The Inconvenient Truth

by Denrhea

Summary

After the birth of his daughter due to rape, Yuuri has decided to fight the system that swept it under the rug. With his mate Victor's support along with the entire skate family, Yuuri stands up for omega rights and against the fetishizing of male omegas while reclaiming his place in the figure skating world. The skate couple have to learn how to balance family and skating and the battles before them, but Yuuri is nothing if not stubborn...and Victor would do anything for his Yuuri.

DO NOT COPY TO ANOTHER SITE.

Не копируйте это на другой сайт.

Notes

If you haven't read it, this is the second part. The first part is "A Convenient Lie".

I hope you all enjoy the continuation of this story! I'm jumping ahead about four months. Don't worry. There will be a few filler chapters posted in a different side segment.

DO NOT COPY TO ANOTHER SITE.

Не копируйте это на другой сайт.
See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Victor guided Yuuri off the train, his protective arm around his mate’s shoulder. They weren’t bonded but that was a matter of time at this point. But first, Yuuri wanted to stand on his own, to reclaim the ice and everything else that had been taken from him. Victor merely wanted his family to be safe and happy, and to no longer hide from the public eye. This was the first move towards both of their goals.

The Grand Prix Final was located in Fukuoka, Japan, and the couple were making their way towards the event to meet their friends but to also come out into the public. A private car waited to pick them up and Victor settled Yuuri and the baby before moving to the opposite side. Yuuri gave the driver instructions in Japanese. Victor was becoming more and more conversational but he still held back and let Yuuri handle these situations, not confident to try to his language skills on anyone outside of Hasetsu.

Shizuka dozed away, happy in her winter outfit, a canopy protecting her from the cold. Yuuri had a front pack where he could carry her. At four months, she was alert and loved to look around at the world surrounding her. Victor thought back over those four months, the two of them figuring out how to take care of her, arguing back and forth between co-sleeping and a dedicated bed. Much like with most fights, they ended up somewhere in the middle, a soft crib that defined her space but could be within Yuuri’s reach for midnight and three a.m. feedings.

At the hotel, Victor could already feel the excitement building in both of them. They had booked a room at the event venue, wanting to be near friends and familiar faces, many of which were now aware that Victor was playing papa bear to a new baby and had claimed the beautiful Yuuri Katsuki as his mate. The omega was anxious and eager to meet up with his coach Celestino and former rink mate/best friend Phichit.

“What if I’ve let myself go too much?” Yuuri fussed, looking down at the tiny bit of baby fat he hadn’t worked off. A less discerning eye would never have noticed it. However, Yuuri’s self critical eyes took in his every imperfection, something Victor constantly found himself battling. They would sit in front of a mirror while Victor would point out all of his Yuuri’s beauty.

“My sweet Yuuri,” Victor began. “You have worked hard and, since you’ve been cleared, you continue to be just as dedicated to your training.”

“But...I’m constantly having to stop and...well, be Mom,” Yuuri pouted. “That can’t be good.”
“I think you underestimate the work you put in. Yes, you stop to care for Flip,” he watched in amusement as Yuuri grimaced at the nickname, “But...you’ve always had things that interrupt training. School, friends, sharing a rink.”

Yuuri’s eyes squinted slightly, a shine Victor had learned as Yuuri’s thinking face, the one he adopted when he was considering a different opinion from his own...a rarity. “And...I don’t really have to share facilities.” Yuuri chewed his lip before asking, “But what about you...are you sure? Training me...is it enough?”

Victor smiled, he would never be able to convince Yuuri that his time away from the ice had been the best of his entire life. Back in Russia he lived in an apartment full of trinkets, expensive clothes, and even a few marble busts, but none of that mattered to him more than the pink Gucci shoes that Flip had thrown up on just last week. “I train you, I choreograph programs for others, I take care of you and Flip, I help out at the onsen and restaurant, and...I have a family. You give me so much of what I’ve been missing. You are my life, my love...and I wouldn’t trade those things for all of the gold medals in the world.”

Yuuri sighed before nodding, reaching across the car seat to take his hand. The legend he had a crush on his childhood had turned out so much better in real life as the flawed, silly man next to him. “I guess...it’s time to face the world, then,” Yuuri determined.

Victor smiled warmly. “I’m with you the entire journey.” Victor got out of the car and walked around to help out his mate and daughter while the driver unloaded their luggage. The porter loaded the pile with expert ease. Yuuri smirked at the amount of luggage needed for traveling with a baby and Victor. At least they didn’t have all of his skate gear this time.

They entered the hotel and Victor guided him over to reception and soon they were headed up to their room with their keycards. They arrived early and had taken care to cover up so they could get settled first, ahead of the paparazzi and any fans.

In their room, Victor went through the space marking it with his scent while Yuuri stripped off the layers so he could feed Shizuka. She was already tugging his shirt down when she found his nipple and latched on. Yuuri’s expression softened. She had taken to him right away and that closeness helped the bond he felt with his daughter. His mother would often sit with him as he nursed, reminding him of what a struggle he was, anxiously watching the world around him.

He held her cradled to his chest when a knock tapped at the door. Yuuri’s eyes followed Victor as he opened the door a peak. The friendly Swiss voice in the hallway announced their guest and Victor turned back to see Yuuri nodding, which was all the signal he needed to open the door
wider. In walked Chris and a less familiar face, the latter carrying a little curly headed blond with
green eyes looking around the room curiously. “Chris! Lawrie!” Victor greeted them, embracing
them as they came inside. “Is this baby Gabriel?” Victor’s eyes were wide and tender as he took
the boy from the tired omega’s hands. Chris was already kneeling before Yuuri.

“She’s beautiful,” he murmured, his expression tender as he studied Shizuka in her mother's lap.

Yuuri’s eyes remained on his daughter greedily suckling. “She’s a little piglet!”

“My little kobuta-chan,” Victor echoed with a grin. His eyes widened as the little one came off
Yuuri’s breast and reached for her Papa. Victor handed Gabriel over and gathered his daughter up,
giving her a good pat as Yuuri covered up. Her nose went directly to his scent gland and he
scented her back as the doctors had instructed he keep doing for the first year. “So how was your
trip?” Victor asked warmly.

“Not bad considering we were flying with our little angel,” Chris decided.

Yuuri’s eyebrows furrowed. “Did he fly well?” and the chew of his lip told everyone he was
thinking about when Shizuka would fly.

Lawrie laughed a little lying his son on his lap to let the chubby hands grab his fingers. “A little
fussy on takeoff but feeding him helped his ears pop and he was fine,” Lawrie assured the other
mother.

Yuuri looked over at his daughter who normally got sleepy after a feeding pulling her head off
Victor’s shoulder to investigate the three new people in the room. He wasn’t convinced that she
would do well on a flight. “I’m just glad the Final is in Fukuoka,” Yuuri confessed. “Otherwise, I
may not have come.”

“Your friend Phichit is here, though,” Chris pointed out.

Yuuri smiled and nodded. “Not yet or he’d be in here already, but yes. Victor’s going to meet with
my coach about my training and they are going to work out a schedule. I think Coach is going to
watch me skate while he’s here.”

Chris’ hazel eyes sparkled with admiration and something that looked like a challenge, “So you are
coming back to the ice,” the Swiss skater confirmed and with Yuuri’s nod, he turned to Victor and
added, “And you’re not?”

Victor sighed. It was part of an ongoing argument. Yuuri even insisted they could all train in Russia. Victor, however, wanted to focus on his family, on his Yuuri. And at almost twenty-eight, how many more seasons could he have? “It’s best for my family if I remain out of competition,” Victor stated but heard a huff from his mate. “And it’s my decision.” He added turning to see Yuuri’s lips twitch in irritation.

Chris quickly saw that he had opened a can of worms Victor had been trying to close for four months. “Perhaps once you get Yuuri settled into his training routine…”

Another huff and then Yuuri cut in stating, “Yuuri is in his training routine. Vitya refuses to try and see if this will balance.”

Victor bounced his daughter on his shoulder, sensing her tension with Yuuri’s annoyance. Their bond is so strong. It’s like she’s still attached in some ways. He only wished he could tell him of how much more important this was, and how it was what he wanted. “One of us will have to be with Flip and it may as well be me!” Victor argued.

Yuuri rose to walk to Victor’s side. “I could make the exact same argument! I am her mother...the one with the breasts feeding her.”

“You’re younger and have more years,” Victor interjected.

“You’re older and have a title to defend,” Yuuri posseted. He turned to his daughter leaning her cheek to Victor’s shoulder once more, blue eyes locking on his. Yuuri’s fingers moved to settle her as the little one began to wiggle and squirm at the upset. “It’s okay, Shizuka. Papa is just being stubborn.”

“No more than Mama,” Victor muttered under his breath.

Chris and Lawrie exchanged looks and finally Lawrie inserted, “Well, I think we’re going to get settled into our room. I look forward to dinner. Good afternoon, gentlemen.” And then he firmly guided Chris out.

“I didn’t mean to start a fight,” Chris defended as they left the room.
“No, you didn’t…you just want Victor to compete almost as much as his mate,” Lawrie stated as he pulled Chris down the hall. He may be omega, but he wasn’t dominated. In fact, Chris was putty in his hands.

Yuuri settled Shizuka into her bed, a cloth covered bassinet with a pattern of skates and ballet shoes. Yuuri liked it because she could sleep next to him without giving up her space. Victor thought of the unused crib in their room. Sometimes he just wanted to be intimate with his mate without worrying about whether or not the baby could see them. When he complained to Takeshi, the younger father laughed declaring he’s still tumbling girls out of his bed. *But hey, it was good birth control*. Victor didn’t feel reassured by that statement.

“I could call down and have them bring up a crib,” Victor suggested.

Yuuri screwed up his face in horror. “You don’t know how clean they are, who’s slept in them, pooped in them...no, she’s fine in her bed. It smells like us.”

“It’s just that…” A soft whine slipped from his lips and Yuuri’s expression gentled, his hand going up to cup his mate’s cheek.

“I promise to move her to the bed once the crib will no longer contain her,” Yuuri reassured him. Except, Victor suspected that Yuuri would have a hard time being far from her. It was one of the many things discussed in therapy. And deep within, Victor knew if having the baby close gave Yuuri the reassurance he needed, he’d always cave to that need.

“I’m sorry,” Victor murmured, turning into Yuuri’s touch. “I want to...be close to you.”

Yuuri settled her into the bassinet before leaning up on his knees to kiss Victor, resting their foreheads together before continuing. “We are close. Even when we disagree. I love you. Shizuka loves you. You aren’t discounted. You’re not overlooked.”

Victor felt frustrated. Yuuri always analyzed and took things deep even when it’s straight forward. “I didn’t...Yuuri...I want to make love to you.”
Yuuri started, glancing down at the infant, eyes closed, sucking on her fist. “She’s asleep.”

“What if she wakes up?” Victor whined.

Yuuri chuckled softly, moving into his space. The kiss was slow and languid and Victor could feel his inhibitions slipping when someone knocked on the door.

“Fuck!” he said under his breath.

Yuuri grinned knowing Victor only succumbed to profanity when he was most frustrated. “Later…” he promised. Yuuri backed off the bed leaving Victor to try and straighten himself out as his mate answered the door.

Phichit stood on the other side. “Do I get to see my niece?” he asked without preamble.

“Shhhh,” Yuuri murmured with a soft giggle. “She’s sleeping.” Yuuri led him across the room and soon Phichit was a bundle of gasps and coos at the adorable infant.

The Thai skater finally lifted his head, a smile on his face. “I can’t believe you made such an adorable human!”

“Hey!” Yuuri protested but his eyes laughed in response.

Sitting back, Phichit sobered. “So...are you really going to do it?”

“The interview is set with both Marooka-san and the American reporter Nick Zaccardi with NBC Sports,” Yuuri confirmed. “I need to face my demons.”

Phichit nodded, his expression grim. “Coach and I are behind you all the way. You know this.” Phichit searched his friend’s expression for reassurance. He knew that Yuuri was angry at the situation, angry at how he felt shoved aside, but there was still a difficult meeting between the skater and former coach that needed to happen.
Yuuri sighed but nodded. “I’m nervous but the attorneys assure me that legally, I’m protected. There may be some posturing. At worst, my...my rapist...he’ll come after me in the courts. However, I’m protected by law in the state of Michigan. I have more than enough grounds to prove rape in a civil court. Criminal court is another matter...thanks to the university’s interference.”

“And you’re going against the university,” Phichit confirmed.

“It’s their interference that made a proper police investigation impossible. So yes.” He swallowed as he heard the tremor in his voice. He could feel his mate move close to him. Victor’s hand moved up and down Yuuri’s back to settle the omega. If going against a single person for rape would be a difficult battle, taking down an institution looked insurmountable. But he knew the university was in the wrong. Yuuri took a deep breath and added, “I think it’s important I make this fight.”

Phichit’s smile was wide and his dark eyes sparkled. “I agree...I just don’t want you to be blindsided.”

Yuuri smiled gratefully. “Me, neither.”

Victor slipped his arms around Yuuri’s waist from behind, something else they continued to work through in therapy. Sometimes Yuuri still stiffened but it was better. He also knew that occasionally, Yuuri would come undone, sinking into memory. Three days of torment and torture all hitting him at once. Yuuri talked about it more and more, not just to his therapist, not just to Victor, but to his mother, father, sister, best friends, and coaches. Yuuri reached out to Celestino two months ago pushing him to seek counseling, telling him that what happened was not his fault. Now, Yuuri stood much stronger than a year ago; he was ready to face the injustices that he had been dealt in Detroit.

Yuuri shifted in his sleep and Victor turned to settle him into his arms. The younger man sought his scent unconsciously, calming once he knew Victor was near. Victor stared up at the ceiling, worry in his thoughts. He was in the lengthy and difficult process of adopting their daughter, granting her the legal name of Shizuka Victorivna Katsuki-Nikiforova. They kept experiencing delays in the legal process, however. It was already difficult that Victor was not Japanese, but made more so that Yuuri had to prove there wasn’t a known alpha. An ugly prejudice that did little more than hurt victims of rape and abuse under the guise of “omega protection”.

Victor sighed, trying to shut his own mind down. He knew not to share these worries with Yuuri,
especially before bedtime, especially before a breaking press conference, but he didn’t want anything or anyone to threaten his daughter or his mate.

Yuuri whined in his sleep and Victor knew his worry had leaked through his scent. Victor leaned in and brushed a kiss into Yuuri’s raven hair and felt the younger man snuggle impossibly closer to him. Victor’s hand went to the space where Yuuri’s shirt rolled up revealing skin and the dimple just above his ass. The simple sight of his Yuuri’s dimple was enough to bring a soft laugh to his throat, and next to him Yuuri hummed happily in his sleep. He moved his fingers in soothing movements. *Tomorrow. It all comes out tomorrow.*
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Yuuri speaks out in an interview with Victor's support.

Chapter Notes

Hey, all...it was hard to wait so long to post this but I don't want to run out of story before I get too much written. I've got 9 written so far and 6 edited (including these two). Thanks to BluSkates for keeping this going.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Victor tamped down his own fears as the car drew closer to the arena. Although the official interviewers the couple had contacted knew what to expect, this moment would create a sensation in the figure skating community. He stepped out of the car and already his silver hair drew the attention of reporters even as he walked around to Yuuri’s door. He heard the twitter of excited fans, keeping a respectful distance behind the ropes, a few beeps from phone cameras telling him they were already being tagged on Instagram. His eyes caught Yuuri’s through the window and the beautiful brown from within the car gave him courage. He opened the door, taking Yuuri’s hand to stand and he and their daughter rose. As they moved away from the car, tending to the baby carrier that would turn into a stroller, the atmosphere changed quickly.

A hush filled the crowd as they watched the new parents settle their child into the stroller. Finally, with diaper bag thrown over Victor’s shoulder, stroller in Yuuri’s hands, they moved towards the throng. Victor saw the eyes of fans, some hardening against him, others turning damp as they looked at his beautiful daughter smiling to the crowd. The voices of reporters might have been prying or harsh, but at least they spoke softly in the presence of a baby. “Mr. Nikiforov, are you and Katsuki mates?” “Mr. Nikiforov, is this child a result of events in Sochi?” It didn’t take long for them to draw conclusions. Not that either of us gave them anything to go from. “Mr. Nikiforov, is this the reason for your disappearance over the past months?”

Victor held a hand and leaned in to check with his partner before turning to answer the crowd of reporters. “My mate Yuuri and I are here to support friends competing in this year’s Grand Prix Final. We have already agreed to exclusive interviews, so you’ll have to hold onto your questions until after those have been aired.” Victor then guided Yuuri through the crowd with a firm hand and purposeful step ignoring the questions that fell at his back.
“They think…” Yuuri murmured as they cleared the reporters and showed their badges to move into the entrance reserved for skaters and coaches. Celestino had managed to pull strings, obtaining coaching passes for the two of them. Victor was sorry they hadn’t found a way to get one for Flip, but then she didn’t need one.

“I know…it will be fine. They’ve been thinking it since Sochi,” Victor reassured him.

Yuuri’s lips parted as he thought about what Victor went through without cause. It must have been awful to shoulder that lie, the same one that had pulled him from his nest, saved him from a deadly drop. While that lie may have saved Yuuri’s life, it potentially ruined Victor’s life, his career. He had to live with being seen as a rapist for months, all while knowing he would…could never do something as horrendous. “I...should have said something.”

“It wouldn’t do any good. You didn’t remember.” He saw the doubt on his mate’s face and quickly smiled. “It’s fine, Yuuri. I couldn’t be happier with how this turned out.” Yuuri knew his smile, could see how forced it was but also knew it was his mate’s armor. He let it be. Victor then spotted Celestino and Phichit, waving at them as he continued to guide Yuuri through the stares of the crowd.

The coach’s expression was longsuffering, a patient smile on his face. Yuuri knew that he hadn’t been an ideal student, headstrong, stubborn…but he was nothing in comparison to one Phichit Chulanot. That skater was an army within himself. “Is this her?” he asked to fill the space. He reached out towards the baby in the carrier, his fingers dancing over her tummy as she grabbed hold of it. His laugh tumbled out warmly at her hold. “She’s a strong one, Yuuri. Tell me you plan to introduce her to the ice.”

Yuuri glanced up at Victor, his own smile settling on his face. “She already spends about four hours a day on the ice. Victor has her in a front carrier while I skate. She loves to watch.”

The coach straightened up and held the other man’s eyes. They had discussed at length Victor’s part in Yuuri’s situation once the truth came out. It took time but the Italian, an omega who had suffered his own horrific events, finally recognized Victor as an ally. Now, he was part of Yuuri’s team, choreographing his upcoming season and standing in as coach so Yuuri can stay close to his family. It began as an uneasy arrangement but then video came from Yukko to the older coach and he could see Yuuri laughing, bright smiling eyes as he skated up to Victor to tease his daughter on the ice before going back into his routine. Yuuko knew only a little of Celestino before using her own daughters as a means of investigation, the three girls were some of the most knowledgeable people of the skating world beyond Japan. She soon saw it was imperative the video include how the couple worked as a coaching team, and as a family. Through this medium, the older coach could see that Yuuri had kept his daughter and was in the process of making peace with his past.
Victor was an important part of that, stabilizing the skater, unwavering in his support.

Yuuri shoved a loose strand behind his hair, the top half mostly held by an elastic. Victor loved his mate’s hair pulled back, the longer length just reaching his shoulders. His hair had grown and thickened during the pregnancy assisted by the generous vitamins and well regulated meals. They talked about haircuts but Yuuri was reluctant and Victor started playing with the new length of hair, getting Yuuri used to it. Yuuri’s fingers slid over the thick dark locks of his daughter. “She’s grown quite a bit,” Yuuri said as he lifted the chubby infant out of the carrier and settled her into the coach’s arms. They all chuckled as she reached for the lanyard pulling the ID badge into her mouth.

It hadn’t taken long for the couple...for the baby to attract the attention of others. Skaters who were on the outside of their story watched curiously, questions on their tongues but knowing Victor wouldn’t spill information before planned. The alpha rested a protective arm around Yuuri’s shoulders purposefully ignoring them. The competing skaters would be herded into a room soon enough for interviews. Yuuri and Victor were scheduled right after to meet with Morooka and Nick Zaccardi.

Morooka worked to help Yuuri relax, talking about the mundane as he bounced Shizuka on his knee. Nick spoke with Victor and went over the interview questions with him one last time before they began. The American journalist had covered Yuuri’s climb in the States and had been one of the few to decline speculation about Yuuri’s sudden departure, even going as far as to get into a shouting match on Around the Horn with Bomani. Finally, the producer signaled for the four of them to have a seat. “Good afternoon, and welcome to the Grand Prix Final in Fukuoka, Japan. We are treated this afternoon with a rare interview from omega skater Yuuri Katsuki and last year’s champion Victor Nikiforov. I am Nick Zaccardi and this is Morooka Hisashi. Welcome to our first collaboration for ESPN’s Sports Center !”

“Thank you, Nick,” Morooka responded. “And thank you, Victor and Yuuri, for agreeing to this interview. Why don’t you tell us about the past few months?”

Yuuri glanced shyly towards the camera then focused on his daughter now sitting in his lap. “I think I’ll have to go a little further back,” Yuuri began. He met Victor’s eyes and the alpha placed a calming hand on his back. “Take her,” he whispered and as he handed off his daughter, Victor could see the tremor in his hands. Taking a deep breath, he let it out slowly lifting his beautiful countenance to the camera. “Last November while training in Detroit, I...was taken, held captive, and forced into heat by an unknown assailant. O-once I was free, I couldn’t recall many details and my university was quick to brush it under the rug. I thought...I was fine. I went to the Final, however, and well...you saw the results. I unraveled before everyone. A delayed effect from the
trauma pulled out in a time of stress.”

The two reporters allowed for a moment while Yuuri settled himself. The young man was clearly upset, but also a remarkable example of strength, holding himself together. “So...your daughter Shizuka is not Victor Nikiforov’s,” Nick clarified.

Yuuri initially shook his head but then stopped and looked at his mate, nodding. “It’s not as simple as that. Victor is in the process of adopting her. But she is not his...genetically.”

“I assure you, as far as I’m concerned, she is my daughter,” Victor interjected, shifting the baby in his arms as she cooed and reached for his nose. He smiled at her and let her settle into his lap easily. “However, that night that everyone speculated on...I only looked out for Yuuri keeping him safe. We spent the night in my room, sleeping side by side. But nothing happened, I would never. Yuuri was in no condition to consent. We didn’t become intimate until months later.”

Yuuri blushed, unused to his life going on display. “I...it was a struggle. I didn’t...realize that I had made such an impression on Victor. However, as I fell apart, Victor came to Japan...and found me. Once more.” Yuuri rested soft eyes on Victor before continuing, “It’s been a journey, getting to know one another and learning to lean on Victor when I need to. He encouraged me to make my own choices. In the end, I chose to keep my daughter.”

“Some would suggest that your decision to keep your child contradicts your claim of rape,” Nick stated, not managing to completely hide the wince at his words.

“They might,” Yuuri countered. He had prepared for that question knowing that people would ask. “It’s about choices. I was denied my first choice when I was forced to mate and carry the child of my rapist. The government denied my second when it refused me an abortion, a legal option for any woman in the United States, but denied to male Omegas in almost every country. The only choice I had left was whether or not I’d keep and raise my daughter.” He stopped thinking back to the emotional turmoil he went through during that time, some of it blurred out by how close he came to dropping. Should I even mention that? How ignored my health was by the medical community, to the point where a doctor wouldn’t even look at me until it was too late? He shook his head, one battle at a time. To his side he felt Victor shift closer to him, giving him the assurance he needed. “I...would not have...if I didn’t have the support of Victor and my family. I couldn’t see past my own pain. Mentally, I would not have been in a place where I could have properly cared for her. However, I never entertained the thought that I didn’t love her. I worried...I didn’t love her enough. I misread my pain. But when I laid eyes on her, that all went away.” He looked at the little girl playing on his alpha’s lap, her eyes concerned but returned his smile. “And...well, over thirty percent of people impregnated through rape keep their child. So...those who make the suggestion that a loving parent couldn’t raise a child because of the horror of their conception are working on assumptions and not facts. But more importantly, the question is not why I kept my child. The question is why wasn’t I given the same choices my
female counterparts are given. The law is flawed and it oppresses male omegas under the guise of
protection.”

The two reporters were quiet for a moment before Morooka asked, “What are your next moves?”

Yuuri met Victor’s eyes and smiled. “With Victor’s help, I’ll be reclaiming my place in the figure
skating community.”

Both reporters blinked at Victor before Nick asked, “So you’re not returning to figure skating?”

Victor sighed, his eyes resting on Yuuri. “That’s a question still up for debate. Yuuri would have
me return and I lean towards watching over my family. As you know, I lost my own fathers a
number of years ago and to be blessed with this family at this point, I just want to cherish every
moment.”

“But I argue that you can cherish those moments while still doing what you love, while still
skating,” Yuuri argued emphatically. He then blushed and then turned towards the reporters. “As
you can tell, this is a point of contention between us. Although I respect Victor’s choice, I still long
to see him skate and I don’t want him to give up the ice for me.”

“I haven’t given up the ice,” Victor countered softly. “I simply approach it differently. As your
coach and your choreographer.”

Yuuri sighed and refocused on the reporters. “As for other moves, I have a legal team in place and
with their help, I am planning to bring suit against the university to hold them accountable for their
actions. There was no investigation, and I was shuffled off as quickly and quietly as they could
make it. I wasn’t a rape survivor, I wasn’t a person. To them, I was a scandal waiting to erupt and
they swept me aside. I will also be speaking to the Council for Omega Rights at the United
Nations in New York City. I haven’t been back to the United States since I left months ago with the
news of my pregnancy. Coach Celestino has since moved all of his skaters to another location.
That should not have had to happen but he did this to ensure their safety. So we are here today to
support my former rinkmate and friend Phichit Chulanont and Victor’s friend Christophe
Giacometti.”

“We appreciate the courage it took to come out with your story,” Nick stated.

“And we look forward to seeing Japan’s Ace back on the ice,” Morooka added, clearly happy to
write on his favored subject for many more seasons. “Thank you for sharing your story with us, Skater Katsuki and Skater Nikiforov. And we can’t wait to see baby Shizuka follow in her mother’s footsteps!”

The interview aired as a special before the opening ceremonies of the final and by the next day those skaters who had held back the previous day came up to talk with Yuuri and Victor. “I...didn’t know. Are you okay?” Leo de la Iglesia asked breaking the awkwardness.

Yuuri sighed. He had to start talking about this. To get himself past this. To get everyone else past this. “I...am having a good day but I know there will be bad days along the way.”

“Can I hold your baby?” Yuuri turned to see Sara approaching curiously. Her dark eyes were taking in the beautiful baby.

He looked down to his daughter who was reaching towards the long-haired Italian twin. “Of course,” Yuuri responded warmly, settling her into the Crispino twin’s arms.

As she stepped back and became enraptured in the little bundle, her brother leaned into Victor and murmured, “This is why I’m so protective of my sister. I know everyone has always thought it was weird, or that I’m a dick but it’s a scary world. Being a skater makes her even more visible.”

Victor would like to have been able to tell him that she would be fine but since Yuuri, he knew that bad things happened to good people. “The hardest part is letting them be independent while keeping watch over them.”

Michele grimaced before responding, “I don’t think I’ve mastered that yet.”

JJ watched from the edge not sure how to approach the crowd but Georgi pushed past him and embraced Victor before he had a chance to respond. “I knew you were a good man,” he echoed. “I just didn’t...you walked away from everything to be there for the love of your life! Would that we all have the courage to sacrifice all for our love!”

“Ummm...thank you?” Victor choked out, pulling back he surveyed his friend from the rink in Russia. Georgi always came across to him as a little corny in his romantic ways, but he was at least
completely sincere, and that was the best part of him. Looking past the honest smile Victor spotted Yakov at the edge of the crowd. As the Russian skater released him, Victor approached the old coach who regarded him thoughtfully.

The older man huffed out a sigh, removing his hat from his head and placing a hand on Victor’s shoulder. “You let me believe the worst,” he stated gruffly.

Victor reached up, cupping the withered hand with his, the skin etched with time. “I thought...it would be easier to let me go. And...as far as I’m concerned, she is my daughter.”

He sighed then walked over to Yuuri who now bounced the infant on his hip. “Well, let me see her.” The coach lifted her out of Yuuri’s arms and held her up, squinting his eyes as he studied the child critically. “She’s sturdy...and doesn’t appear nervous at all.”

Yuuri laughed softly leaning into Victor as he stood to the younger man’s side, sliding an arm over his shoulders. “Well, she’s better when Vitya is near. His scent soothes her.”

The coach held his brown eyes before responding, “As well as yourself. You...you are planning to skate?”

“Yes, sir,” he answered.

He then narrowed his eyes at Victor before turning back to Yuuri. “And you want him to skate?”

“I’m not going to leave my Yuuri in Japan,” Victor protested. The coach waved him down holding onto Yuuri’s eyes. He was clearly talking to the head of the household...Yuuri.

Yuuri held his gaze, brown eyes narrowing with determination. “Yes, sir, I do. Celestino is working with me through Vitya but Victor could train. There is time.”

“I help with the family business,” Victor argued. His foot began to tap in annoyance with being ignored.

“A business that thrived in my absence and before it even knew you,” the Japanese skater argued.
“My family’s onsen will continue on without us. It’s Mari’s to run someday.”

“And you need to stay in Japan?” the Russian coach continued.

Yuuri considered the question before shaking his head slowly. “I don’t need to stay here forever, but now, I’m in therapy and I’d like to stay with my current doctor until I found another I trusted as much.” He chewed his lip, considering his options...his choices. “I know I don’t want to return to the States.”

Yakov listened to the young man speak, ticking off everything on the list in his head. “You...come train in Russia. And we’ll get Victor back on the ice.”

Victor’s eyes widened. “What? No??!”

“You say ‘no’ like a question...you aren’t committed to your decision, Vitya,” the coach stated gruffly. He knew Victor, he knew the man he had a hand in raising was unshakeable in his commitment to his family, but he also knew this man loved the ice, the competition. “You want to skate but are holding onto your obligations. You can do both.”

Victor’s eyes went from his mate to his coach not sure what had just happened. “I…”

Yuuri turned to face Victor, a hand on his forearm. “I don’t want you to regret us. We can stay in Japan a while longer but you eventually have to return to your own life. And if you want, I’ll make my place with you. Your life has been on hold long enough.”

Victor swallowed, dizzy from the out of control feeling his life took on. “But…”

“Your lawyers are working out of Europe. It will be easier to communicate and meet with them if we are closer,” Yuuri continued. He then thought about his own life, what he wanted to accomplish with the time he had reclaimed. “I can’t hide in Hasetsu forever. I have to face the world.” Turning to the coach, he added, “I’m in intensive therapy. I’d like to finish that course before making any moves. It’s important for my daughter that I’m mentally stable. However, I’ll have Dr. Hashimoto prepare a referral.”

“Where would we live?” Victor asked.
The old man rolled his eyes. “If you hadn’t put your place on the market, you could have moved back home. I’m sure Lilia will let you stay in the gatehouse for as long as you like.”

Victor squirmed at how quickly things were moving and falling into place. “The dogs…”

“Makkachin has stayed there before. What is one more?” Yakov was able to counter each of the predictable concerns easily.

Victor looked at his daughter in his mate’s arms. “Who will take care of Flip while I practice?”

“I think I can handle Shizuka by myself,” Yuuri grated. He shifted the little girl as she pulled at his ID lanyard, kicking her leg against the last bit of soft on his tummy.

Yakov grimaced, catching the odd nickname. “Did you just refer to your daughter as Flip?” the coach asked warily.

“Maybe? Yuuri’s friends, their daughters are named after jumps. It sort of started as a joke,” he defended.

He grunted before turning back to Yuuri. “I’ll be able to expedite the paperwork once you are ready. Just contact me directly, don’t go through the consulate.”

“Yes, sir,” Yuuri answered.

Victor watched his coach walk away. What just happened?

Chapter End Notes

Wow! I didn't expect that to happen, either. I even had it plotted out with them in Hasetsu. Sometimes characters have their own ideas!
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The changes before them...

Chapter Notes

Hey, all...I know. I haven't replied to any of your lovely comments. I'm on my way there next. I did enjoy a lovely visit with my mom so that makes it entirely forgivable. ;)

Send love to BluSkates who did my edits. She makes my writing look beautiful.

Also...I realize the between times are important. I will be putting up a short series between these two stories. I'm thinking to call it "Between Truth and Lies". It will have Yuri meeting Shizuka among other things. Yuri was the first skater to meet the baby and it's mentioned in the text of Truth but I want to tell that story among others. So...if you're missing anything that might have happened in between, let me know. Maybe I'll pull it into the middle story.

As for now, enjoy...we jump into just a touch of angst. Not a lot...Yuuri knows how to handle his man.

---

Victor and Yuuri maintained face while with friends but back in their room, Victor turned on Yuuri, his eyes taking on a dangerous glint. “How dare you make decisions for me!” He had been holding that behind his teeth the entire return to the room.

Yuuri, unabashed by the outburst, just cocked an eyebrow as he prepared to feed their daughter, who smiled at her father, unphased by his anger. “All you had to do was speak up,” he stated simply.

Victor wasn’t ready to back down, “You’re safest in Japan!”

Yuuri shook his head in disagreement. “I’m not...not really. There are dangers no matter where we live, Vitya. And although the United States has left a bad aftertaste in my mouth, I’m no safer here than there.” He watched his boyfriend’s face settle and knew he was helping with one of the issues that faced and terrified Victor. “The problem isn’t location, it’s attitude. We live in a culture that
fetishizes male omegas. Do you think that’s not happening here? Before I left for Detroit, I was propositioned on multiple occasions, men wanting me to be their concubine, their mate. Once was just when I had turned sixteen and newly presented… Victor, I was only sixteen and that happened right here in Japan.” He watched as Victor sat down on the bed next to him, cradling their daughter’s tiny head as she fed. “It’s part of why I need to stand up for omega rights. It didn’t just start with my rape. I’ve been fighting this fight since before I left Japan. Since I presented. And...it’s time to take it up once more.”

Victor kept his eyes locked on Shizuka’s small face, partially hidden as she nursed from Yuuri. His words had become weaker as he listened to Yuuri’s argument. Yuuri, as usual, was right. “But your parents…”

Yuuri sighed. “Let me handle my parents. If you want to be part of the conversation, fine, but...I’ve fought for my freedom once before.”

Victor looked up, taking in the determined eyes before him. “I...don’t want you to have to fight for your freedom. That should be a given.”

“But it’s not.” Yuuri reached out his hand and Victor moved in closer. “We have to talk about the second elephant in the room.” He watched Victor squirm where he had settled. “If you really don’t want to return to the ice, I will respect that. However, I don’t think you are listening to your own heart. You...don’t sleep well. There’s a restlessness in you. You’re not finished yet.”

Victor shrugged, but Yuuri felt his hand grow cold. “I...I am worried about Shizuka.”

“I know,” Yuuri whispered.

Victor blinked, hoping they were talking of the same worry that plagued him nights. “You...do?”

Yuuri regarded his mate, shifting to settled Shizuka into her bassinet but remaining close to Victor. “Most people think I’m...unaware. I notice everything. I just...keep my thoughts close until I know what I’m feeling.”

“I don’t want to lose her.” Victor’s fingers brushed over her sleeping form.

Yuuri reached out and turned his face towards him, holding him with intense brown eyes. He’d
gone over all of the risks with the attorneys. He knew what could happen as well as what would likely happen. Still, Victor needed assurance. Yuuri’s thumb brushed over Victor’s cheekbone as he reassured him. “You have me. And because of that, you have her. I’m not going to lose her. The press will be in my favor, more importantly the law is on my side. No court will be able to ignore my claim on her. Besides, he will likely never show up. That would be tantamount upon admitting rape.”

Victor understood all of that, however the worry never left him. It was like he traded old fears for entirely new ones the minute she was born. “I know what the lawyers say…”

“You trust your lawyers,” Yuuri pointed out.

“I...I just don’t want you at risk. You’re too important to me.” He looked back at the little girl, now sleeping soundly. “Shizuka is too important to me.”

Yuuri leaned in and kissed him, his fingers tracing down Victor’s jawline. “I know...and I know you will keep us safe. And I will take care of you. Either we’re in this together or we fall.”

“I’m...with you,” Victor agreed reluctantly but Yuuri could taste his fear.

“Trust me,” Yuuri whispered. Moving even closer, the thighs touching, sharing their warmth.

“I...almost lost you,” Victor whispered back. Yuuri could feel Victor’s emotions through his touch, knew the fears that wracked through him.

“I have always been yours...since before...Shizuka ever happened. You would not have lost me.”

“If he...he took you from me…” A sob broke Victor’s voice.

Yuuri titled the head up, catching his eyes. “I fought to stay alive. I fought to see you that day on the ice…” The resolve in his voice caught Victor’s breath, stunning him for a moment.

Victor’s tears released as if he’d been holding them back for months. “I...knew you. There was something familiar about you…”
“Just a letter from a scared twelve-year-old,” Yuuri said softly.

Victor shook his head. “I don’t. I’ve never sent anything like that bunny before...or ever again. Something instinctively took over.”

Yuuri’s lips parted a moment before he closed the distance. Emotions ran high as Victor felt his world fall away, leaving just the two of them. Yuuri shifted in his arms pushing Victor onto his back. It seemed every time they fell into bed like this it was due to high emotions. Victor wondered what it would be like to intentionally take his Yuuri apart. But then again, Yuuri’s emotions were strong and ran wild. Especially with Victor.

Blue eyes watched as Yuuri pulled his shirt and bralette over his head, the slight swell of his breast still providing more than enough milk for their daughter. The white liquid leaked down his body in a small rivulet in Yuuri’s desire. Victor traced the path, drawing his finger back to his lips tasting Yuuri’s essence. It wasn’t the first time he’d tasted Yuuri’s milk but for some reason while Yuuri breast-fed, Victor couldn’t bring himself to suck and tease at those pink buds. That didn’t stop Yuuri, though, as Victor was quickly reminded by the smaller form dipping down to slide his tongue over Victor’s nipple, blowing on the sensitive surface causing Victor to shiver. “Yuuriiii,” he moaned and was rewarded by those beautiful lips closing over his nub and sucking steadily, tongue flicking at the tip. For all of Yuuri’s lack of experience when Victor came into his life, Yuuri made up for it as soon as Dr. Ito cleared him for physical activity (including sex...she explicitly stated sex). And Victor learned just how aggressive Yuuri could be when encouraged.

Victor gasped as Yuuri bent over the other nipple ensuring it didn’t feel neglected, his tongue laving over the surface hungrily. Victor wanted the torture to continue. He also wanted Yuuri on his cock. Those lips moved back up Victor’s chest, across his jaw, teasing the sensitive flesh beneath his ear. A scrape of teeth brought an “nnngg” from Victor’s throat.

“Yuuri, need you...” The whine came from far back in Victor’s throat.

He received a chuckle in reply, a hand reaching down to graze along his length through his pants. “I suppose we should do something about these clothes, then,” Yuuri answered. His hands reached for the button and soon Victor felt Yuuri pushing him free of his slacks, Yuuri returning without his own pants. Victor reached down for him and Yuuri crawled back up him, settling in his lap.

Victor sat up to meet his kiss, the younger man lifting his hips seeking to settle onto his mate’s length. Yuuri’s lips parted with the stretch, his eyes closing as he focused on relaxing, willing his body to give to Victor. It didn’t take much. Yuuri’s body knew Victor’s now and responded to it without hesitation.
Yuuri captured Victor’s lips once more as he began moving up and down Victor’s length, his slick filling the space between him, the glide and pull catching their breath. Yuuri belonged to Victor and the older man knew it, knew Yuuri only responded to him like this, knew Yuuri would only give himself over to Victor.

Victor watched in rapt adoration as his mate sought his pleasure on Victor’s length. “Come for me, my Yuuri,” he whispered as he felt the muscles in Yuuri tense, his own quickening barely held in control. Then those muscles spasmed around him as Yuuri released, Victor capturing him as he came down from his orgasm, shifting Yuuri onto his back. He continued to move in and out of Yuuri chasing his own orgasm, Yuuri a relaxed mess beneath him, his fingers sliding lovingly over his body until Victor found the edge he sought, tumbling over and releasing into Yuuri.

He lay breathless in Yuuri’s arms, fingers tenderly carding through his hair now damp with sweat. When did they become this, where sex and love flowed so freely between them? A comfort settled between them, a confidence that they were home. Which was why they could argue without fear, speak their minds, fight with one another...they knew in the end, the other was there for them.

Victor pushed up with his arms and looked down at his very relaxed lover. He knew Yuuri, knew him in this state. He’d need to care for him. It was an added pleasure to Victor to have this honor. Yuuri hid his vulnerability from everyone except him. Slipping from Yuuri’s side, he padded to the bathroom, returning with a warm dish of water and cloth. He wiped down Yuuri’s body. The smaller form turned into the cleanliness, a soft purring escaping his throat. Victor smiled, appreciating the trust Yuuri gave him.

Once clean, he pulled the blanket over Yuuri and leaned over the smaller form to check on their daughter. She slept unaware of her parents’ activities. Settling in beside Yuuri, he pulled the smaller body into him, nestling his back against Victor’s front. This was a hard fought position, Yuuri letting them sleep like this and Victor now claimed it every time he had a chance.

Yuuri sat with his parents, his hands worrying the tail of his shirt. He could feel Victor’s presence nearby, his mate holding his daughter protectively in his arms. “I...I’m going to Russia. After my therapist agrees, but we are going to train. With Yakov...and I guess I’ll continue to train there.” His hand nervously rubbed the back of his neck not sure how his mother would react.

She studied him and Victor and then sighed. “This town was never able to hold you, my son. It was only a matter of time before you left again.” Looking up to Victor, she stated, “You have to
promise me you will watch over him no matter what."

“Of course I will,” Victor assured her. He let out a small breath of relief. He wanted his family to stay in Japan, to stay safe, but he knew that this was no longer what they needed. He had been preparing for a fight and was grateful when it didn’t happen...but in a smaller sense sorry it hadn’t.

Toshiya remained quiet, his eyes watching his son. Finally, he added, “You will come home to us.”

Yuuri reached across the table, “Yes, of course.”

The father’s eyes moistened, “More often than before?”

Victor smiled knowing how much Yuuri’s parents loved him. “I’ll make sure of it.”

The old man nodded, “I know you will.” Turning back to his son, he added, “We will always give you the space you need. Just don’t forget to come back to us. It’s too hard on the heart when you stay away so long.”

Yuuri nodded. “I’ll do better.”

Toshiya smiled at his son, knowing he would take this to heart. “You don’t have to prove anything to us. We know you are strong and courageous. Now, is this what you want?”

Yuuri considered his father’s words, the man who kept quiet and rarely entered into a dispute. He had his own ways for dealing with things and Yuuri only just realized how his continued absence hurt the man, hurt both of them. “It’s what I need. I came back...and I had time to heal. Now I need to know the world won’t swallow me alive once again.”

Toshiya smiled softly. “You’ll do fine. Now hug your mama so she can hide her tears.”

Yuuri smiled, feeling the sad pull at his heart before pulling his mother to his chest. She didn’t shake in his arms. It always amazed him she was such a quiet cryer. But he felt the dampness of her cheeks against his neck. “I promise I’ll come back,” he whispered.
“I know...it’s just so hard to let you go.” The unspoken again hung in the air between them. Yuuri fought so hard to convince them to let him go the first time. She reached up and wiped the remainder of her tears away. “I’ll be in the kitchen,” she declared and Yuuri watched her walk off.

His father smiled indulgently towards his wife. “She’ll come around. You are...so much like her.” He smiled thinking of his stubborn, emotional wife. “She just has to prepare her heart.”

“I’m sorry…”

“Don’t be, son. You did nothing wrong. Now...you have therapy this afternoon. Work hard. Your dreams have been on hold long enough.”

And with that, Victor and Yuuri were left alone. Neither of them commented on the gruffness in Toshiya’s voice or the casual wipe of the tear. Victor picked up the carrier and took Shizuka out to the car. Yuuri followed, still shell shocked from the encounter.

On the drive, Yuuri whispered out his fear, “I’m hurting them.”

Victor considered the little girl in the back, “One day we’ll have to let our own little girl go to chase after her dreams. I suspect that will be one of the hardest things we do. But we will. Because we love her.”

Yuuri took in a deep breath and let it out. Nodding with determination, he reached over and squeezed Victor’s hand.

It took two months before his therapist comfortably released him from counseling. “You still need care to maintain and continue your improvements. And you will have rebounds, I want you to be ready for them and know how to deal with them once they arrive. I’ve been put in touch with a Dr. Abramovich in St. Petersburg that is well versed with our techniques. I’ll send you with a copy of your file but I leave it to you to decide if he’s the one for you. His contact information is in the folder.”
“Thank you.”

Yuuri had his six month check up with his daughter later that afternoon, both in good health. Leaning into Victor’s arms, he whispered, “It’s time.”

“I know. Are you ready?”

Yuuri nodded. He watched as Victor made the call to his coach listening to the warm flow of Russian from the silverette. Disconnecting, his mate declared, “He’s putting everything in motion. And...I guess we’re staying in the gatehouse.” He stretched and laughed. “You know, I stayed there off and on during my youth while my parents traveled and then full time until I was old enough for the dorms after they passed. I used to drive Lilia up the wall.” He settled into a soft smile. “It will be good to be back.”
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Yuuri in Russia!

Chapter Notes

I know it's late...I was chilling out reading and watching Insidious...because it's that time of year.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

While Victor was uneasily becoming more comfortable with their move to Russia he had determined that he would do one thing prior to their departure with or without Yuuri’s blessing. Yuuri had to have a decent coat, one that could last through the unforgiving winter, one that cost a shit-ton. Yuuri now stood in the blue wool peacoat with a brown scarf wound round his neck waiting for their ride in St. Petersburg. Shizuka was bundled up in a baby snowsuit in the frontpack beneath the layers. “Go back inside,” the alpha ordered. There was no point in both of them standing in frigid temperatures. Yuuri’s initial stubborn streak flared and he had a ready retort on his tongue, but pressed his lips together and retreated into the warmth.

They had shipped all of the necessary items including the entirity of the baby room along with supplies that Yukko insisted they would need as Shizuka grew. Yuuri knew she was only a facetime away, but he would miss having her calming reassurance readily available. The items now sat waiting for them in the carriage house at Lilia’s home. It had taken some ingenuity but Victor even figured out how to ship the rocker. Victor was a problem solver and he knew his mate was sentimental.

Victor spotted Lilia’s driver and car as he pulled into the pick-up line. Standing up from where he leaned against the wall, he stepped inside where Yuuri had taken shelter with the baby. The omega was putting himself back together after feeding their daughter. Victor could see others staring and let out a low warning growl. Heads dropped automatically as Victor knelt before Yuuri and helped him reassemble himself.

“She was hungry and I didn’t want to step out of sight,” Yuuri flustered and Victor could see the small hands shake as he fastened the coat around the two of them.
“It’s fine, my Yuuri. You shouldn’t have to explain feeding our child.” Victor helped Yuuri to his feet and guided him outside, their luggage in tow. Victor also had to admit he didn’t want Yuuri to step out of his sight either. Russia was his home, but it could also be dangerous.

By the time they reached the curb, the driver had worked his way up the line and was now parked to receive his passengers. He first settled Yuuri and the baby before turning to help Victor load up the trunk. “You shouldn’t be doing this, sir,” he argued.

Victor laughed before responding, “How many times are we going to have this conversation, Lev?”

The driver grinned and answered, “With you, likely several more.”

Climbing into the car, he could already see the droop of Yuuri’s eyes as the tension from travel left him now that he was out of the public eye. Victor reached over and smoothed his hair out of his eyes and smiled as those brown eyes fluttered open wide. “Are you ready?”

Yuuri nodded but took his hand holding it tightly. The alpha knew his mate well enough to know that although Yuuri wanted this, he was afraid of all of the changes. However, Yuuri was never one to let fear hold him back. Victor felt that head rest against his shoulder. Just as well. Lilia’s place was on the outskirts of St. Petersburg in an affluent and private community.

It was a little over an hour when Victor roused Yuuri from his sleep, drowsy brown eyes lifting up to him. “We’re here, solnyshko ,” Victor greeted with a warm smile.

Yuuri sat up, now looking around in interest and then his eyes widened at the cottage. “It’s so big!”

“Well, it looks bigger than it is. It’s a little chopped up. But it has two small bedrooms upstairs. The closets are small but there is a huge unfinished area I’ll turn into a closet for all of us. The living room, kitchen, dining area, and hall are on the lower level.” He guided Yuuri to the door, taking the key from the driver. “Lilia said we can use her driver until we get our own transportation.”

Yuuri’s lips parted as he stepped inside. His eyes went to the stairs and then turned towards the living room. Setting the carseat down, he freed his daughter and carried her into the living room. A fireplace warmed up the space and the furniture was classic in design, soft fabrics and
“Lilia must have redecorated. Some of these pieces came from the main house.”

“It looks...homey,” Yuuri decided, picturing some of their belongings filling the space. He turned and wandered into a space that was the dining room filled with a country painted table and china cabinet. “Oh! I didn’t think they made those anymore!”

“In old Russia, you will find it,” Victor reflected, his expression amused. “I’ll see if Lilia has a high chair for my zvyozdochka.”

Yuuri looked his way in surprise. “Why would she…”

Victor smiled at his mate’s incredulity, “The house is an old family home. Many generations of her family have lived here, some even being born here. There have been babies even if Lilia hasn’t been blessed.”

“Is she...okay that we are here?” The lack of children between coach and wife was known as one of those hushed topics of conversation.

Victor chuckled warmly. “I’m sure she insisted on it. Lilia...she may be stern but she’s adopted each and every one of us. She makes us her family.”

Yuuri smiled warmly, “Like Ciao Ciao!”

Victor nodded, a grin on his lips. “Exactly! Prepare for our little princess to be quite spoiled.”

Yuuri huffed. “You do that already.” He followed Victor into the kitchen. It was quite modernized although there were touches that spoke back to a bygone age. “I like the red stove.” The patterned tile behind it drew Yuuri’s attention as the omega traced along the surface. “The ceramicists back home would appreciate this work.”

They went upstairs next and Yuuri found the master bedroom next. “Oh! The bed is small!”
Victor chuckled. “It will seem so with our old bed. You might have to pull the crib up beside the bed for a change.”

Yuuri frowned as he considered that option before sighing in agreement. “I suppose that would be a fair transition. Do you think it will fit?”

“It will be tight but if you are fine with climbing across, I think we could make do for now,” Victor answered thoughtfully.

Yuuri looked around the room thoughtfully. “I’ll be glad to have my quilts and other bedding. But...where will we store everything?”

“There’s an extra room. It’s not exactly finished but I think we can put hanging racks and trunk spaces.” Victor led him across the hall and opened the door. It was too narrow with the eaves of the house to put a living space in that room but it was perfect for storage. Yuuri shivered realizing that part was not heated and Victor closed it behind him. “Now for our sweet little angel’s room.” They crossed the hall, and opened the door. Victor let out a laugh and Yuuri peered inside. “It seems Lilia has already taken grandmotherly privileges with our baby girl.”

The room had an almost fairytale appearance but with a decidedly ballerina appearance. Yuuri studied the space taking in all of the details from the mobile topped with a tutu and dangling ballerinas to the chair in the corner. “Our stuff is here already?”

“I sent her things express, at Lilia’s request. I should have known she was up to something.” He watched Yuuri run his fingers over a pink faux sheepskin rug as he set the baby down, her tiny eyes staring up at the fairy lit room as she chewed her fist.

“It’s very...pink,” Yuuri surmised. He bent over and picked up a knitted bunny. “She seems to have caught our aesthetic, however.” He dropped down on the rug next to Shizuka and began teasing her playing where’s the bunny . Her giggles filled the room.

Victor grinned. “She probably influenced part of that aesthetic.” He sat down with his knees butterflied on the other side of his daughter. “I don’t think that crib will fit in our room,” he said finally.

Yuuri lifted his eyes and considered the crib. “Well, she’s outgrowing the bassinet. I guess...I’ll
have to get used to her being in the next room.” Victor could hear the wistfulness in his words. “You sent the baby monitors, didn’t you?”

“Of course! And the nanny cam!” Victor reached across to touch Yuuri’s face, the light tickle of his fingers brushing the other man’s face.

“We’ll just make sure they are in good order before we put her down for the night.” Yuuri forced a smile putting on a brave face.

Victor admired his mate’s positive attitude but he knew otherwise. Yuuri would have a long night and, by extension, so would Victor. “So, the bathroom,” he said, his own voice surprisingly gruff.

Yuuri gave him an amused look and rose to his feet scooping up their baby girl to continue the tour. At the end of the hall, he opened the door to reveal a clawfoot tub with a shower connection, hex-tiled floors in black and white, and wainscoting up the walls. The sink was a rectangle pedestal. Storage was nonexistent.

“Is there...a linen closet?” Yuuri asked, his eyes going around the room. There was none. “We...may have to get creative.”

“There is a closet next to the stairs,” Victor suggested. They went to check it out only to discover an apartment sized stacking washer and dryer unit. “Oh...well, at least we have laundry.”

Yuuri nodded and then he hugged his daughter close. “It’s really a nice place, Vitya. Much nicer than my place in Detroit.”

Victor couldn’t help but remember the amenities of his former home. “Oh...it’s...so different from my last place.”

“You lived in a fancy condo,” Yuuri pointed out. “This will be fine. But I suppose if you’re not comfortable, we could look elsewhere. I just want to settle in and nest.”

Victor smiled at Yuuri’s acceptance. “I guess...it’s more than what we have back in Japan, too. And it’s private.”
“No Mari complaining about how loud our sex noises are,” Yuuri pointed out. Those complaints would still cause Yuuri’s cheeks to rosey up. Still, he loved his sister and the affection was evident between the two.

Victor chuckled. “I guess that’s a plus.” They spent the next hour unpacking and then Yuuri settled into their new bed to nap with his daughter. Victor promised to wake them for dinner. “Lilia wants us at the main house tonight.”

Yuuri nodded drowsily, his shirt off while Shizuka found his nipple to nurse. He was asleep before she finished, Victor scooping her up to pat her on the back then settling her in Yuuri’s embrace. He drew a quilt over the two of them making sure he left trace amounts of his scent along the surface.

Downstairs, Victor began sorting through the pantry. It was well stocked but very Russian. He began to make a list of things he knew Yuuri would want. A knock at the door drew his attention and he answered it to welcome in the blond tiger.

“I can’t believe you’re here!” The surly teen managed to get out before being pulled into a hug.

“Well, my Yuuri made that decision and I was dragged along for the ride.”

Yuri rolled his eyes and answered, “You’re just pissed he didn’t let you play the martyr.”

Victor turned a pout as Yuri moved into the house, examining the arrangements. “I was not!”

The little blonde turned, walking backwards as he moved to the overstuffed couch, plopping down onto it. “Sure you weren’t! Where is she?”

Victor then realized the blonde was going from room to room looking for his little mite. “She’s sleeping with Yuuri but knowing her, she’ll be up in another five minutes. Yuuri on the other hand will probably sleep until I wake him up.”
As if on cue, her cry rang down the stairs and Victor climbed up to grab her, Yuri not far behind but hanging in the hall while Victor went into their room. As he emerged, the blonde reached for the baby and hugged her to his chest. “She’s gotten so big!”

Yuri had been the only one in their community with time to visit after she was born since he wasn’t skating in any major competitions during the current season. And now he cooed and played with the baby girl who grabbed his nose and giggled as he blew raspberries on her tummy. Looking up, he asked, “When do the dogs arrive?”

Victor smiled as the teen was able to show such open affection for his daughter but still stumbled over every word when talking to Otabek. “Tomorrow. I think with the rest of our things.”

“Are they being delivered?”

“Yes, everything’s been arranged.”

Yuri entertained the baby over the next hour when a cry was heard from above. Victor was on his feet headed up the stairs, Yuri held onto the baby protectively, his green eyes wide. Victor entered the room and found his mate disoriented. He immediately went to Yuuri’s side pulling him to his scent.

“It’s fine, Yuuri,” he murmured. “This place will smell like us soon.” He pressed his lips against Yuuri’s head, holding him close. “Breathe, Yuuri. I’m here.”

Yuuri gasped for breath and then settled into his arms. The tears came next. Then he started looking around, searching the bed. It took a moment for Victor to realize he was looking for Shizuka. “Yura’s here. She’s with Yura. Downstairs,” he stated firmly.

Yuuri looked up, his face now splotchy from the cry. “I’m sorry,” he whispered.

“Don’t be. We have that name. The one Hashimoto gave you. We’ll call tomorrow and see if you can get acquainted with your new therapist.”
Yuuri fell quiet for a moment. He knew the move, and all the changes would be an adjustment. But he didn’t expect to wake from a nap horrified by his unfamiliar surroundings. “I didn’t know...it would be this hard.” Please help me make this work.

“It’s a new place, new surroundings. I expected you to be a little unsettled.” He hugged Yuuri once more then murmured, “Let’s get cleaned up. We can visit with Lilia and Yakov before dinner.”

“I hope you didn’t mind that I decorated the little ballerina’s room,” Lilia chuckled. She had taken over the baby since they arrived, only giving her up for feedings and changings.

Yuuri laughed warmly. “Not at all. I didn’t decorate the last space either. That was all Victor.”

Lilia blushed a little, realizing she had robbed a new mother of his opportunity to decorate. But Yuuri seemed happy for the help. “It’s just...I felt like she needed to have a space ready as well.”

“We greatly appreciate that you made us feel so welcome. I didn’t know what to expect.”

“You brought our Vitya back to us. At least now he can skate to a proper retirement.”

It was Yuuri’s turn to blush, feeling guilty for something he didn’t control. “I...never meant to take him away.”

Lilia smiled, closing her eyes as the warmth filled the room. “Vitya was gone before he left. He knew where he belonged. It just took some of us longer to accept it.” Opening her eyes, she rested them on her husband. “It’s not always about blood calling to blood. Sometimes, there is something deeper that connects us to someone.”

Yuuri was stunned at her intuitive nature. “Victor said...he just knew.”

“So he did...”
Chapter End Notes

Don’t get too comfortable...

;)
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

How does Yuuri-mom handle Shizuka sleeping separately?

Chapter Notes

Hey! Are you ready for another chapter? A little Yuuri angst which can only create Victor angst headed your way.

Thank you, BluSkates, for the edits! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yuuri glared at the alarm as it went off too close and too loud. Unfamiliar space combined with his daughter not sleeping next to him had him set on edge. He had checked on her no less than ten times during the night. She was still asleep and part of him resented that she adjusted to the separation more easily than him. He shoved his blankets back and rolled out of bed. Victor was already up and by the sound of the water running in the bathroom, in the process of getting ready.

As Victor came into the room, he dropped a kiss on Yuuri’s forehead. “It’ll get easier,” he promised.

“She doesn’t even need me anymore,” Yuuri hissed like it was Victor’s fault.

Victor chuckled taking the tiny abuse with good nature. He understood his mate, possibly better than the man did himself. As Yuuri huffed in front of him, a grumpy mess, Victor gave a gentle shove towards the bathroom. “Shower! You’ll feel better.”

Yuuri stood under the running water, a pout settling on his face. So much had changed at once and part of him was rebelling hard against it. I want my baby nearby. There has to be a way. But he knew she was too big for the bassinet and that he’d even agreed once she outgrew it, he’d move her to the bed. The only other option would be to place her between them. Getting out, he called to Victor as he dried off. The silverette poked his head into the bathroom, a warm smile in place.
“If we create a bed for Makkachin and Vicchan in the corner, maybe she can...sleep between us?”

Victor smiled indulgently as Yuuri formed his words. The dogs already had to sleep elsewhere, the smaller bed would soon turn into a territory war. “On stormy nights and when things are more uneasy, of course. But it’s good for her to sleep in her own bed.”

Yuuri huffed, he hadn’t wanted to compromise, he wanted his way. He wasn’t sure he agreed. They apparently read different articles on parenting. He moved past Victor still annoyed and into the bedroom to get dressed.

Yuuri stood in front of the mirror tugging at his practice clothes. Nothing seemed to sit in the right places. He felt fine with how the clothing settled on his body in Hasetsu. That small town had seen him go up and down so much in weight, no one really cared. But here...training with Victor’s rink mates...Yuuri cared. Those perfect Russians had a discipline that challenged gravity and aging. They looked chiseled from stone, but moved with fluidity. He stiffened as a pair of familiar arms slipped around his waist.


Yuuri looked up at him sharply through the mirror. “You’re just a little biased.”

Victor smiled at the mirror image of Yuuri. “Maybe...but I also know what you’ve fought back from over the last few months. The struggle...it has its own beauty.”

He raised a disbelieving eyebrow. “Not everyone sees that. All people will see is me...all lumpy and dumpy.”

Victor was undeterred. Pressing a kiss into Yuuri’s hair, he murmured, “I disagree. They will see a fearless warrior that puts his family first, a mother that loves his daughter without limit, and a beautiful omega in all of his grace and dignity.”

Yuuri sucked back his breath, turning into his arms. “I don’t know where I’d be without you.”

“Don’t think about it...you and I are together. This is us.”
Yuuri nuzzled into his scent gland and breathed him in. “I...need to wear your scent,” he confessed.

Victor began to run his wrists over Yuuri, making him feel claimed and protected. Slowly, that vulnerability fell away and Yuuri stood up, stood stronger. “Better?”

Yuuri nodded. “Much.” He hugged Victor close once again and murmured, “I wish...I didn’t need this. That I was strong on my own.”

“It’s not weakness to take what you need. I love you and freely offer myself to you.”

Yuuri sniffed back. “One of these days...I’m not going to cry.”

Victor’s expression remained soft as he slid his fingers through Yuuri’s hair. “Take as long as you need. I’m yours for life.”

Yuuri clutched into his shirt as Victor held onto him, his cheek resting against his mate’s chest. A baby’s cry broke through the moment. Yuuri giggled...the tension in his body releasing from the sound of his little one. Then he laughed. As he pulled up, Victor could see a smile behind the tears. “I’m glad...I kept her.” He then ducked away and headed into the nursery.

The omega missed her, missed her snuggles, her scent. Holding her to his chest, he soon forgot about the ill fit of his clothes and just remembered how his body provided for his daughter. Sitting in his rocking chair, he soothed her with a light touch to her thick crop of hair. She watched him and hummed as she suckled. He looked up as a shadow crossed the door.

“I’ll go get her rice cereal,” Victor offered. Yuuri smiled, nodding. Victor loved feeding her making silly noises to engage her. For now, Yuuri focused all of his attention on this moment, his moment, one that only he could share with his daughter. He knew they only had half a year longer like this. He planned to wean her at one year. Just before competition season begins.

Taking her downstairs to Victor, he received his own breakfast of eggs and toast. “Are you ready?” the Japanese man asked his mate.

Victor hummed as he nodded, taking the baby from him. “I have my gear in order. The playpen is by the door. Not sure what you and Lilia cooked up.”
Yuuri chuckled as he watched his mate make silly motorboat noises to feed their daughter. “She says she has a space for us. I thought we’d leave the playpen there, give her a place to move around while I do my stretches and dance.”

“A studio! Of course!”

“I just don’t want to inconvenience anyone.” Yuuri chewed his lip, pushing the toast with his fork.

Victor huffed. “You are not an inconvenience, my Yuuri. You breathe life wherever you go.”

“Again, just a bit biased,” Yuuri teased. Rinsing his dish, he kissed Victor on his way out of the room.

Yuuri packed for the day, his training bag more of a diaper bag these days. They had a playpen to set up at the rink. Blankets. Layers of clothes. Diapers, wipes, and more food. Added to that were the pads Yuuri used to keep from leaking through his shirt. “I need Hermione’s bag with its extension charm,” Yuuri muttered under his breath before looking up to see Victor carrying their daughter unhappily strapped into her carrier. “I see she’s not happy.”

“I think she is tired of travel. Perhaps we should take an extra day of rest,” Victor suggested.

Yuuri laughed but shook his head. “We start today!” A determined Yuuri was unstoppable. Victor couldn’t help the warmth in his chest. He watched Yuuri crumple but when shored up, he found his strength.

Yuuri took the carrier, leaning forward to release his calm over Shizuka. She sputtered then sniffed before settling. It was cheating, something Yuuri rarely used. He wanted her to use her voice. But they had a journey and she needed to become used to their new life.

In the car ride over, Victor hummed thoughtfully and Yuuri more than once cast a curious eye his direction. “What’s on your mind?”

“Just...a list,” Victor conceded. “There are so many things we need.”
Yuuri frowned, a little confused by his mate’s scheming. “A car would be useful but otherwise, I don’t know what you’re worried about.”

Victor kept his eyes out the window, “It’s just...you...you are not happy, Yuuri.”

“I just got here,” Yuuri argued, laughing wryly. Shrugging, he added, “I just need to settle.”

“And you can’t sleep.” Victor countered.

“It...takes time to adjust. And...” His eyes rested on Shizuka. “I don’t like being so far away.”

Victor studied Yuuri for a moment then asked, “What’s going on?”

Yuuri’s fingers danced over his daughter’s tummy as she watched him with interest. “I almost messed up,” he whispered. “I almost let her go. I don’t want her to disappear.” The words gave Yuuri’s fears substance and he felt Victor’s arm go around his shoulder. “I...I was so afraid...of everything. And I might...I would have...”

“Yuuri, you were just trying to survive,” Victor stated quietly.

Yuuri’s eyes rested on her. “Can I...speak for omega choice when I doubt the ones I would have made right now?”

“Yes,” Victor answered without hesitation. “You would bear the weight of your choices but they would be yours. And everyone else does the same. Do some have regrets? Yes. But they were allowed to have those regrets. It’s only right that male omegas have those rights. You should have had the choice...all of your others were taken away. You should have had this choice.”

“If I had...If I a...aborted...” He gasped for air, panting as he worked through his anxious thoughts. “If...there was no Shizuka...would there be an...us?”

Victor frowned as he thought about Yuuri’s question. “I...think there would be. I believe we are
meant to be together. But...I can’t predict what might have been. I can only tell you what is. And what is is that I love you, with every part of my being. I can’t believe that hinges on a choice. Yes, I love our daughter, I consider her every bit my child and bonded with her when she was born. However, I said from the beginning that that choice was yours. If...if you gave her up, I would still be by your side helping you move forward with your life, with our life. I would mourn her but I would have respected your choice. Because you should have always had a choice.”

“I don’t know why this is so hard for me,” Yuuri whispered.

The sedan pulled to a stop and Victor sighed as he took in their location. “I think we should go home. You’re too upset right now and I worry you might hurt yourself.” He took in the brown eyes begging him to reconsider, “Can you skate?”

Yuuri looked up, his eyes moving out to the facility before nodding. “I...I need to skate. Maybe it will help me get out of my head.”

Victor helped Yuuri out of the car before going to the trunk to get their things. Yuuri held his daughter close to his chest as Victor situated her stroller. He then settled her into the seat tucking a blanket around her. She cooed and reached to her mommy as Yuuri placed her bunny next to her. It had a hot water bottle inside it to help keep her warm. She reached over and pulled the ear to her mouth, actively chewing on it.

Yuuri sighed as he smoothed his fingers over her hair before standing up. “Did you bring the tylenol? She’s teething.”

“It should be in her meds bag. I picked up an extra to keep with us for traveling.”

Yuuri nodded before turning to his new rink. He never imagined he’d be in this place, the ice where Victor grew up training. A solid hand on his back gave him the courage to step forward. As they stepped inside, both were surprised to be greeted by Lilia but it was soon apparent she was waiting to see Shizuka as she knelt down to check on her.

Standing, she took in the load Victor was carrying. “I checked studio assignments and there is one upstairs where you can set up her crib. I took the liberty of assigning it to the two of you. The custodian just finished giving it a fresh cleaning and we made sure the closet inside was clear in case you need to store things for the baby.”
“That’s most generous…” Yuuri began only to be waved off.

“Nonsense. You need a practice space. It makes sense that you have a dedicated space.” Her smile turned rye as she added, “I will say that Yura also claimed that he needs to practice with you.”

The Japanese skater laughed warmly. “I have no problem with that. We work well together.”

“Good, I’ll make the move.” She passed one door and gestured in it’s direction. “If you need to work with me, this is my preferred studio. I’ve worked with some of Russia’s best skaters and ballerinas as they worked through their choreography.”

“I’d be honored,” Yuuri replied, his voice properly awed.

She raised a well-sculpted arched brow in something that appeared to be amusement. Opening another door, she motioned inside. “Very well, Yuuri, this is your space. Feel free to get settled in but Yakov wants to see both of you on the ice once you can be made ready.”

“Oh, okay…” Yuuri’s eyes widened and he caught himself before he bowed before she walked away. He turned back to his mate, his cheeks red. “I-ah...Vitya, does he expect us on the ice at the same time?”

Victor chuckled. “Of course not, my Yuuri. We’ll take turns. And if it is so, there will be someone who will be happy to hold our little angel.” He opened the door to the studio and guided Yuuri inside. The younger man let his eyes move over the space, small but definitely would meet his needs. Yuuri spotted a hanging rod in one corner and he began to unload his bag. Victor set up the crib and then scooped Shizuka out of the stroller so she could stretch out while they set everything up.

Half an hour later, they were changed and down at the ice floor, suddenly surrounded by Russian skaters. Yuuri knew a few faces...Georgi, Anya, Yura, Mila...but others weren’t as familiar. Victor quickly made introductions. Katya, Ivan, Dmitry, Pyotr. They all fussed over Shizuka.

A sharp whistle startled the baby and made her cry, Yuuri quickly patting her to quiet down. Yakov actually looked apologetic but sent the skaters back on the ice. “Which is going first?” he finally asked looking from one to the other.
Victor checked the time then declared, “Yuuri will go. Flip needs to eat in an hour and a half.”

The coach narrowed his gaze at Victor before turning to Yuuri. “You let him call your daughter that?”

Yuuri gave an exasperated shrug. “I’ve tried to curtail him but that just seems to encourage him.”

The coach snorted. He knew the skater well. As Yuuri handed the baby over to Victor, he moved towards the entrance onto the ice. “Warm up, Katsuki, then move to the middle and show me your program,” the old coach ordered.

“But I’m supposed to be coaching him,” Victor fussed even as he bounced the baby in his arms.

Yakov grunted. “You’re green as a coach, Vitya. He’s on my ice, I will coach.” He watched Victor twist uncomfortably and pout from the corner of his eye before adding, “You may assist...but you will assist others, too. Yura and Mila. For your rent.”

“I thought you wanted me to skate,” Victor pointed out.

The coach chuckled but his eyes were trained on the Japanese omega warming up on the ice. “His form is good. Most don’t come back so quickly. How are his jumps?”

“His triples are solid but he needs work on his quads,” Victor confirmed. “He has a beautiful triple axel.”

“I remember,” the coach stated surprising Victor. “What! You don’t think I watch the competition as well?”

Victor turned his attention to his mate as Yuuri moved into his start position. They both remained quiet through the four minutes of Yuuri’s movements. Finally, the coach leveled a stare at Victor.

“The boy is too innocent for that program.”
Victor smirked. “He does innocent well. This will surprise the audience.”

“You and your obsession about surprising the audience. Have Lilia work with him on his presentation.”

“Of course,” Victor agreed.

“And those jumps, bring them up to quads. He needs at least twenty points to break a hundred.”

Victor nodded sharply.

“And have Katsuki work with Yura on his step sequences. The boy doesn’t value them enough.”

“He could skate school figures like my Yuuri does to relax,” Victor pointed out.

The coach stared at him then erupted in a laugh, “Bah! I’d love to see you get that out of the boy!”

Victor took it as a challenge, even as his daughter snuggled into his scent seeking comfort from the loud, noisy Russian.

Yuuri was exhausted by the time they called it a day. Balancing the back and forth of parenting and skating seemed to make for a longer day. He stretched as she napped. She played from her stroller while Yuuri lifted weights, Victor fussing about a critique his coach provided. They traded off at lunch eating while the other fed Shizuka. Then they traded off practices in the afternoon. By the time they climbed into the sedan that would take them home, Yuuri was leaning against the door, half asleep. Victor kept watch over both his mate and daughter.

Back home, they took turns showering off, Victor built a fire in the living room after taking the dogs out, and Yuuri made dinner. Finally, they curled up and watched a movie but Yuuri fell asleep in Victor’s lap. With a gentle tap, Victor suggested they go to bed.
Yuuri checked on Shizuka, sound asleep in her crib, before going to bed. Dressed in his pajamas since his shower, he climbed across and settled into the space he claimed for himself. Victor lit the fireplace in their bedroom, the coals casting a soft glow across the space. Yuuri watched as Victor settled in next to him. Now that he was in bed, sleep seemed hard.

Victor watched him and Yuuri knew he was making note of his anxiety. He tried to will himself to settle and even allowed Victor to pull him into his embrace. Even breathing in Victor’s scent did little to relax him. Yuuri pulled back and rubbed his arms, staring up at the ceiling. He swallowed a sob trying to work its way out.

Victor leaned forward to kiss him before slipping from the blankets. Yuuri heard the water in the bathroom through the wall and turned to face the wall. She’s fine. She’s fine. She’s fine. He continued his mantra until he felt the mattress dip, turning to see Victor stretch out next to him...and place their daughter into Yuuri’s arms. The sob he had been fighting hitched out of his throat as she snuggled into him.

Victor smoothed Yuuri’s hair. “I listened to you, my Yuuri...I can tell that it’s important for her to be here.”

“It’s so small,” Yuuri whispered.

“We’ll make the adjustments. She can stay between us as long as you need her to be here.” Victor’s hand moved down Yuuri’s arm and rested on his waist. “Rest now, my Yuuri. She’s safe. You’re safe. It’s time for sleep.”

Yuuri nodded. He slowly breathed through to settle his residual nerves. Finally, peace found its way into his demeanor and his eyelids grew heavy. A warm blanket settled around Yuuri covering the baby and surrounding her with warmth. Finally, Victor also relaxed, his hand on Yuuri’s hip. He would prefer to have Yuuri spooned into him but for tonight, this was what Yuuri needed and he listened as the younger man’s breathing evened out. Finally, Victor’s eyes shuttered and he slept.

Chapter End Notes

That bed is going to get awfully small...
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Sometimes we need a little help to get over a hump...and sometimes we need to adjust a few things.

Chapter Notes

Hey, all...enter Dr. Abramovich. Thanks, BluSkates, for the edits!

---

Victor held onto Shizuka as he walked Yuuri into the unfamiliar building, unsure of whether or not there would be a language barrier. Hashimoto had assured Yuuri this psychiatrist studied in the UK and spoke English fluently but that didn’t mean his staff had the same skill. Meeting with the receptionist, Victor found her English not too bad for someone who only studied in Russia and both Yuuri and the Russian lady seemed to communicate well enough to work through the appointment details. Victor also had to admit he wanted to see Yuuri in to make sure he kept the appointment. It had taken a little more effort on Victor’s behalf to get the time scheduled and Yuuri’s stubborn will had flared its head.

Yuuri visited with an intake nurse who gathered some basic history, then handed her his file explaining, “My previous doctor, the one who wrote the referral, sent this with me. I’d...like to hold onto the original if you don’t mind.”

She smiled indulgently and nodded. “That won’t be a problem Mr. Katsuki. I’ll make the copies while you wait here. If you prefer, your mate can wait with you.”

“Yes...please.” Yuuri smiled over to Victor, who breathed a sigh of relief that his mate wasn’t going to hold this against him.

While they waited, Shizuka started to fuss and Yuuri pulled her from the stroller with a sigh as he realized he’d lost track of time. She was hungry and the ache in his chest answered her fussy behavior. Victor reached for a blanket while Yuuri freed himself to feed her. It was the sight of Victor kneeling before the omega, watching over him while Yuuri fed their daughter, that the nurse walked towards smiling indulgently as she re-entered the waiting area.
“It’s refreshing to see such a devoted alpha,” she murmured softly.

Victor looked up surprised. “I thought...this was the norm.” He thought of his devotion to Yuuri, knowing that while some of it came from his conscious thoughts, most of it was driven by something deeper within him.

She waved off his concerns. “In this business, one becomes jaded.” Turning to Yuuri, she added, “Dr. Abramovich is ready to see you once you are finished. I’ll let him know that you are tending your daughter.”

Yuuri smiled his appreciation and nodded. He was nervous but he knew he needed this. He’d had too many breakdowns since the move for him not to admit he needed help. Finally, relinquishing Shizuka to her papa, Yuuri gave him a nervous smile as he put himself back together.

“It will be fine,” Victor assured him. “And if you don’t like this one, we’ll find another.”

Yuuri nodded as he stood up shaking his nervous energy out of his hands. “It...it will be fine,” Yuuri echoed. Stepping through the door, the nurse smiled warmly and guided him into the office. “Dr. Abramovich, this is your new referral, Yuuri Katsuki.”

The older man stood up and Yuuri’s eyes widened at the barrel chest and the salt and pepper beard. The mustache was pronounced, formed by thoughtful twisting of the ends. The smile was warm as the psychiatrist greeted him. “Come in, come in. Have a seat. Let’s get to know one another.”

Yuuri took a steadying breath and approached the man, his hand nervously going to his neck. Taking the offered chair, he sat stiffly chewing his lip. It was always hard, these first meetings. “I...I suppose I should have sent my file ahead. I didn’t want to let it go.”

“Don’t worry about it. Your previous therapist left some concise notes at the front that summarized the situation. So...you’ve just moved to Russia.” Yuuri nodded in answer, his brown eyes wide as he took in the bear of a man. “And I bet you’re feeling just a bit unsettled.”

“I mean...I’ve lived elsewhere before. Five years in the United States...most of that was...good.” Yuuri’s eyes went down to his hands and he realized he was twisting them nervously. He forced them to still, stretching them out flat on his lap. “It was good...until that night,” he finished, his voice dropping to a whisper.
The doctor nodded, understanding the young man’s hesitancy to speak of his horrifying experience. “We will have plenty of time to delve into the past as needed. What’s going on now?”

Yuuri drew in a deep breath and let it out. “I suppose...I’m not dealing with the change too well. I thought it would be easier but even the small things...like a bed that’s too small...are crowding in on me. All of these things are wearing on me.”

“What are the big things?”

Yuuri took a deep breath and let it out. “My daughter. My husband now training along my side. New country. New culture. My...family. I have to create an entirely new support system. And well...Victor and I...we have some differing parenting philosophies.”

Abramovich listened quietly as Yuuri ticked off his list. He smiled, impressed that the young man was so in touch with his difficulties. “Are you able to work them out?”

“For the most part...but well, I strongly believe in the benefits of co-sleeping. I want to keep my daughter close. And he...well, he thinks she should be moved to the crib. I thought...well, I thought I could do it once she outgrew the smaller bassinet, but it’s a lot harder than I thought. And that damn bed...it’s just too small.”

“Perhaps some of these things can be changed,” the psychiatrist suggested.

“Shouldn’t I try and make it work? I mean, the house was offered to us freely so that we could move here. I don’t want to put anyone out. Lilia...she’s been so gracious and kind.”

“Perhaps you are reading more into the intention than she had in mind. Sometimes we dance around a topic when straightforward communication can achieve much better results.”

Yuuri fidgeted, studying his hands as they worried his sleeve. “It’s such...a little thing.”

“It doesn’t seem like a little thing. Let’s talk about that. Why is it so important?”
Blinking his eyes rapidly, he didn’t know when the tears came forward. However, they were there now. “I...I would have given her up...aborted her if I had the chance. How...do I let those thoughts go? I love my daughter. I don’t resent her. I want her in my life...but then...I wasn’t myself back then and I would have taken a different path.”

The doctor smiled thoughtfully. “I think now we are getting to the root of the problem. It sounds like we have some guilt to work through.”

Victor sat across from his coach distracted, his thoughts on Yuuri and his daughter. The last few nights had been better but there was a hanging nervous energy with his mate. He didn’t know how to take it away. Even with the visit to the psychiatrist and more scheduled, he didn’t feel like the matter was resolved.

“Vitya, did you hear what I said?” Yakov’s gruff voice cut through the worried thoughts.

He looked up, startled. “I’m sorry, coach...my mind...was elsewhere.”

Yakov huffed. “It’s been elsewhere since you’ve been back. Do you want this?”

Victor considered his coach’s question before nodding slowly. “I do want this...but not at the expense of my family. So seeing to their needs is foremost.”

“What need is not being met?” the coach asked in confusion. From his eyes, they had a furnished house. What more could they need?

Victor sighed. Maybe another perspective would help. “It’s just that...Yuuri...he’s a nester. And well, the bed is too small. By the time we’re all in it, there is no space.”

“Get a bigger bed,” the coach suggested as if it was the easiest thing in the world.

“Those upper rooms are small in general. With the other furniture...”
“Figure out what you need, get rid of the rest, make room for the bigger bed. Or...if the kid is going to sleep with you, move some of the furniture to the other room.”

Victor thought about it. “I...do you think Lilia would mind?”

Yakov’s face dropped into the exasperated look he wore when Victor was being ridiculous...so the face he wore always. “Look, she wanted to make sure you had something to start with. She never expected you to just go with her suggestions. If you need to get rid of something, just tell the household servants and they’ll move them into storage. And there is no obligation to stay. If the layout of the house doesn’t work, look for another place.”

“But...it’s only for a couple of years.”

“Two years in a cramped space can make or break a marriage.” Yakov’s knowing tone sounded heavy to Victor.

“But we’re not…”

Yakov sighed. “You’re as good as married so you may as well accept it. Make the changes you need to make and move forward.”

Victor considered his coach, his mentor’s words. Victor skated around the ice watching Yuuri as he came close, cuddling their baby close. Yuuri walked away from the safety and support of his own world so Victor wouldn’t give up his own dreams. It was up to Victor to restore that sense of security. When he came off the ice and Yuuri relinquished the baby to his arms, he followed the omega down the hall to the studio.

Entering the room, he smiled. Yuuri had laid out a picnic. He reached into the crib and spread out the blanket where Shizuka could stretch out her limbs. Yuuri pulled the food out of the cooler and Victor couldn’t help but appreciate his multi-talented mate. “When did you do this?”

“Last night when cleaning up in the kitchen,” Yuuri answered. His eyes were shy, as well as his
smile. “I know...I’ve not made this move easy. I didn’t know it would cause me so much stress.”

Victor reached over and took his mate’s hand, his thumb rubbing circles into the soft flesh. “I’ve been thinking...perhaps we should look at the cottage as a temporary residence. Like staying at a roomy hotel.”

Yuuri looked up, his brow wrinkling in confusion. “What do you mean?”

“I know we talked about staying because it was such a short period...but it really doesn’t suit us. We like to live in each other’s spaces and to have a home so chopped up…”

Yuuri chewed his lips thoughtfully and Victor was surprised he didn’t reject the idea initially. “If we...look for something different, could we look for something in walking or running distance to the rink? I’d prefer to go by foot or bike if possible.”

Victor smiled brightly, “I think...that’s a good idea. There are a number of loft spaces we can consider in the area. So...are you okay with me calling a real estate agent?”

Yuuri looked at Shizuka, watching as she rolled on her back, “I...I’m okay with it. But I want to help, financially.”

Victor sighed and clicked his tongue at Yuuri. “I still have the money saved from the sale of my condo. It should give us a good down payment and anything else should be reasonable.”

Yuuri frowned, unhappy at not contributing to their income. “It...doesn’t have to be big.”

“No...but it does need to accommodate a large enough sleep space.” Victor watched Yuuri’s eyes brighten and a smile play on his lips. He reached across, taking his mate’s hand. “I want you to be a part of this process.”

Yuuri nodded hesitantly. “I’ve never really picked out a place before. My apartment in Detroit was picked out by my coach. He had several skaters in that building.”

“The realtor will make that process easier. And I’ve gone through both the buying and selling
process.”

Then Yuuri shook his head and Victor watched Yuuri backpedal. “I...I will be okay where we are at,” Yuuri said after a moment. “This is a lot of trouble and Lilia...she made a space for us.”

Victor sighed, taking his hands in his own. “I don’t want you to be just okay. I want you to be happy. I’ve already talked it over with Yakov. He’s already assured me that Lilia would not be upset. This house is fine...for now. But it doesn’t suit our lifestyle.”

Yuuri hugged himself as he let the words set in. Finally, he stated, “You’re the one telling Lilia. She’s been nothing but kind to us.”

It turned out telling Lilia produced a surprising response. They were at the big house for a team dinner, something Victor missed. Lilia was bouncing the baby on her knee making teasing noises which drew a number of curious stairs. “What? It’s not like I have grandbabies to spoil! This may be my only chance.”

Smiles slipped into the skaters’ expressions although they turned them away from her. Lilia’s series of miscarriages were all something that everyone knew of and no one spoke of. As a result, she adopted them each as they walked into her husband’s care. Of course, her attention was back on the baby as eyes returned to her. Yuuri sat on a cushion nearby, ready to take her back when Lilia grew tired. Finally, the wizened lady focused on Victor who had been shifting anxiously, his eyes darting to her nervously. “Out with it, Vitya. I don’t have all night for you find your courage.”

Victor smiled his charming smile and responded, “I don’t know what you mean.” He saw how she leveled a look of disapproval at the dodge and he took a deep breath before spitting out. “I think Yuuri and I are going to look for a place closer to the rink, something with a more open concept.”

She blinked in surprise then turned to Yakov. “Do you have something to do with this?”

Yakov held her gaze before responding, “Of course...I know you want Yuuri and Victor to settle in and be happy so they will stay longer, dear.”
She frowned as she considered his words. “That house...it really is too small. Yakov and I hated it and there was just the two of us. No pets, no...children.” She stuttered out the last word and Yuuri glanced at Victor in concern. The alpha held a hand up just slightly to stay his thoughts. “I think...if things had been different, I too...would have been happier closer to work.” She then focused on Victor and added, “That doesn’t mean you have permission to stop bringing this little angel over to see me.”

“Of course not!” Victor responded, his expression easing back into a smile. “And Yuuri and I appreciate your graciousness in allowing us to stay until we find our own place.”

She huffed. “Of course you would be allowed to stay. That house has been a revolving door for skaters and dancers through the years.”

“Thank you still the same,” Victor repeated, winking at Yuuri.

Later that evening as the party broke up, Georgi approached Victor. “The building where I stay...it has a few units open. In fact, Dmitry and Ivan stay there as well. It would...I mean, you might need a quick babysitter and we’re all right there.”

Yura who had been watching them all curiously pouted. “What about me? I thought I was your standby babysitter.”

Victor smiled at the youth and nodded. “Always...but sometimes you need an emergency plan. You are our first choice, however.”

It took a few days to set up an appointment and then Yuuri and Victor found themselves touring a flat. The open layout was much more socially inviting with kitchen, dining and living flowing into one another. It had two bedrooms on opposite ends of the apartment, two bathrooms but one ensuite. The master bedroom, however, held the spaciousness Yuuri craved. Victor could already imagine the oversized bed. Yuuri could see it holding their things as well as the baby’s.

“Do you think the second bedroom is too much?” Yuuri asked.

Victor shook his head. “We’ll set it up as a guest room and office. I do not like work in my living
space if it can be helped.”

Yuuri nodded in agreement. “I think...we could make this work. How about the cost?”

“My other place was in a more exclusive building so it was more expensive. I can purchase and furnish this one with what I have.”

Yuuri chewed his lip and shifted uncomfortably, his eyes going to the large floor to ceiling window and the park it revealed nearby. “I...want to contribute to our space.”

“I think you should. It should have a bit of both of us. But I don’t want you to feel constrained.” Victor knew his mate would never be satisfied with simply allowing him to pay for the flat. However, there would be opportunities for them to work out an economy more to Yuuri’s liking later.

“I...know I don’t make as much as you. I hate photoshoots and want to focus on my skating. But...I do have an income.” He stopped and thought about what he could bring into their home. “I want to put a portion of that towards the furnishings and household needs.”

“Okay...we’ll need quite a bit. Just outfitting the kitchen will take a good amount.”

Before they left, they had entered into a lease-purchase agreement, lease until the purchase was final. Three weeks after making it to Russia, Yuuri and Victor found themselves packing once more, making sure to take the gifts from Lilia for their daughter. Victor already had an idea of how to set up the bedroom.

Buying furniture took some time as Yuuri didn’t quite know what his personal style entailed. He had moved from his childhood room into an apartment a step up from a dorm room. Then he returned to his childhood home. This would be his first opportunity to see what his adult tastes would choose. They looked at a number of sofas to start and he kept coming to some more modern pieces. However, when he started weighing in on what would go with it, Victor realized he liked the more vintage mid-century modern style. They used grey and wood as their main scheme and soon they had the dining room table, black with wood stained chairs, a mission style bed frame with an armchair and stool for the bedroom, a gray shag rug to soften the living room floor for baby (the bedrooms were already carpeted), geometric accents and soft comfort items. Victor
found an omega store that allowed Yuuri to outfit his nest properly. The bedroom was accented in pinks and purples to go with the nursery. The living room had blues and reds. The kitchen had golds in the way of a brass drink cart and changing out the pendant light over the dining room table. Soon the apartment was in order and they were moving in.

Although they had a nook planned for baby’s bed, Victor placed it at the foot of the bed to Yuuri’s surprise. “Why there?”

“Because you and I know she’s going to be in our bed but...she needs a place nearby for when we become...more intimate.”

Yuuri gave him an amused look. “You can say sex,” he pointed out sardonically.

Victor dramatically covered Shizuka’s ears. “Not in front of the baby!”

Yuuri rolled his eyes as he lifted their daughter out of his arms. “And how do you propose we keep her from seeing us?”

“I thought...a blanket. Sort of like a fort.”

Laying Shizuka on the bed to stretch and wriggle, Yuuri chuckled but as he ran his fingers over the edge of the bed, he knew it was an appropriate transition for them. “I can live with this. Much better than before.”

“Aren’t you...happy?” Victor chewed his lip uncertainly, a habit he picked up from Yuuri.

Yuuri nodded, his eyes resting on the small alcove that was originally designated for the crib. “Maybe...we can put the rocker and her toys in the nook. A place to read to her, rock her, and let her play freely.”

Victor brightened. “I think that’s an excellent plan.”

Mama settled baby into the crib before turning to Victor, wrapping his arms around him. “Thank you. I really want us to be here...I just didn’t know how it would unsettle me.”
“It’s understandable. You just had a baby. Do you feel...safe?”

Yuuri considered the question before nodding. “Georgi, Dmitry, and Ivan all live here and run to and from the rink when the weather permits without a problem. We have built in walking mates. And...it’s not like I’ll be there late at night without you and the baby. So we’ll probably...take a cab?”

“Not for long. I’ve ordered up a Subaru Crosstrek.” Victor stated. “Since you insisted on helping with the household goods, I put the extra towards a car.”

“Are you sure that’s not too much?” Yuuri argued.

“Before you protest, it’s midrange in price and handles snow and ice well. It makes me feel like you are safer and that’s important.”

Yuuri sighed but nodded in acceptance. “Fine. I’ll quit fussing.”

Victor smiled at his mate’s agreement. Sometimes you have to appreciate the small wins.

Chapter End Notes

Who wants to see scenes with Hashimoto in the between chapters? I’ve actually plotted them out and it was more substantial than I thought it would be. I have one chapter per week...4 mos/16 weeks.

And this is what I meant by "don't get too comfortable”...but it was a twisted kind of fun to watch you all squirm. My apologies for my dark sense of humor. I hope you enjoy these changes. In the end, the cottage just didn't suit our couple. I almost rewrote it but then I decided to let it ride and have them struggle through the choice. At least they didn't have deposits to lose!
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Sometimes when we are most at ease, things start to unlock inside...

Chapter Notes

I have another chapter for you...10 glorious pages in type. I hope you enjoy it!

Victor spent the evening putting the kitchen in order and making dinner, leaving his mate to the bedroom. Clothes were tucked away into drawers or hung in the closet. The bedding was pulled askew in preparation for the nest, and the nesting materials were put through the wash, removing any lingering scents from the store. Shizuka played happily in her corner, two poodles checking on her regularly and often lying protectively just out of reach of little hands that would pull at fur. Yuuri cast a warm smile in their direction.

The beep from the dryer pulled his attention and he scooped up the baby, walking into the kitchen. A highchair sat at the table and Yuuri settled the baby into its confines before pulling out the laundry to tend to his nest. When he returned, he smiled at his mate sitting before her playing peek-a-boo and making her giggle. He knew his heart couldn’t feel more full than at this moment.

In the bedroom, he began building the walls to his nest, first laying out the cushions, then snaking the long fabric around it that held it all together. Once the foundation was built, he began searching the room for the finishing touches, things that held the scents of their family, things that Yuuri needed to keep close. The blanket they wrapped Shizuka in the day she was born, a handmade scarf from his mother quilted together in shades of blue silk, a ribbon his sister had bought him at a festival embroidered with poodles, a handkerchief that Vicchan sometimes wore as a puppy, a leather bracelet his father gave him when he was small but he’d since outgrown, the red cashmere scarf Victor had wrapped him in that night in Sochi, the rabbit Victor sent to him as a child freshly scented by his mate...

Studying the nest, he knew it was coming together but it was missing something. Going into the closet, he frowned as he studied the clothes hung up with care. He stroked his hand down the red and white sleeve of Victor’s Olympic jacket.
A hand snaked around his waist from behind and Yuuri gasped and all of the sudden everything fell away and Yuuri was in a darkened room. It was impossible to breathe. Dark hair fell over his shoulder and Yuuri looked back to catch a glimpse of blue eyes. Yuuri whined in fear, begging, bargaining. “Please let me go.”

“Yuuri!” The softly accented cut through the nightmare, but the memory held him. The name came to him from the distance. The voice familiar but different, not belonging to this time. The room struggled to change from a horribly dark empty room of his memories to the light-filled bedroom of the present.

The voice pulled to him, asking, not demanding. “Breathe with me Yuuri.”

Yuuri struggled to do what the voice suggested, the warehouse all too real, the smell of mold and mildew choking him as he drew in breath. The hard surfaces he was pushed down on, all too present, hands pressing him against a flat surface.

“In.”

*Oh, I’m supposed to breathe. Will breathing get me out of this nightmare?*

“Out.”

Exhaling, the world around him dimmed for a moment.

“In.”

He breathed in and light found its way to the edge of his vision.

“Come back to me, Yuuri.”

Slowly the scents of his nightmare faded until they were only small traces like burnt toast in a large house. Other aromas, welcoming, warming reached out to him. He could smell...a familiar scent, a comforting scent.
“Come back to your Vitya.”

The room flooded back into focus. The clothing hanging in front of him, the woodwork of the closet door, the warmth of the room, the wide bed with a nest in the process of being completed, all came rushing at him. The present washed away the last traces of the past’s hold on him for that moment.

Oh...I’m not...there. Yuuri’s breathing slowed and his eyes came back into focus. Where am I? Looking up, he could see the clothes hanging above him. Turning his eyes forward, he could see worried blue eyes...so different from the other man’s. Yuuri’s eyes widened in realization. “I saw him...that night!”

Victor frowned, reaching for him, pulling Yuuri out of the corner of the closet into his arms. Yuuri pulled at his shirt needing to be closer to his scent. “You’re safe now, my Yuuri. He can’t get to you.”

Yuuri breathed in his scent. The recovered memory had him shaken. He rested his head on Victor’s shoulder. “I thought...he always kept me turned away from him...” he gasped. “But I...looked back. At least once, I must have. I saw him. Blue eyes. Hair...dark...long...wavy. Like it came out of a ponytail. My age. There were things in the room. Not many, things he had discarded when he... Expensive things. Like a cashmere sweater. Designer jeans. He was wealthy. His voice...he saw me as nothing but he sounded...well educated.”

Victor listened as Yuuri ticked off the details, careful to wait until Yuuri had completed his thoughts before he spoke. “Like he’d been to private schools?”

Yuuri nodded. “Exactly.”

Victor settled Yuuri into his arms. He’d suspected as he learned more about that series of days and the haste the university showed in shuffling Yuuri out of the country that wealth and privilege were involved. Someone had paid, handsomely, to shut the university up. Running his hands through his mate’s hair, he made soothing sounds but felt troubled inside. “I know this is hard, but I want you to repeat what you said while I record it. Then we’ll have something to turn over to the lawyers. Okay?”

Yuuri nodded, his eyes wide as he went to stand up. Victor reached out and held his hand, studying him with pensive eyes. “Yuuri...I’m sorry I startled you. I should have said something
Yuuri drew a shaky breath and released it slowly. “It’ll be okay. Let’s just...get this over with.”

As had happened many times before, Yuuri astounded him with his bravery and strength, recounting the memory into the voice note, this time with even greater detail. Victor then made an appointment to see Dr. Abramovich. Yuuri would need the support through this recovered memory. Finally, he sent word to Yakov that they’d be late to practice.

“Do you think you can eat?” he asked gently.

Yuuri was curled up in his nest, Shizuka playing next to him. He was pale, eyes unseeing although he kept a hand on their daughter almost like an anchor. Finally, turning large brown eyes his direction, he nodded and sighed. “I need to. I’m not sure how much.”

He watched Yuuri pick at his plate but slowly begin to eat. Victor took care of Shizuka and himself, keeping a watchful eye on his mate. Reaching for the damp cloth, he wiped down their daughter and carried her into the living room where she played on the rug blowing bubbles at the dogs. He then came to his mate.

“Yuuri...”

The younger man blinked and then looked at him, his eyes refocusing. “How is this going to change things? I can’t...un-remember. Does that put us in greater danger?”

“I...don’t know.”

Yuuri looked up, facing Victor, voicing the fear both of them held. “He has money. What if he tries to take her from us?”

Yuuri speaking his own silent fears aloud now solidified Victor’s resolve. “We’ll talk to the lawyers. It’s their job to handle it. No one is going to take her from us.”

Yuuri stared at him in surprise. Then he moved into Victor’s arms, the alpha’s solid strength
supporting the omega when his own failed him. He took a deep breath then released the sob gnawing at his chest.

“I’ve got you,” murmured Victor, pressing kisses into his hair. “I’ve got you.”

Later that night, Yuuri sat in the middle of the nest. Victor came to him with the Olympic jacket. “I think you were wanting this,” he murmured. He draped it around Yuuri’s form and smiled at the beautiful omega. “May I take a picture of you...like this. Just for me.”

Yuuri reached up and pulled the jacket tighter around his shoulders and nodded. Yuuri, always the picture of strength and vulnerability, captivated Victor. How the omega balanced the two so well astounded the alpha. How did I become so blessed? A soft cooing from the crib drew his gaze and softened his smile further. Doubly blessed.

As he returned to his mate’s side, Yuuri reached up and cupped his cheek, seeking his kisses and as Victor’s hands slid down to Yuuri’s hips, he found his lap full of his omega. Pulling back, he murmured, “The baby.”

“She’s asleep,” Yuuri whispered.

“I...heard her,” he argued.

Yuuri sighed, climbing off of him and they crawled across the bed to look into the crib, their view blocked by a blanket draped over the side. Although small coos and sighs escaped her lips, she was indeed asleep. Yuuri’s expression was soft as he studied the sleeping form. “Mom said I would talk in my sleep and later, sing.”

“You still do,” Victor responded softly and was charmed by the bashful blush in Yuuri’s reaction. Satisfied that he wouldn’t scar his daughter for life, he crawled back up the bed leading Yuuri into his lap once more. “So...what do you need?”

Yuuri leaned in to kiss him, allowing his tongue to dip into his mouth and tease along the Russian’s white teeth. Pulling back, he murmured, “I need...to feel like I’m yours...to know I’m claimed. I want...you to wipe away the vestiges of those memories...if only for a little while.”
Victor nodded even as he leaned in to claim Yuuri’s lips once more, removing his lover’s shirt as he turned him to lie into the pillows and mattress. Yuuri laid in nothing more than his underwear cradled in the red and white of Victor’s jacket. Victor cleared his throat as he reached for his phone once more. “Just for me…” he murmured before he took the picture, Yuuri’s skin blushing, his knee sliding over the other leg, his hands toying with his hair, glasses off and brown eyes watching him. *Like I’d share this with anyone.*

Setting his phone aside, he leaned in and began to run kisses along Yuuri’s neck, the omega turning his head to give Victor better access, fingers sliding beneath his own shirt, pushing it up, hands exploring until Yuuri pushed it over his head and tucked it with expert ease into the nest with a smirk.

“How long are you keeping that?” Victor asked, noting several other items of laundry wound into the twists and turns of the fabric lining the walls of the nest.

“Until the nest is saturated with our scent,” Yuuri promised. “When I’m...calmer.”

Victor smiled indulgently. “So it’s...sort of a cheat.”

Yuuri nodded. “It pulls our scent in sooner...then I’ll pull it apart and rebuild it with just the nesting kits and treasures.” Looking around, he shrugged. “I need it to smell like us.”

“Then...let’s work on that,” Victor responded with a wicked gleam in his eyes but an edge of concern watched from behind making sure Yuuri was truly in this. Then his omega pulled him down, his wrists running down Victor’s naked back. Yuuri’s kisses were demanding, and Victor soon found himself drowning. Thumbs slipped along the waistband of his pants and soon Yuuri was pushing them down his hips. Victor pulled back to free himself of the pajamas and underwear, taking Yuuri’s along with him.

Naked, they stretched out next to each other, fingers exploring, wrists sliding over the other scenting the other. And then Yuuri’s teeth scraped against the gland on his neck causing the alpha to groan with need. “Make me yours, Vitya…”

“I thought you wanted to wait,” he whispered in reply.

Yuuri nodded in agreement. “I did...but now...I’m scared,” he whispered. “I don’t want him to...”
Victor pulled back and studied the figure beneath him. “As much as I want to give you what you ask for, I don’t think you’re in the right state to make that decision.”

Yuuri whined in frustration, reaching up to him, pleading with his touch, with his eyes, with his words, “Please, Vitya...I already belong to you.”

Victor sighed heavily, taking both of those hands in his, kissing his fingers. “I will make love to you. I will even make you feel claimed. But I won’t bond with you until you feel settled and are sure of your decision.” He watched the omega’s pout, knowing how stubborn Yuuri could be even in his most emotional decisions. But he held firm.

And Yuuri surprised him. Drawing a deep breath, he nodded. “I...I feel...vulnerable,” he whispered. “I should feel safer knowing what he looks like...but now I feel like he’ll come after me.”

“I get that, Yuuri...but this just happened.” Victor stopped and realized something important. “You just remembered...just now. He doesn’t know that you know. As far as he’s concerned you left, returned to Japan and he hasn’t heard about you since. There’s no reason to worry about a fight until you are ready to take it to court.”

Yuuri took a deep breath and turned those words over on his tongue. “He doesn’t know that I know.”

“We’ll talk to the lawyers. You’ll talk to Dr. Abramovich. Then we’ll make the appropriate plan of attack with the guidance of our team. Until then, remember he doesn’t know that you know.” He watched Yuuri’s eye sharpen with the understanding, felt his biceps tighten around him, pulling Victor’s body into Yuuri’s embrace. Victor smiled, too often people forgot that Yuuri was the stronger of the two men. “How do you feel about that bond now?”

A soft whine came from Yuuri’s lips but he shook it away. “Part of me would be more settled but I know that is only temporary. I think...you’re right. I should wait. But...how can I feel more yours?”

Victor ran his hand through his hair as he considered their options. “How do you feel about...fluids...”
“What do you mean?” Yuuri asked, a frown furrowing his brow.

“I mean...when we scent each other with our wrists, it lasts until the next shower or two. Then it washes away. If we...our cum, it...” He faded off, thoroughly red himself as he fought for the words. “Well...it lasts. For a few weeks at times.”

Yuuri frowned at the thought before he asked, “Can we...wash it off?”

Victor blinked. “The scent?”

Yuuri shook his head. “No...the cum. I don’t want to…”

A soft laughter, held in to keep from waking the baby escaped from Victor. “Oh, no no...no. We wash up...but the scent holds...because it’s directly applied...well...to our scent glands.”

Yuuri mulled it over before finally saying, “Show me.”

Victor chuckled. “Maybe...on the other end of making love. I just...I wanted to see where you stood on the matter.”

Yuuri shrugged. “I may hate it...but I don’t know?”

Victor nodded even as he pulled Yuuri back into his arms, nuzzling their noses together before leaning in for a kiss. It stayed on the surface at first but then Yuuri licked into his lips and Victor opened to him allowing the omega to take control. He knew Yuuri, knew that control settled him. Rolling onto his back, he felt Yuuri straddle over him, his hands reaching down for Victor’s length, the smaller hands creating a different contact than his own. Victor could enclose his mate’s entire length with his long fingers but Yuuri would tease him with both hands, soft skin sliding along his length and when Yuuri used his own slick to lubricate his touch, Victor felt a growl vibrate through him. Yuuri reached for his hand pulling it down to enclose them both, his hand covering their shafts in tandem, Yuuri’s hips rolling into the touch. Victor found his timing with his partner, his eyes searching for those cinnamon brown eyes blown with desire for him. *Shit, Yuuri…* And then he felt himself tumbling over the edge releasing across his own stomach and chest.
Yuuri’s eyes rested on the mess in front of him unsure, chewing his lip. Victor’s occupied hand remained still between them for a moment. With his free hand, he ran his wrist along the fluid and then along Yuuri’s scent gland. He didn’t know what to expect but for Yuuri to tighten up and then release into his other hand, his eyes fluttering in orgasm almost like a biochemical response...that took him by surprise.

As Yuuri came to, became more aware, he repeated the process to Victor and the older man gasped as he felt the contact, felt the chemicals combine as his body received Yuuri’s pheromones, Yuuri’s scent and he felt...more connected than ever to his mate. As Yuuri pulled back, sitting on his lap, still straddle Victor’s legs, he studied Victor, eyes large and searching Victor’s face.

“I...didn’t know what to expect,” Victor murmured. “I...never did that with anyone.”

“I didn’t expect that you would...you said you never scented anyone...before me.”

Victor shook his head. “It always felt too...intimate. But with you, it feels natural.” He studied Yuuri for a moment trying to get a read on the omega before asking, “Are you okay?”

Yuuri nodded slowly. “It’s just...so much. Is that...a taste of what it will be like when we bond?”

Victor shrugged as much as his sated body allowed him, “Maybe...I haven’t…”

Yuuri shivered...his thoughts slipping back to his one experience. “I felt...all of him. So much...disdain. I was an object...to be used as he wanted. He...wanted to control me. I think...he didn’t plan to abandon me but realized I was too well known to hold onto. I fought him...continued to fight him...until it was over.”

Victor studied Yuuri before sitting up and pulling him into his arms. “You’re remembering more and more.”

Yuuri nodded even as he nuzzled into Victor. “But...I’m yours.”
Yuuri sat in Dr. Abramovich’s office, the words tumbling out in great detail of the memory. “So...the EMDR didn’t work...” Yuuri tugged at his hair in frustration just wanting all of it behind him, wanting to move forward.

“It did work,” the therapist assured him. “This is not a set back. Think of this as a rollercoaster. You will have times when information comes too fast, and too harsh. It’s how to use those uphill slow moments to prepare for those other moments that proves this is working. But sometimes we find bigger triggers. And...perhaps as you felt safer, your mind was able to release greater information to you.”

“I do feel safe with Vitya...although I’m afraid now...in a different way.” Arms wrapped around himself, hugging himself, blinking rapidly to hold back the tears and feeling the panic on the edge of his thoughts. “It’s silly...but maybe now that I know him, he might come after me, come after her.”

“Legal matters are frightening no matter how well we prepare for them,” Dr. Abramovich reassured him. “Go over the matter with your attorneys and we’ll handle the trauma here. I will make sure you can testify in court...and before the omega council. I’m on your side.”

Yuuri drew himself up and offered a small smile. “Thank you. I think...I’ve been gathering allies as I move forward.”

The doctor smiled at his patient. “What you may not realize is that your allies are gathering more allies. This will roll in like a storm. You can do this.” He leaned his large frame back in the ancient chair, crossing his legs. “Now, let’s go over this trigger. You said your mate touched you from behind without warning...”

The attorney Bogdan Lievich that worked directly with Yuuri listened to the recorded statement and then asked Yuuri a number of questions testing the consistency of his story. “I have a suggestion, something to think about. And we will only do this if needed. But we know the DNA evidence gathered from your rape and kidnapping did not hold to a chain of custody test. However, locked up inside your daughter is proof of the father. There is photographic evidence taken at the scene. I don’t think this case is dead and if we approach the Detroit PD, I think they will reopen it.”

“He’s got money. Or at least, I’m pretty sure he does,” Yuuri argued. “What if he uses that? What if he tries to take her away?”
Lievich laughed, his warmth putting Yuuri more at ease, and pointed out something Yuuri hadn’t realized. “Many defendants have money on their side, but so do you...and more importantly you have the press on your side and an arsenal of fans. Your support is overwhelming. But the end of the matter is settled that you have the hard cold facts on your side.”

Yuuri considered the attorney’s words and looked over at his mate who smiled encouragingly. “We...have money?”

Victor shrugged. “I don’t know our current net worth but yes. We do have money. And sponsors clamoring to support us through this. Two human rights groups want you to be the face of their causes...one specific to omegas.”

Yuuri pulled back a little, “But that means...I have to open up.”

Victor nodded. “You will have to let go of some of your privacy.”

He chewed his lip, this decision wasn’t his entirely. “And...Shizuka?”

Victor saw the horror in the brown eyes as they searched his, “We’ll protect her from it as much as possible but...she’ll know what happened to you as she grows up. That’s...already out there.”

Turning to the lawyer, he frowned. “I don’t know if it’s wise to put out there that I know what he looks like.”

“I agree...but we can still use this information,” Lievich acquiesced. “We have the advantage. Knowledge is advantage.”

Taking a deep breath, Yuuri nodded. “Then...let’s fight.”

The ice held all of Yuuri’s emotions as he skated through his program. Yuri on Ice was about his
fall, how he felt alone, how he thought he was fighting alone. Then the realization that he didn’t have to face the world alone. He had friends, family, Vitya, and his daughter. He had purpose. He would win this battle and the next and the one after this. And he would use every weapon in his arsenal even if he had to bare his soul to the press.
The jogging stroller was just what Yuuri wanted, the large wheels made it stable for running. With the weather finally cooperating enough for a man from southern Japan to tolerate it, Yuuri and Victor packed up for the day. Tucking Shizuka into the seat, Yuuri settled her hot water bottle bunny next to her and then tucked the blanket around her. She snuggled into the furry plush of the pink bunny and cooed up to her mama. Now that they had a fair store of supplies at the rink, they could get by with their backpacks for the day. Taking off, they headed to the elevator and waited for the trip down meeting their rinkmates inside.

“Great timing, Vitya!” Ivan called out watching as Dmitry knelt down to tease Shizuka, the baby gurgling in response.

“I thought we could run together since the sidewalks are clear,” Yuuri murmured, his expression soft as his new friend teased his daughter.

The elevator door opened and Georgi joined them, his face blotchy from a fresh cry. He’d been by the previous evening to cry out his frustration about Anya. Victor’s jaw tightened as he listened to his friend’s explanation. After he left, he muttered, “She’s just stringing him along.”

Yuuri didn’t know anyone well enough to weigh in but it was clear Georgi was hurting. This morning showed further evidence. However, no one commented on it.

As they ran, each jogger took turns with the baby talking about how well the stroller rode. As Yuuri’s turn came back around, he knelt down to make sure she was still tucked in and warm while
the others jogged in place. Satisfied, he stepped behind the stroller and nodded for them to continue. Three miles they continued like this until they arrived, Yuuri lifting Shizuka out of the stroller as they came inside. With the change in routine, their arrival time meant feeding time and he slipped away from the crowd to tend to his daughter.

When he returned, he found the hot water bottle bunny refreshed and when he went to thank his mate, Victor nodded towards Georgi. “Oh, thank you.”

The dramatic Russian (which felt weird thinking as much being mated to Vitya...but still, it was possible that Georgi was even more so) blushed at Yuuri’s response and murmured a “you’re welcome” before disappearing.

“You’re going to make them all fall for you,” Victor teased.

Yuuri’s eyes widened as his hands fluttered in protest. “I’m just me! I smell like you...shouldn’t that put them off?” Yuuri replied. He hated garnering unwanted attention...even if he counted the person as a friend.

Victor shrugged, a knowing smile on his lips, and let his eyes drift around the room. “I don’t mean that way, Yuuri. They all see you are beautiful, but the love they have for you, the love that will grow, is one of family. Georgi is the first to feel it. He’ll look after you and he’s an honorable man. I think he’s just real emotional. And he does seem to adore our solnyshko.”

Yuuri smiled and nodded in response. He couldn’t argue with that. Holding Shizuka cheered him as nothing else did last night. He finally agreed to go down and rest himself, Yuuri taking the baby and explaining it was time for her to go down for the night. She was becoming fussy and Yuuri disappeared into their bedroom to feed her while Victor saw their friend off. He heard Victor on his phone, likely talking to Ivan and Dmitry. They were next on Georgi duty. Yuuri smiled as he looked down at his daughter suckling, rocking in his chair. Soon his mate joined him, a tired smile on his lips. “About ready to sleep?”

The next morning didn’t seem to provide a cheerier perspective for Georgi. As the day progressed, he continued to dissolve into tears, often found near Yuuri and the baby. “Maybe once I have a family, things will settle down…”
“I don’t think that’s how it works, Georgi,” the Japanese omega murmured softly.

“Is it wrong to want love, to want a family?” he plied.

Yuuri shook his head. “Not wrong…but you can’t force those wants on another.” He’d caught Anya’s gaze more than once as they sat waiting their turn on the ice.

Mila plopped down next to the ice dancer and nodded his way. “Georgi looks good with a baby.”

She sniffed and shrugged. “Maybe so…but that’s…not for me.”

Mila’s blue eyes widened and turned back towards Yuuri. “Oh, you don’t want a family.”

Anya snorted and shook her head. “No…people stop looking at you once you have a kid. It’s all about the kid.”

Mila couldn’t help but disagree. Yuuri garnered a lot of looks. He was beautiful and kind. As she watched Yuuri handling Georgi with patience, she couldn’t help but think she wouldn’t mind having Yuuri as family.

Victor looked over the contracts presented by his manager. “This is a lot of travel, Daniil.”

“Initially. There are a number of sponsors wanting to show that you are still with them. And that they are still with you. It’s a good financial sum. And, as always, the Grand Prix is slotted by lottery, that’s out of our control.”

Victor sighed as he flipped through the papers. He hated the idea of being away from Yuuri. He’d been back to see Abramovich twice a week since the memories flooded back. They visit with their
attorneys at least once a week. It was expensive and although Victor was well off, he knew all of this had a cost. The attorneys were gearing up for the suit against the university, they had hired local private investigators to look for other victims. He knew what they would receive from the fight would barely cover attorney fees if that...but Yuuri needed this. He thought of all the brave girls standing up to United States’ Gymnastics. They knew it was about fighting a monster, and worse, an organization that let him...helped him, hurt them.

“I’ll need to make some arrangements. Can you book this initial run in one trip? I’d like to spend as little time away from my mate as possible.”

“I’ll see to it. And...you’ll just be in Moscow. You could travel as a family.” He thinned his lips as he considered what laid before them on the table. “Some...would prefer that. Photos of the skate family. Insight into your lives.”

Victor shook his head. “Yuuri prefers to travel as little as possible until she reaches a year. And...I’m not sure how much Yuuri wants the press in our lives. It’s one thing to talk with me, but I want to respect his privacy.”

“Very well, I’ll make some calls and get this arranged.”

Victor studied the blond as he worked through the program. Agape suited him even if the hissing kitten fought against it. Victor knew the big heart that beat in that tiny chest. As the teen came to the barrier, Victor handed him his water bottle.

“What’s up, Old Man?” he asked suspiciously after taking a long drink.

“A favor,” he said quietly.

The boy narrowed his green eyes before shrugging. “What do you need?”

“I’ve got to be out of town for a few days. Moscow. Business with sponsors and a few interviews. I was hoping you would stay with Yuuri.”
Handing back the water bottle, blond assessed him thoughtfully. “Does Katsudon know?”

Victor shook his head. “Not yet. I want to tell him that you’re going to stay with him...to help him out with the baby.”

Yuri frowned and tilted his head before stating, “But you want me to stay with Katsudon and keep an eye on him.”

Victor nodded. “He’s been having nightmares and I’d just feel better if someone I trusted was there...looking after him...making sure he eats.”

“He’s not eating?” Those blond eyebrows furrowed.

Victor shook his head, raising his hands to calm the young teen’s nerves. “It’s not total avoidance, at least, not to that point. When he feels stressed, he doesn’t eat as he should. He’s...remembered some things. It has him shaken up.”

Yura hissed and frowned. Victor could tell he didn’t approve. “Then why are you going?”

Victor tried to control the strain he felt from showing in his voice, but he could hear it easily. “Attorneys cost money. I have a large net worth but most of that isn’t liquid. Yuuri as well.”

“I see…” He thinned his lips then nodded sharply. “Fine. I’ll keep Katsudon company. When do you need me?”

“In a couple of days.” Victor felt some of his worry slid from his shoulders. “I don’t have the itinerary just yet.”

“Let me know when you have the details.”

Over dinner, Victor broke the news to Yuuri who studied him thoughtfully. “I have Dmitry and
Ivan upstairs and Georgi downstairs.”

“I’d feel better if Yura was here with you.” He tried to keep his voice light. “He can help with the baby.”

“I can take care of myself,” Yuuri argued, seeing right through him.

“I know, love,” then changing the tactic he started again, “but I think Yura would benefit from this as well. He adores Shizuka and dorm life...well, it’s lonely.”

Yuuri sniffed, his eyes resting on his mate suspiciously. “You’re a lousy liar, you know.”

Victor blushed. “It was only...half a lie,” he confessed. “With your nightmares...”

Yuuri shook his head. “He can’t do anything about the nightmares...but if it will make you feel better, he can stay and keep me company. How long?”

“Close to a week.” It seemed longer now that he said it out loud.

Yuuri frowned and sighed heavily. “We...haven’t been apart since you came to me. Not really.”

“I know...it’s hard for me as well.” Victor wanted to reach out to him, cancel the plans right away, but he knew that Yuuri was just as aware of their need for this as he was. “Can we do this?”

Yuuri nodded straightening up. “It’s the business. We have to have sponsors.”

Victor refused to let Yuuri see him off at the airport, taking a cab instead. He knew watching that pathetic figure would break his resolve. He left while Yuuri was at practice saying his goodbyes in the morning.
In Moscow, he texted his mate from the hotel.

Victor/ I’m here!

My Yuuri/ How was the flight?

Victor/ Uneventful. How is Yura settling in?

My Yuuri/ Cranky. He took over the kitchen and I’m sitting at the table watching him cook while Shizuka plays in the floor.

Victor/ He doesn’t get to cook at the dorms. He’s going to take full advantage.

My Yuuri/ He said I’m about to get used to good Russian food.

Victor smirked at the message glowing from his phone.

Victor/ I make you good Russian food all the time.

My Yuuri/ Not according to Yura.

Miles away in a bland hotel room Victor Nikiforov threw himself backwards onto the bed in mock distress.

Victor/ Brat!

My Yuuri/ ;)

The next few days were a blur of negotiations, photoshoots, and interviews. One of the magazines asked him to do an insight into his new life with his mate.
“I’ll need to run that by both my Yuuri and our attorneys,” Victor answered thoughtfully.

The journalist, an American woman Victor knew from previous interviews sat forward in her chair. “We’ll come to you. Perhaps do a photoshoot at your new home?”

Victor laughed wryly as he thought about the homey space, so different from his previous condo. “Well, it’s not been professionally decorated if that’s what you’re hoping for. It’s just...us.”

He watched as her eyes lit up, evidently she was tired of the show rooms and fake living spaces that most professional athletes kept for magazine covers only, while they actually used those spaces as storage and lived in comfortable, warm rooms that the fans never saw. “That’s what we’re hoping for. The look at the real Victor Nikiforov. We’ve…” she blushed, “the fans, even the journalists have noticed the changes in you since you’ve chosen your mate and it’s more...genuine. The public likes what it sees and trust me, we want to see more.”

*I’ve fooled no one over the years,* he thought even as he found his smile. “Yuuri has brought such life, such love into my world. I didn’t realize the lack of substance until I held him.”

She smiled back at him, her expression holding no artifice. “Let us show that to the world. Talk to your mate but this is what we want to explore.” She played with the words in her head for a moment, the smiled directly at him, moving her hands as if revealing a title for a documentary, “The Life and Love of Victor Nikiforov.”

As Victor looked over his itinerary in his hotel, he knew he had a few more days before he could rejoin his mate. Pulling out his phone, he frowned realizing it was still on silent from the interview. A flood of messages greeted him.

*My Yuuri/ Shizuka isn’t feeling well.*

*My Yuuri/ I called mom, she said it could be teething.*

*My Yuuri/ She’s sneezing and sniffling. I don’t think it’s teething.*
Angry Kitten/ Katusdon is freaking out. The kid has a little cold. We’re going to the doctor in the morning.

He dialed his mate and the phone was answered immediately. “My Yuuri, how is Flip doing?”

He heard Yuuri huff at the nickname. “I gave her the medicine Dr. Ito recommended over the phone. He said it is probably just a cold. Change in environment might be pulling my immunity down and affecting hers.”

Victor smiled. *Of course Yuuri called the doctor back home in Japan.* They had a pediatrician in Russia but Yuuri liked the Itos much better, planning to fly back for his own wellness check before his next heat. However, Flip needed to see someone more often and the team physician found them a qualified professional near the rink.

Victor spoke slowly into the phone, “Go to Dr. Romanova in the morning to get her checked out and to give you some peace of mind.”

“I will...that’s what I was planning.” Yuuri’s voice sounded a little unsure. “Yura wanted to go with me.”

Victor chuckled. The blond teen took his job seriously. “It will be okay. Babies get colds all the time.”

Yuuri drew in a shaky breath and offered a weak, “I know.”

“Now, don’t neglect your own rest. You don’t need to get sick as well.”

“Okay…”

Victor’s heart broke with how little that *okay* sounded. Not dozens of miles away, but millions. He reached out across the distance, “I love you, my Yuuri.”

“I love you, too.” Yuuri answered back right away, the voice stronger, fuller.
As the call disconnected, Victor laid back and frowned at the ceiling. Of course his little angel would get sick while he was away. He texted Chris.

Chris/ Gabriel has had three or four colds this winter. Lawrie handled the last ones like a pro but the first one, he drove the pediatrician and his mother nuts.

Victor/ But I’m in Moscow.

Chris/ Shizuka would be sick whether you’re in Moscow or St. Petes. Just take care of business so you can get home sooner. Maybe you can move up your flight a little.

Victor considered his friend’s words and looked back over his itinerary. Seeing some gaps in time, he sent an email to his manager to see if they can get those closed up and help him to get home sooner.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Shizuko fights her cold with Yuuri's love and how others love Yuuri in return.

Chapter Notes

So this chapter was originally two or three chapters before this but I realized it needed more in between. So I wrote backwards to where I met the rest. I hope you enjoy this bit of love and kindness.

And don't forget to be kind to yourself along the way. So many times we get busy taking care of others and forget to take care of ourselves.

All of the thanks and appreciation to BluSkates for her lovely edits for this chapter. I do have a soft spot for this chapter. I don't know why in particular, but it is one of my favorites.

Yuuri held Shizuko in his arms as he rocked in the familiar chair, the chair where his mother held him when he cried, comforting him and drying his tears. Victor was away for a publicity run, press conferences and ads, and Yura stayed in the guest room in case Yuuri needed help. For now, the youth was at the rink. Yuuri stayed home with his daughter, her body warm with fever, her nose running, forcing her to breath through her mouth now chapped from the ordeal. He’d called his mother no less than five times and now had a humidifier releasing Vicks vapor into the room. His own nose stung even as he sniffed back.

A small sneeze broke the silence and Makka came over to sniff and make sure they were both okay. Vicchan lifted his paw to Yuuri’s knee and looked on with concern. The blond human pup had taken them out which told them something was off about their younger master.

The phone rang and Yuuri answered. “Vitya?”

Victor’s voice sounded tinny from the distance, “My Yuuri...how is she?”
“She’ll start feeling better then her medicine wears off.” He loathed to sound like the nagging wife, but... “Will you be home soon, Vitya?”

Victor’s voice rang through with good news. “I catch my plane this afternoon. I’ll be home before night. Is Yura helping?”

“Yes...but he’s at practice right now. It’s just me and the dogs.” He looked down at his daughter, struggling through her first cold. “What if I mess up?”

“You’re a wonderful mother, Yuuri. Don’t doubt yourself. It’s just a cold. She’ll be fine.”

“I-I shouldn’t have her at the rink all day. It’s cold…” His voice started to quaver, the illogic of his statement meant nothing in the face of his insecurities.

“Yuuri…” Victor began.

“No, Victor!” His name sounded harsh on Yuuri’s tongue and Victor waited. In his panic and anxiety, he was building up walls against the logic and reason his mate would offer. “This isn’t fair for her. I should...I should retire.”

“Yuuri...if anyone should retire, it should be me,” Victor argued softly.

Yuuri felt the first tear fall, “N-no! Y-you can still win.”

“Yuuri, my time is passing. Others will surpass me. You. Yura. Lord forbid, even JJ, although I’d prefer Georgi or Chris. I need you to keep fighting. I only skate now...for you.”

The crying hadn’t become the torrent of sobs, and had quieted with Victor’s words. “Vitya…”

“My Yuuri...you are the only reason I agreed to this madness. I do everything for you. Haven’t you figured that out yet?”

Yuuri took a deep breath and released it. He felt calmer, looking at Shizuka who had managed to
fall asleep through her cold. Then he keyed in on something Victor said. “Y-you don’t want this?”

“I will always want to skate,” Victor assured his mate gently, ”but you and I both know we have a short shelf life. I’m already nearing my expiration date. We can’t all be Carolina Kostner.” He heard Yuuri chuckle, knowing he had scored some points naming one of his mate’s favorite skaters. “My time is ending. But I will skate...for as long as possible...because it makes you happy.”

Yuuri breathed into the phone for a few moments before he spoke again. Clearer this time. “I think...I need to be more clear-headed.”

Victor sighed in relief down the other end. “I think so as well. Once she is better, I think you’ll see things differently. I’ll be home tonight.”

Victor came in to find Yura in the kitchen wrapping up piroshkis. Victor swore that was the only thing the kid knew how to cook. “I should show you how to make a proper borscht,” the older Russian suggested.

“Blech,” Yura responded with exaggerated gagging motions. Teenagers! But someone does need to take Yura hand and show him how to care for himself. Proper diet, budgeting, how to handle your income, get sponsors... Victor shook his head, one thing at a time.

Victor left the young teen to his own devices. He knew where to find Yuuri. Opening the door to his room, Victor’s eyes found his mate easily. Both were in bed, Yuuri’s body curled protectively around their daughter, his hand sliding over her dark head. Vicchan and Makkachin were keeping watch from their corner of the bed. Shedding his outer clothes, he started to climb into the nest only to receive a hiss from the omega. Startled, he stepped back, eyes wide.

“You have every germ possible! Shower!” Victor staggered back at the command from his omega. He nodded, still at a loss for words and stumbled into the bathroom. The shower was quick but thorough, Victor aching to return to his mate. Dressed in fresh pajamas, he returned to the nest and waited.

The omega studied him a moment before finally patting the bed. It was the night at the beach when Yuuri finally opened up at him all over again. Victor closed his eyes as he allowed the
memory to wash over him. Taking a deep breath, he joined Yuuri in the nest. A welcome hand
fluttered over him and he opened his eyes just in time to receive Yuuri’s arms around him pulling
him into a kiss.

As they parted, Yuuri leaned his head into Victor’s. “I’ve missed you.”

“I hate being apart from you,” Victor replied.

“Me, too.”

“How is she?”

“The fever finally broke. She’s sleeping but not running a temp.”

“I’m sorry I wasn’t here for you both.” Victor answered softly.

Yuuri blushed. “I panicked. I worried I was going to mess up, that she would get worse and I
wouldn’t know what to do. I called Mom at least six times. No, seven. Of course, she said she
didn’t mind.”

Victor smiled at the thought of Hiroko knowing to keep the phone next to her on the wooden table
as she made dinner. Chopping vegetables and comforting Yuuri was probably a skill the woman
had honed her entire life. “I’m sure she didn’t. She probably felt the same way when you and Mari
were sick.”

Yuuri sighed, his eyes resting on the sleeping form. Her breathing cleared, her body relaxed, he
could believe she had never been sick. “About what I said…”

“Yes, Yuuri? Do you want me to retire? Shall we pack up and move back to Hasetsu?” His eyes
were teasing although if Yuuri said the word, the offer would be genuine. He’d drop everything
for his mate.

Yuuri blushed and laughed inwardly. “I think...a third move in as many months might border on
the extreme. Maybe...we should try a bit longer.”
Victor smiled indulgently. “Anything...for you.” Victor’s phone buzzed from a text and he sighed, breaking free long enough to retrieve it from the nightstand. “Yura said if we through sucking face, he has dinner ready...and that you haven’t eaten enough in his opinion.”

“I was a little distracted in my defense,” Yuuri protested.

Still, Victor dragged him out of bed and sorted his hair out by hand. “Let’s eat. Yura slaved in the kitchen, which he probably also destroyed, to feed us!” They entered the living space hand in hand and received an eye roll from their teen guest. “What grand feast have you prepared for us, fair Yura?”

“Fucking asshole,” Yura responded. “You know what I made already. And for your information, I can cook something other than piroshkis. It's just that Katsudon requested them.”

Victor turned to Yuuri who shrugged. “I did...Yura always talks about them and I told him he should make some so I know what he is talking about.”

They sat around the table, the meat buns before them, water in their glasses with an additional glass of milk set for one. “Milk, Yura?” Victor asked.

Yura’s face was an incredulous smirk as he turned to Victor, equally freaked out by the unwelcome liquid at the table. “Ask your mate...he’s practically demanded it every time we turn around.”

Yuuri blushed. “I crave it. Maybe...it’s the breastfeeding?”

Yura gagged in his chair but remained silent.

“Possibly. It can’t be the Vitamin D deficiency. Not yet, anyway,” Victor supplied. “Milk is good. We will all drink milk, da, Yura?”

The blond grumbled but stood up to get two more glasses and the milk from the refrigerator. “I can’t believe I’m drinking milk with my food like in grade school,” he mumbled. Still, he followed suit, meeting Yuuri’s eyes and seeing the pink on his cheeks.
Yuuri took a bite and his eyes widened in surprise. “This is wonderful, Yura!”

It was the teen’s turn to blush. “Da, I know. My grampa taught me.”

“I’ll make katsudon for you after I gather the ingredients,” Yuuri promised. They ate talking about Victor’s trip, the photo shoots he was on and when the ads would launch. Yura bringing up his plans for the Grand Prix, slyly working in his hope that he would see some familiar faces, but careful not to mention one.

When finished Victor washed dishes even though Yuuri argued. “You’ve been traveling.”

“You’ve been taking care of a sick infant. I think I win this time.” Victor then proceeded to take care of the dishes while Yuuri joined Yura on the sofa. He listened as they talked quietly.

“Are you going to stay a few more nights?” Yuuri offered.

The blonde shrugged. “I probably should get back to the dorms. Unless Lilia decides to play mom again.”

Yuuri watched the boy’s face for betrayal of his emotions. With Yura it was never a straight line. “Does she do that...I mean, play mom?”

He grimaced. “I mean, I get it. She couldn’t have any kids. And it’s not weird or anything. But yeah, she plays mom. And she has strict Russian mom down to a tee.”

“Does that bother you?”

Yura shrugged. “I mean, I guess it’s nice she cares. It just makes me miss not having time with my own.” He sat quietly studying his fingers. Now that Victor was back, he felt safe asking his question. “Are you really...going to fight?”

Yuuri sighed, his eyes resting on the TV that played music from Spotify. “I am...but I’m scared.”
The crime happened in Michigan and the laws protect me. He...her, ah…”

“Fucking rapist sperm donor,” Yura supplied.

Yuuri blushed and nodded, sometimes it was a straight line with Yura. “Yeah, that...he can’t file for custody. I have enough evidence for a civil court. But part of me is still scared.”

“Then why are you doing it?”

Yuuri met his eyes and murmured, “I think it’s important for her to know that sometimes the monsters don’t win. We’re public figures, people will learn about what happened to me. She’ll learn about it eventually. Someday she’s going to ask me about him. I want to tell her that although he hurt me, I didn’t let him break me. I want to tell her that Papas, like Victor, protect the Mamas and babies, not hurt them. I want her to know that just because he provided the genetic material, she has a loving Papa...but honestly, I’m afraid of when she starts asking those questions. I think I’m more afraid of her questions than any I’ll face in court.”

The large green eyes narrowed, “How...does it start?”

“We’re suing the university for covering it up and for breaking the chain of evidence rather than turning it over to the court of law. And I’ve reached out via lawyers and investigators in The States. There have been others who were attacked by the same man, possibly. And they’ve found even more. We are making it a class action lawsuit.”

“Any ideas who it is?”

Yuuri shrugged, “Some rich, privileged alpha who thinks the law doesn’t apply to him. So probably someone in one of the more elite fraternities. It would explain the coverup. We have investigators digging up more evidence. But...it’s not just my fight at this point. It belongs to all of us.”

Yura’s lips turned up into the smile that he held for gold medals...and Otabek. “I’m glad...that you’re fighting. I know it hurts but she’ll be glad as well.”

Yuuri smiled softly. “I keep my focus on her...but you helped open my eyes.”
The boy dropped his eyes. “I probably...shouldn’t have said anything.”

Yuuri shook his head. “You have a right to your emotions. They come from an honest place.”

“Victor knows you still have nightmares.”

Yuuri nodded. “He’s more aware than I am at times. But you took good care of me. Tea is what my mother would have done.”

Yura smiled again, this one showed the little boy that still lived in the teen’s body. “My grampa always gave me tea.”

“Thank you, Yura, for looking out for me. It’s a lot, I know...I can be a bit of a basket case when I’m stressed.”

“I...understand that better. I used to think...that was weakness. But it’s not. Some of us...carry a bigger weight. I guess if the rest of us don’t help, it’s no wonder you falter. So...maybe I can help you carry the load when you need it.”

Yuuri reached over and squeezed his hand. “I’d like that.”
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Shizuka wakes up and with her fever gone, she melts hearts.

Chapter Notes

If I was to pick one word to describe this chapter, it would be family. Enjoy...we're gearing up in the background for a trip to America.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Victor rolled over in bed, movement pulling him from his sleep. Blue eyes met his, a tiny mouth breaking into a smile as she bounced up and down in her diaper repeating “pa papa pa pa pa” and then reaching for him. Yuuri slept but his state of dress told Victor he had woken earlier for a feeding.

“Good morning, moya zaichik, did you sleep well?” She answered by crawling into his arms, his wrist automatically sliding down her back, scenting her to himself. She buried her nose into his neck and snuggled and Victor smiled softly thinking how Yuuri did the same. Always. From the beginning. As if he knew he already belonged with Victor. Shizuka was the same. His. She took to him from the first words he murmured to her, knowing his voice from the stories read to her in the womb, soft lullabies sung while he held onto her mother.

Yuuri’s eyes opened slightly, and Victor could see the exhaustion in his partner. “If you loved me, you’d change her diaper,” he muttered, an arm stretching up to cover his eyes from the slivers of light coming through the break in the curtains. It was early, still dark, but the street light sometimes disturbed Yuuri’s sleep and they kept heavy drapes closed at night.

Victor chuckled warmly holding his daughter close as he rolled to sit on the edge of the bed before rising to tend to her needs. She wasn’t fussing so he knew the diaper was keeping the moisture from her skin but he could smell the offending odor and knew Yuuri’s nose was more sensitive than his own.

Laying her on the changing table, he teased her with the wipe, murmuring “boo” as she giggled and reached up to him, attempting to roll over and crawl away once free of her diaper. Victor laughed
as he turned her back over and deftly fastened the tabs. He remembered those early days when he thought he’d secured her diaper perfectly, only to pick her up and it fall right off of her. Yuuri would roll his eyes, taking her from him to redo the work.

Settling her back in bed next to her mother, he smiled down at Yuuri whose brown eyes were open and slowly taking in the world. Shizuka flipped over, tugging at the blanket seeking Yuuri’s nipple. Victor’s eyes took in their interaction, watching Yuuri’s sure but tired touches as he settled her into him. “How are you this morning?”

“How are you this morning?” Yuuri murmured. “It’s hard to be apart from you.”

Victor slid into the bed next to them, “I feel the same. Like a piece of me is missing.”

Yuuri nodded letting those words settle between them. Supporting his daughter and turning on his side, he stretched, his back arching beautifully. Victor’s fingers drifted down Yuuri’s arm, feather-light touches dancing across the surface. Yuuri sighed, his eyes blinking away the vestiges of sleep. They both had practice to attend and Yuuri felt the aches of the last few days of being holed up at home with his daughter, in his nest. Although a comfort, Yuuri needed to move.

“We should get ready for the day,” Yuuri suggested as she came off his nipple. Soon they were all in the shower handing the baby back and forth, her gurgles as Mama held her and Papa applied her gentle soaps. Out of the shower, wrapped in towels, Victor focused on applying lotion to their daughter’s skin while Yuuri set out her clothes, building layers where they could adjust to the temperature changes with ease. Victor laid her on the bed next to Yuuri’s pile and his eyes widened. Next to the pile of clothes laid a pair of booties crocheted into the shape of a pair of figure skates.

“Yuuri, are those skate booties?”

Yuuri blushed and nodded. “They were sent in some fan mail. I washed them in her soap and tried them on her. They have some give but they stay on as well as anything.” He quickly put her into her clothing, placing the small booties on her feet.

Victor’s eyes sparkled with joy as he lifted his daughter dressed in the booties. “Oh, we need to have a family picture.”

Yuuri chuckled and pointed out, “I’m sure Mila or Yura will oblige.”
Breakfast out of the way, dogs walked, they headed out the door. On their way to the elevator Yuuri sighed as he glanced back towards their apartment. “Speaking of Yura...he was a lot of help while he stayed here.”

Victor smiled thinking of the teen, the first of their friends to fall completely in love with Shizuka. “He’s a good boy...I knew you’d be well taken care of.”

“But you had him stay...for Shizuka,” Yuuri smirked.

Victor blushed and murmured, “Of course.” Yuuri rolled his eyes. They decided to drive that morning in case Shizuka relapsed. Settling her in the car seat, Victor negotiated out of the parking garage and into traffic.

Everyone at the rink was glad to see the official little sister of every single skater was alert and feeling better. It took the coaches a few minutes to get them back on task. Yakov huffed, “Let me hold her. Get on the ice.”

Victor grinned and soon skated backwards while waving towards his daughter. Yuuri rolled his eyes and shrugged towards Yakov. What could you do?

They moved through general practice, working on various elements. Yuuri knew before the first pucker when it was feeding time and was there to relieve Yakov whose gruff voice now comforted Shizuka. The old man frowned as he relinquished the baby. Yuuri didn’t quite hide the pleased sparkle in his eyes. He had found family in Russia.

In the privacy of the studio, he settled down to feed his daughter. His milk was what she craved but she wasn’t fully satisfied and soon Yuuri was breaking out the pouch of baby food. Her current favorite packet was apples, carrots, and parsnips. After getting her cleaned up, he let her stretch and move while he did the same, incorporating his yoga moves with baby care. She gurgled and reached for Yuuri’s face, repeating “ma ma mama ma”.

Free to roam on her tummy, Yuuri watched her as he continued his stretches, rolling on her tummy, rocking back and forth on her knees, and scooting towards the rattle/teething ring she preferred.
The door opened and Yuuri looked up to see his partner joining him. “You missed feeding her,” Yuuri teased and watched Victor’s pout form. “I promise I’ll save that part at lunch. How are you doing?”

“I’m fine...just finding my story.” Victor laid on the floor next to his daughter, wiggling his fingers at her, eliciting a high pitched squeal from the happy baby.

Yuuri watched the interaction between the two, “Are you sure you’ve found your story?”

“Maybe?” Victor sat up. Then he sighed and shrugged. “Maybe not. I just...I want to talk about us, about Shizushka.”

Yuuri smiled at the diminutive. Last week it was Shizulya. At least it’s not Flip, Yuuri thought with an eyeroll. “And have you settled on music?”

Victor shrugged. “It seems all I listen to these days are lullabies.”

You’re going to give Yakov an ulcer...another ulcer. Yuuri chuckled. “Well, that’s what you sing...but we listen to more. What...does our relationships mean to you...how does it change you?”

He considered for a moment. Going to Yuuri, loving him, supporting him had all been so natural that he never considered any other life. Before Yuuri’s life and love Victor had been empty, filling his life with stuff. This pushed him out of that. “I...stepped out of myself. For the longest time I was...untouchable. I kept everyone at arm’s length. But...I longed for someone to hold close. I longed for...a family.”

Yuuri softened his features, tilting his head to his mate. “Hard to have that if you don’t let anyone in.”

Victor nodded as he stared off in the distance. “I mean...I had friends. I had Yura. Yakov. Lilia. But...those who wanted to be with me intimately...they didn’t want me, they wanted the celebrity. So...I stopped letting them get close. They used me. I...used them.”

“And it was okay...because it was fair trade.” Yuuri watched him nod before continuing. “Maybe
you gave more than you realized. A little humanity lost each time you hardened the crust around your heart.”

Victor thought of his mate’s words, “But you broke through…”

“I don’t know...how...I was falling apart myself,” Yuuri whispered.

“I knew...you.” Victor knew how impossible it sounded, falling in love with someone over a night...a dance, but that’s what happened. “Maybe it was your scent, but I knew you. And I wanted to know more.”

Yuuri reached for his phone and scrolled through music and hit play. “The music is out there. I think...for a time I was a wayfaring stranger. I think...I was lost for some time. I think you were too.”

Victor listened to the guitar, the beat both uplifting but holding an edge, like a declaration. “I felt at times like I was shouting and no one was hearing me. They heard the celebrity, they did not hear the man.”

“I heard you,” Yuuri whispered.

Victor hugged his knees and smiled towards his mate, remembering a letter, a scented bunny sent in reply. “I heard you, too.”

Yuuri scrolled down his songs and then hit play once more. “Sometimes we are screaming and no one hears us...like we’re in a wind tunnel.”

Victor listened as the words washed over him. He felt the darkness like shadows, the lost words, the lack of understanding, and he nodded. “I could work with this.”

“I know it’s a departure from where you were thinking and it’s nothing like what you’ve done before...but maybe you need to explore and close out the past.”

Victor nodded in agreement. “I think so as well.”
The music clicked over to another *song* and Yuuri stood to his feet with the grace of a dancer. Holding out to take his partner’s hand and pulling him to his feet, they moved across the room. They could see their daughter playing in the corner, babbling and rattling her toy.

“Dance with me,” Yuuri invited.

Victor was most at ease in those arms...as if he found his other half, his home. They danced, moving in one another’s space, making love with their movements. Victor’s body answered Yuuri’s questions and offered questions of its own.

As the song finished, they held onto each other breathing deeply. “You did hear me,” Victor whispered.

Yuuri looked at Victor’s hands, lacing their fingers together. “Every time you skated, you spoke to me.”

Victor leaned down, placing his forehead to Yuuri’s, “I’ve been shouting for so long.”

“I know.” Yuuri’s voice was almost breathless.

A sputter in the corner brought them out of themselves and Yuuri turned, his smile warm and loving, Victor following and scooping up their daughter pulling her into their circle of love. “And it took this little angel to truly pull us together.”

They each kissed her downy dark hair before Yuuri rested his head on Victor’s shoulder, the music fading into another *song*. Yuuri’s movements leading them into another dance, slow movements, the waltz of a family.

---

That evening, they had Yura over for dinner, Yuuri cooking for him. “I wanted to thank you for staying with me while Victor was gone.”
The blond huffed, focusing his attention on the baby teaching her a Russian nursery rhyme. Looking up, he nodded at the dish Yuuri was preparing. “Is that katsudon?”

Yuuri chuckled. “No...I haven’t earned katsudon. I will invite you when I do make it, however.”

The blond leaned against the counter. “What if I win?”

Yuuri chuckled at the childlike bargaining. “Yes, of course. If you win, I’ll make you katsudon.”

Yura hugged himself, his eyes looking inward. “Maybe I’ll sleep here tonight.”

“You can sleep here anytime, Yura,” the omega invited. Looking over at Victor, he nodded to the older man.

“Of course. Yuuri and I talked...and the guest room. You can stay there any time you want. I know the dorms...they aren’t the best place to grow up.”

Yura shrugged, “Mila…”

“Stays with her sister as often as she can.” Victor cut his argument off. Mila’s family was close and her sister had moved out of the dorms into her own flat. “The dorms are a place to lay your head down...but family, it’s important.”

Yura wrapped his arms around himself. “I only have Grampa, and he’s so far.”

Yuuri and Victor both came around the table, Yuuri pulling the younger man into his arms. It happened without conscious thought, the boy lifted his chin, breathing in the omega’s scent, breathing in the mother scent. Then the tears came, Victor’s solid hand running up and down his back. They didn’t want to steal away the boy’s independence but they had decided to offer him a place to call home, to offer him family.
Something new is on its way! For those who love "Lost and Found" and "Semicolon", I think you're going to love "Gravity". For those who've been with me awhile, you know it's hard for me to work solely on one project. I'm hoping to put this up on Friday but it should be up starting next week for sure.

"Gravity" starts with 19-year-old Yuuri who is facing an injury that is similar to one his idol had five years before. He is surprised when Victor reaches out to him out of the blue. This is the story of their developing friendship moving in a slow burn to lovers. Yuuri isn't certain of his sexuality in this one and may possibly be in the Ace spectrum (which includes Demi). Six chapters are written so far and it will be a lovely one to trade off with Truth.

As always, thanks for reading! And thank you, BluSkates, for all of the lovely edits.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

The last bit of peace and a few anxious thoughts before Detroit...

Chapter Notes

Greetings, all! It's Sunday and I have another chapter for you. And a good thing it's break because I only have one more written. Don't worry, I have the next arc plotted out. All the love and thanks to BluSkates for her attention to this story.

Yuri didn’t stay with them every night but over the next week, the spare bedroom started to fill up with treasures. Then one day, Yura showed up with a kitten, gray and fluffy. “I named her Sophia. She was abandoned. I couldn’t just leave her.”

Victor took the kitten in his hands and studied her small form. “You aren’t allowed pets in the dorms unless you have a written prescription from a doctor.”

“I-I know...but you said this was my home, too.” Those green eyes could be fierce when it came to someone threatening him or those he cared about. Now they were beseeching and Victor knew he was soft to them. Looking up at his partner, he watched Yuuri set down the basket of laundry and walk over to the boy and slide an arm around his shoulders.

“Of course she can stay. We need to get her checked out by the vet and pick up what she needs, but she can stay.”

Yura hugged him and then Victor before taking the kitten to his room. Victor watched him depart before turning to Yuuri. “I thought I was going to be pushover parent.”

Yuuri rolled his eyes and sighed. “Saying yes does not make me a pushover. But really, what’s one more in this family and a baby kitten isn’t going to take up a lot of room?”
“But…” Victor started to argue, only to have his words die on his tongue as those brown eyes turned on him. It was a stern look, but one that melted quickly.

“But Yura will have someone that loves him unconditionally. Like you and Makkachin...and me and Vicchan. And one day, we will find someone for Shizuka.”

Victor smiled softly. How could he argue against that? “I suppose you’re right.”

“Of course,” Yuuri murmured as he reached down to scoop up the basket of laundry and continue his task. “Yura, do you have laundry?”

“Left it at the dorms,” the teen called down the hall.

“Well, bring it next time.” Yuuri disappeared into the utility room and put the load on before rejoining Victor who was on the phone making an appointment for the kitten.

Covering the receiver, he asked Yuuri, “Do we want to get her spayed?”

“Eventually.” Yuuri called from the other room, “We don’t even know how old she is.”

“I’ll just have a checkup and shots then. We can take her back for the other.” He returned to the call and finished the arrangements before hanging up.

Yuuri reached for the keys and handed it to Victor. “I think you need to go with Yura to get supplies for the new kitten.”

Victor wrinkled his brow, “Supplies…”

“Food, kitty litter, a litter box...at the very least.”

“Oh…” He looked over at Yura who simply shrugged. Evidently the teen had given this as much thought as Victor had, which is why they both needed Yuuri.
The pet store was familiar territory to Victor but not necessarily the cat department. He trailed behind the teen watching Yura pick up things he needed and maybe a few he didn’t need. “You know, I have a cat at Grampa’s. Potya.”

“I remember,” Victor murmured picking up the feathered wand.

“Get that, too,” Yura demanded before continuing. “I’d just see about getting Potya but she keeps Grampa company.”

Soon they were checking out and Victor picked up where Yura left off. “She would be welcome as well but we can’t take in every stray off the street.”

“I know,” Yura replied although Victor could hear the hurt in his voice. He waited. Perhaps waiting is good for both Yu(u)ris. “Is that what I was that day?”

Victor climbed into the car as he mulled over those words. “No...I saw something in you, a fire...and you didn’t allow yourself to be dictated by what you lacked. I knew if someone would take the time to see you, that you’d do great things.”

Yura was quiet on the drive, staring out the window. But Victor knew he was thinking and left him to his thoughts.

When they arrived at home, they found Yuuri in the kitchen, baby on his hip, kitten once more being removed from the counter. “Boundaries are a hard lesson, little one,” Yuuri stated patiently. “But you will learn them.”

Yura snorted as he watched the battle of wills. “Potya never fully learned.”

“Potya?” Yuuri asked with interest.
The boy moved into the kitchen space, settling his bags on the table. “My other cat. She lives with Grampa.”

“Maybe next time we’re all in Moscow, you can introduce us,” Yuuri suggested as he watched the teen start setting up a feeding station for the kitten on a shelf and out of reach from the dogs. The little furball ate voraciously, growling as she went. Two poodles watched the new resident curiously. When she hopped down, Makkachin started to sniff her receiving a hiss in response. He backed up, narrowing his eyes in confusion. Vicchan bounced towards her and she swiped at him. As he took off with a bit of a cry, Yuuri laughed, scooping him up. “You need to give her time to come around. If you scare her, she’ll fight back.” Much like our Yura. The Japanese omega lifted his eyes to meet the boy’s.

“It will be okay, though, won’t it?” he asked shyly.

“Of course,” Yuuri reassured him. “And we’ve already enlisted one of the neighbor’s kids as a petsitter and dog walker. She takes Vicchan and Makkachin out when she gets home from school and if we happen to be late at the rink.”

“And when we’re both traveling or at competitions, she’ll take them out more often and make sure there is food,” Victor added.

This compromise seemed to settle Yura but the teen pointed out, “I need to meet her if she’s going to be taking care of Sophia.”

Both men chuckled and Victor reassured him it wouldn’t be a problem. “I’m sure Daria would like that as well,” Victor added.

Yura spent the evening playing with the kitten and laughing at Shizuka’s curious stares. She blue bubbles at the kitten and the fluffy creature now deflead and clean bobbed noses with her as she scooted on the floor. Makkachin would sometimes lift the kitten by her scruff when she got too close to the baby moving her across the room. It was a never-ending battle and the old dog would beg askanse of her owner.

Victor and Yuuri would chuckle at their antics. The floor full of their babies warmed up the evening and the older man whose stares would stray to his mate, a slight line of worry in his
expression, memories of the previous night’s nightmares making him worry about the coming night. *Maybe the kitten is a good thing, distracting you from your worries. At least...for now.*

Yuuri lifted his eyes and smiled adoringly towards Victor. “I love you,” he mouthed, cuddling into his space.

*For now...we have peace.*

Victor watched his mate study the calendar on his phone with a frown in the privacy of their room. Their first court date was approaching. The omega began fretting and tugging at his sleeve, unconsciously revealing his anxiety. “The lawyers are ready,” Victor reassured him.

Yuuri nodded, eyes not quite focusing on him, almost looking past him, out the window. “I haven’t been back since...Japan. What if…”

“Shhh,” Victor whispered pulling Yuuri into his arms. “I’ll be with you the entire time.”

“It will be hard on her,” Yuuri whispered resting in Victor’s embrace. “The travel...she’s so small.” Victor knew Yuuri was putting all of his anxieties out in the open. “What if...he sees her...tries to get her.”

“Then he’d be basically admitting to the rape,” Victor murmured.

“Yura’s going to stay here in our absence,” Yuuri continued. “Are you sure he can handle staying on his own?”

“The others said they’ll keep an eye on him. He already stays on his own at the dorms. This just has the added convenience of a stove...something he’s already proved competent in handling,” Victor continued.

Yuuri nodded into his shoulder clinging to him, letting Victor’s calm slide over his skin. Finally he murmured, “I’m scared.”
“What will help?”

Yuuri closed his eyes and considered the question but really there was only one answer. “For it to be over, behind us.”

“Let’s go to bed...let me scent you thoroughly.”

Yuuri looked up at him, his eyes earnest. “The other...what we did before. It’s faded.”

“Is that what you want?” the alpha asked just to be sure. Yuuri nodded slowly, his eyes closing and then he gasped as Victor lifted him up into his arms. “Then that’s what we’ll do.”

“But...Yura...he’s down the hall.”

Victor smirked. So that’s why Yuuri always pushes him away when Yura visited. “He’s across the apartment and I happen to know he sleeps with earbuds.”

Yuuri frowned a moment. “I guess...it’s no worse than than the walls at the onsen.”

Victor snorted. “No, I think these walls are a little thicker than that.” Victor began teasing the sensitive skin beneath his ear. A soft giggle slipped from Yuuri’s lips as he ducked into Victor’s neck. The smaller body began relaxing under his touch. He lowered Yuuri back onto the mattress. Glancing at the foot of the bed, Victor smirked. Picking up the blanket to block off curious eyes from the crib, he returned to Yuuri’s side. “Now, you appear to be overdressed.”

Yuuri rolled his eyes at Victor’s overacting. “Whatever shall we do about that?” he cued in but the amused sarcasm wasn’t lost on Victor who snorted in response. “If the press gets a hold of a clip with your snort-laugh…”

“You wouldn’t dare!”

Yuuri’s eyes took on a dangerous glint as he rolled Victor over. “Don’t dare me...that will get us
both in trouble.” And rather than talking about it, fingers began working Victor out of his clothes, kissing varying patches of bare skin. Yuuri never liked feeling vulnerable. Victor easily caved to that need in him now.

“I’m torn between wanting you in me and needing to feel you on me,” Yuuri confessed as he reached for Victor’s length, his fingers toying with the foreskin causing Victor’s eyes to roll back in pleasure.

“M-maybe we can do both?” he groaned.

Yuuri leaned forward to tease their lips together, his tongue tracing around the perimeter of that heart shaped smile, Victor’s breath stuttering at the touch. “Do you think we can?” he whispered.

Victor could only groan in response as Yuuri ducked down, crawling down his body to tease the head peeking out of the foreskin. He slid his tongue around the rim, and Victor’s fingers tangled into Yuuri’s hair, tightening at the unexpected stimulation. “Yuuuriii,” he moaned.

A soft giggle vibrated against Victor’s head causing the alpha to tighten his hold once more then stroke through Yuuri’s hair. Yuuri’s tongue slid along the slit before he continued to kiss down the length. At the base, he teased that sensitive spot at the juncture of shaft and balls, lips and tongue taking turns with a sucking motion.

Lips fluttered back up the length, a tongue slipping out to trace up the vein as he went. Victor could already feel a pooling in his belly, could already feel himself coming undone. “Don’t fight it,” Yuuri whispered against his skin as fingers wrapped around the now spit-wet surface and slid up and down, the other hand reaching down to play with his balls.

“What did I do to deserve this?” Victor cried, feeling completely undeserving. Another giggle vibrated along his length and he felt himself tumble over, spilling across his belly. Yuuri stretched his neck into the milky fluid before rising up on his hands and knees and leaning back on his haunches.

Victor sat up reaching for Yuuri, drawing him into a kiss. He could taste the saltiness of his own flavor on Yuuri’s lips. His hand continued to massage the cum into the scent gland, tasting Yuuri’s moans in the kiss. “I’ve got you,” he whispered as he held Yuuri close.

“I need...you…” Yuuri stumbled through his words but then reached down to touch himself
begging for release.

“Not just yet, love,” Victor grinned and was surprised when Yuuri allowed him to settle him back into the pillows. “Is this okay?”

Yuuri nodded, reaching for him, his hands shaky. Victor’s eyes widened at the realization that Yuuri had come close to orgasming untouched. Yuuri had all of the indications of his post-orgasm state. Curling in on himself, hugging himself, he looked beautiful laid out beneath Victor and the alpha could feel himself already starting harden again. He leaned forward over the omega and kissed him, deepening the kiss. Yuuri’s hands slid around him, pulling him closer. Victor could feel Yuuri rutting against him, seeking release. Rising up on his knees, Victor began to move down the body lost in pleasure.

Yuuri moaned out “yes” as Victor’s lips hesitantly latched onto his nipple. He could taste Yuuri’s milk and he felt the mixture of enjoyment at his partner’s obvious pleasure and discomfort at knowing this was where his daughter fed. He didn’t linger. Moving further down Yuuri’s body, he tongued into Yuuri’s belly button and watched in fascination as Yuuri arched into the touch supported by Victor’s hands on his waist, dancing into the touch.

Victor lowered his kiss further teasing along the smaller but still beautiful length, sucking and licking along the shaft. Yuuri groaned, his hands clenching into his pillow as he writhed into Victor’s mouth. “V-v-vitya…”

Victor smiled against the head before sucking him down, tasting the salty pre-cum, swallowing him easily. Yuuri’s breaths shallowed, as his fingers now stroked into Victor’s hair, and Victor knew he would need to pull up soon. He also knew he was about ready to meet Yuuri’s other need.

Pulling off of him, he looked up at Yuuri panting from beneath him. “Yuuri?” he whispered, never knowing this submission of his omega.

“N-now...please,” Yuuri begged, his legs opening for Victor, inviting him in. “N-n-need you.”

Victor stroked his length as he lined up, lifting those hips to take him in. Blue eyes watched for any indication of hesitance. However, Yuuri’s lips parted in ecstasy as Victor slowly pushed inside. Victor would submit to Yuuri any and every time if that was what he needed, but having Yuuri come apart beneath him was sublime.
As he bottomed out, Victor leaned forward to lick into a kiss. Yuuri rose up to meet him, his arms wrapping around his neck. “Love you,” he murmured into the kiss.

“Love you,” Yuuri responded with a moan, his hips starting to grind into Victor. “Need...more,” he demanded as he released the kiss, his head falling back. “Now!” Those eyes met his, the command was there. Submission my ass. Yuuri has me wrapped around his finger, has me on a string, at his beck and call. With a chuckle, Victor began to move within Yuuri, their bodies building into that rhythm that was so much a part of them, a song that belonged to just them as they danced the oldest dance.

Then Yuuri cried out, spilling into the space between him, giving Victor what he needed. Brown eyes held his as he reached down into the cum and then moved with determination to make sure Victor smelled as much like him as Yuuri smelled like Victor. He groaned his release at the contact, as they became more a part of each other, holding Yuuri close to him, feeling his lover’s heart beat through his chest.

They remained in one another’s embrace for some time, Yuuri clinging to him as much as he held onto Yuuri until the younger man began to grow restless, frowning almost pouting.

“I need a shower,” he demanded.

With a chuckle, Victor couldn’t say he was surprised. As much as they needed it, it was messy work. He reached for his lover, helping him out of bed and guiding the younger man on shaky legs towards the bathroom to shower with one another.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you’ve discovered Gravity, my new story. And oh, have I plotted out others. I haven't decided what will go up as my third. (some are saying...you COULD finish Lifeline Olympics...and I can. It is on the list for consideration.) I have a short story (I'm thinking it can be done in 50k) plotted out. Then I have another that's rather dark. I'm not sure how long that one would take. Maybe 80k? And then there's the one that I plan to follow this one...it's an age reversal with Victor and Yuuri and an ABO fic. Baby omega Victor. I do love that one greatly. SO many stories, so little time. Well, at least you know there is plenty to write.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The couple heads to Detroit leaving Yura in charge of the house. Don't worry. He has Georgi, Ivan, and Dmitry nearby.

Chapter Notes

It's time for Detroit...but Yuuri gets to see Phichit! So there's at least that.

(sets out fuzzy blankets, chocolate, tea, tissue boxes, plushies, kittens, and puppies for this arc)

Grumpy Yuri met them at breakfast not quite meeting his hosts’ eyes. Victor was busy with preparing breakfast and Yuuri cleaning house and didn’t notice the discomfort at first. “Yura, are you sure you’re fine staying here on your own while we are gone?” Yuuri fussed.

“Yeah, I’ve got this,” he muttered.

“You could always call Mila if not,” Victor suggested.

“That hag!”

Victor chuckled and rolled up another blini but as they sat down for breakfast, he noticed the lack of eye contact and the pink cheeks. Thinning his lips, he thought about his previous night with Yuuri. “You know, with omegas sometimes you have to figure out what settles them,” he began quietly, hearing the vacuum running in the next room. Yura would be going to practice soon and they would continue to prepare for their trip.

Green eyes went wide and hands to his ears. “I don’t need to hear anything else! I think I heard enough.”
Victor chuckled even as a slight blush rose up his cheeks. As Yura stomped out the house, Victor’s mate stopped and watched him go. “What’s wrong with Yura?”

“I think just a little embarrassed,” Victor suggested.

Yuuri turned back, his eyes wide with confusion but as Victor nodded towards the bedroom, Yuuri’s own face shot red. “Oh, my god…” He covered his face with a squeak. Peeking between his fingers, he whined, “He heard us?”

“I think that is a given. We need to get the boy some better earmuffs.”

Yuuri checked his bags a third time, annoyance in every motion. “Vitya, do you have Shizuka’s favorite bunny?”

“In the carry on, lyubimiy,” Victor called back from the kitchen.

Yuuri emptied the bag with a frown finding the wrong bunny. “It’s the wrong one!” he called back out to his mate.

Victor heard the tone of Yuuri’s voice and walked into the room, unobserved. “Not at all. She’s favored Lena more of late,” Victor argued.

Yuuri grumbled under his breath, stuffing the little rabbit into the bag a bit harsh. “We’re going to get to Detroit and she’s going to pitch a fit because Victor can’t keep track of the bunnies. Like I don’t have enough to worry about.”

Coming up behind Yuuri, Victor went to embrace the other man, but thought better of it immediately. Instead he used his voice as a calming presence. “Darling…”

Yuuri closed his eyes realizing Victor had come into the room and knowing he heard pretty much everything. “She prefers Lulu,” Yuuri huffed.
Unseen still, Victor shrugged as if it was no big deal. “Why don’t we bring both?”

Yuuri rounded on him, narrowing his eyes. “There is a limit to how much we can bring.” He knew it wasn’t the rabbits, it wasn’t the bags. It was something much darker and scarier. But he could control this problem, and it was going to get all of his attention.

“Yuuuuuri,” Victor murmured, elongating the u in a way that made Yuuri shiver. “Take both bunnies. It’s not going to put us over the limit.”

Yuuri frowned, not happy but not wanting to argue further. Repacking the carry on, he included both bunnies. He was nervous traveling with his daughter back to Detroit. He knew he was masking his worries with petulance about packing. A familiar chime on his phone alerted him to Phichit’s text.

Phichit/ Ciao Ciao got us ice time at our old rink!

Yuuri/ Good. Victor has booked us a suite of rooms to share.

Phichit/ Ciao Ciao has the reservations. I think we’ll beat you there.

His delight at seeing his friend after so long a separation was spoiled with the purpose of this visit to the States. Yuuri’s fingers stilled over the letters closing his eyes. Finally, he sent the worry through.

Yuuri/ Be careful.

Yuuri watched three dots appear and disappear, knowing his friend was trying to write something to support him. Phichit lived in a bubble of constant happiness. The closest he had come to harm was when he learned of Yuuri’s attack.

Phichit/ I will. Nowhere on my own.
Taking a deep breath, he let it out. “It’s going to be okay.” Closing his eyes, his mind echoed, *if only I believed it.*

Yuuri held out until Victor had agreed to the business class flight and he was thankful to have a bassinet and baby kits to help with the journey. Air France had wonderful flight attendants and once they cleared the initial takeoff, Shizuka worked her magic charming all of those around her. She played peek-a-boo with a grandmother in the seat behind them. She high-fived the flight attendants. She cooed and sang with the three- and five-year-olds in the seats across the aisle.

Victor and Yuuri took turns with baby care and the alpha made sure to take the time to brush his wrist over Yuuri’s cheek as he passed, releasing his calming scent for the omega. As the lights dimmed for sleep, Yuuri and the baby curled into Victor’s protective embrace. Although Victor wore patches to cover his scent, he carried a silk scarf with his scent tucked into his sleeve, another just inside his shirt. Unbuttoning the top button, he allowed the scent to wash over his two great loves. Yuuri was quickly asleep. Shizuka fussed for a few moments before settling down next to her mother.

They finally landed in Detroit, met at the airport by one of the coaches that remained at the Detroit rink. Yuuri recognized the man who had worked with some very promising pairs skaters who were getting ready to move out of juniors. “Celestino and Phichit have already arrived. They are resting in their hotel, Katsuki,” he relayed.

“Thank you, Coach Greer,” Yuuri appreciated. “This is my mate Victor.”

The old coach chuckled. “There isn’t a skating veteran alive who doesn’t know who this man is. Pleasure to meet you. I focus on pairs and ice dancing but I have had the pleasure of working with Katsuki. However, Katsuki was seen helping a few of our ice dancers with their sequences on more than one occasion.”

Victor chuckled. “He does shine in his sequences.”

“How are you settling in St. Petersburg?” the coach asked as he guided the couple out to his car. Victor busied himself arranging Shizuka in the back seat while Yuuri focused on their host.

“It’s been a little bit of a process although I’m sure part of it is being a new mom.”
Greer nodded. “I’m sure. Now the time Celestino booked for you all is evening skate. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The gym is open for your use.”

Yuuri blinked. He hadn’t been prepared to make decisions this soon and was quickly becoming overwhelmed. “Oh, ummm... I think we were planning to use the hotel gym but the ice time sounds great. Thank you.”

“Allow me to open the door for you,” Greer pressed, stepping a little closer to Yuuri and causing the omega to shrink back a little, his eyes flailing about for help.

Swallowing, he muttered, “Ummm,” stepping back to find a solid hand in the center of his back. He looked up thankfully at the sight of his mate.

“Yuuri has a thing about riding in the back with the baby,” Victor supplied smoothly. “Overprotective mom. I’m sure you understand.” The press smile the alpha offered worked its magic, the cold veneer letting the other man know to back off.

“Oh, of course.” He moved away and walked around to his own door while Victor held the back door open to Yuuri, mouthing thank you with his back turned to the coach.

Victor didn’t let his smile falter as he knelt inside the door and settled the seatbelt in Yuuri’s lap. The solid touch of his hand as he secured Yuuri in the car gave the anxious omega what he needed to settle back for the ride. Taking the front seat, he closed the door and nodded for them to proceed.

“We were quite surprised when Celestino returned to the rink without Yuuri. Imagine our greater surprise to learn he was pregnant. I thought it was just rink gossip.” Greer chatted amicably, unknowing the truth of the situation.

Victor froze his expression and glanced down to his phone.

Yuuri/ I’m sorry.

Yuuri/ I don’t know what Ciao Ciao was thinking sending him.
Putting his phone back down in his lap, he put on his most charming expression. “I tend to ignore rink gossip as well.”

Greer took his eyes from the road to flash a smile at Victor, “I’m sure you were also taken by surprise. Especially after learning the baby isn’t even yours.”

Victor’s smile faltered as his eyes went back to see Yuuri shrink back into the seat. “Whatever gave you the idea she’s not mine?” Victor stated coldly. “I assure you, she has every claim on my heart.”

“I didn’t mean to imply…” the older coach started to backpaddle.

Victor sighed, leveling his gaze at the coach. “Perhaps not, but both my mate and I are quite tired and perhaps a little on edge. We appreciate the ride to the hotel but perhaps for the trip back, we’d take an uber. I’d hate to inconvenience you further.”

Greer squirmed in his seat, gripping the steering wheel. “Oh, it’s no trouble. I was hoping to get a chance to visit with Yuuri.” He seemed to want...to need to keep Yuuri close.

“And now you have,” Victor stated, driving his point home. The car pulled smoothly into the porte-cochère and they were soon greeted by the bellman who helped to unload their bags. Greer jumping out of the car in an attempt to help, but only ending up in the way.

Yuuri offered a nervous “thank you” to Coach Greer. Victor felt those words grate at his nerves but held his tongue.

Greer fluttered around as the luggage was loaded onto pallets. The bellhops stood waiting, but Greer didn’t seem ready to leave. “Perhaps I’ll see you at the Detroit Skate Club,” he offered.

“Ummm, perhaps?” His eyes went to Victor and his mate placed a protective hand on his back, the baby carrier in his other hand. “Okay, ummm, bye.”

Inside the hotel, Yuuri opened his mouth to talk only to be hushed by a single finger in front of Victor’s lips. He guided Yuuri up to the front desk where they greeted the guest services associate.
Here, Victor used his charm for good and she assured him their room was in the corner and the other two members of their party had arrived earlier and were already in the adjoining room.

Finally upstairs, the bellman unloaded their bags and Victor tipped generously. The bellman, very appreciative, thanked them profusely before leaving. Yuuri raised a curious eye.

“Tip well those who make the least and they will tell the others. You get the best service along the way.”

Yuuri smirked at the bizarre philanthropy, “Vitya…”

Victor would hear no argument against this, “This is our home for the next week.”

Yuuri turned around, his arms spread wide. “It’s...so much!”

“It was a phone call to a sponsor. I have to leave a review about our stay and endorse the chain.” Victor smiled like a small child expecting a gold star for effort and execution.

Yuuri turned wide brown eyes in his direction. “And the cost, right?”

“The price is my endorsement...and it’s available for our next trip to Detroit should we desire to stay again.”

Yuuri could find nothing more to argue against, his frugality was satisfied, even if he had a hard time believing their luck. “Oh…”

A knock from the adjoining door brought Yuuri’s attention and he went to open it, excitedly hugging Phichit. “I missed you, Roomie,” Phichit squealed. A tired Celestino peered over his shoulder.

Yuuri’s eyes focused on his coach. “How could you send Greer to get me?” he asked accusingly. He hadn’t wanted his first words facing his coach to be those of anger but had to understand what the man was thinking.
The coach frowned in confusion. “No...One of the ice dancers, Cassandra, wanted to pick you up.” He rubbed the back of his head, trying to pull his thoughts into order. “She was so happy you were back and hoped to pick your brain about her step sequence. I don’t...”

Yuuri’s groan interrupted the coach. “He’s Cass’s coach. She must have told him what she was doing and he bullied her into letting him do it.” Turning to Victor, he explained, “I helped some of the juniors and Cass just moved up. I usually avoided Greer.”

“We all did,” Phichit pointed out. Yuuri turned to see the grimace on his friend’s face. With Phichit’s stamp of disapproval Yuuri felt justified in his discomfort of the man.

He turned back to Victor, “He’s...creepy,” Yuuri muttered, running his hands up his arms to soothe the goosebumps.

The coach nodded, giving Victor apologetic eyes. “I should have arranged the Uber instead. He’s...another reason I moved my skaters.”

“Did he...” Victor began, moving closer to Yuuri. He felt his emotions jump with the thought of Yuuri being exposed to another predator.

Celestino quickly shook his head. “No one’s ever come to me with anything other than a general sense of being creeped out by him, little things like standing too close, or trying to talk young. Nothing I could put my finger on. But he did make a number of skaters uncomfortable.” He stopped, leveling his dark eyes on Yuuri, but still addressing Victor, “I thought...when Yuuri first disappeared...”

Yuuri groaned in irritation. “It wasn’t Greer. He’s creepy but he’s never...pushed.”

“You’ve always played clueless to his advances,” Phichit pointed out. Then he shrugged and admitted, “Of course, you never noticed when guys were checking you out...girls too for that matter.”

Yuuri sighed, closing his eyes as if he was seeking all of his patience. “It wasn’t Greer. I avoided him on purpose and being clueless helps deflect a lot of unwanted attention.” He took a deep breath and slowly released it. “I...I remember what he looks like. He was...younger, my age, blue eyes, dark wavy hair he wore in a pony tale or a bun. H-he seemed wealthy.”
Both Celestino and Phichit stared at him with wide eyes. “You saw him?” the coach choked out.

Yuuri nodded slowly. “I...didn’t realize it until later, until I had another scare. Oddly, my psychiatrist said it was because I feel safer. As if my brain was releasing information when I was in a place where I could handle it.”

“Well, this changes things,” Celestino stated and the others could only nod in agreement.

Chapter End Notes

What's going through your minds?
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Witness prep, a little practice, and time in court.

Chapter Notes

Greetings, folks. If you didn't catch the baby Victor fic I started up yesterday, check my posts. Sirin's Child. I have a fourth story going up Wednesday. I'll try for weekly posts on all unless I get behind on one of them.

Now, on with the Truth!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The buzzing of Yuuri’s phone drew his attention down, frowning as he saw the message from the young skater. He hated that his world collided so closely with the blonde’s and he couldn’t protect him from the darkness. Then again, he wasn’t sure he’d have found the courage to fight without him.

Yura/ Is everything okay?

Yuuri/ We are headed to the attorney’s office now. Witness prep. Don’t worry.

Really, I worry enough for both of us. As if on cue, he felt Victor’s firm hand on the small of his back. Yuuri leaned into the touch, his eyes going to the stroller to watch his daughter’s kicking legs and hear her gurgles. At least someone is happily oblivious. They entered the building, Yuuri checking his phone to recall the office number. The modern structure was full of suits as attorneys and other businessmen rushed too and from appointments and court proceedings. Yuuri checked his appearance, tugging at the sleeve. He had chosen what he would wear in court so he could settle into the correct mental state.

The elevator opened and Victor guided him, his hand grounding him as Yuuri pushed the stroller. When they stopped at the receptionist, Shizuka giggled and cooed working her magic ensuring they were received with coos and aaaws. They were placed in a small meeting room, a table surrounded with half a dozen chairs. Soon, their attorneys joined them. Victor smiled as Liam knelt
down to tease Shizuka and she gurgled her approval.

Liam was the second youngest attorney and he had three kids seven and under. He was quick to say he doesn’t know how his mate handled them but they both love the noise and energy kids bring into a place. “She is growing,” he commented warmly.

“Too fast,” Yuuri agreed. He then turned to greet the other attorneys, half bowing and half shaking their hands. “Alec, Bogdan.” Taking his seat, he watched Victor go through the same greetings as he reached down to pull his daughter into his lap.

Liam studied Yuuri with a frown before asking, “Have you encountered any difficulties since coming to Detroit?”

Yuuri laughed harshly. “Not related to the case. A coach from my old rink was a bit of an ass.”

“Ah,” Liam answered but made note of it. “Detroit Metro PD has told us they will have a presence in court. I believe they would like an interview with you while you’re in town.”

Yuuri exchanged glances with Victor in surprise. “I thought...the case was dead.”

“If it was just your case, then that might be true. However, we’ve linked several together with the same MO,” Bogdan stepped in. “They want to follow up on them and with the connections, they could build a circumstantial case at the very least.”

Yuuri’s lips parted as he took in this information. “We could...catch them and stop them.”

Alec leaned forward and nodded. “And we still have private investigators on this. Now, for our case. We’re asking for a charge of gross negligence with the mishandling of evidence. We are going for the stronger charge rather than merely negligence because this happened repeatedly. However, if we can prove intent, then we have criminal misconduct and someone will go to jail.”

Yuuri’s eyes widened reaching a free hand over to grab Victor’s while his other rested securely around his daughter. “How many do we have testifying?”
Alec, took a breath worried he might upset their client with the news. “I have thirty six complainants.”

“So many,” Yuuri breathed. He looked over at Victor who held his gaze.

Alec started again, “And twelve of these have the same modus operandi as yours, Mr. Katsuki.”

“Same DNA?” Yuuri asked, his eyes meeting Alec’s eyes steadily.

Yuuri watched as Bogdan and the others exchanged glances before the older attorney responded. “No, it appears there is a mix of DNAs. We are thinking there might be a ring involved and have alerted the police.”

Alec nodded and reiterated, “This is not a criminal case but a civil suit. Sometimes it’s easier to prove things in a civil court than in a criminal court. We can’t bring your perpetrators to justice, but we can bring to justice the ones who stood in away of that investigation either through negligence or intent.”

Yuuri nodded, he’d heard much of this before and knew they were repeating it for the coming court days. “What can I expect their lawyers to pull on me?”

“They are going to make it look like you made these decisions. We have to show that they did not use due care. For each case they’ve breached due care, we can gain an award of damages.”

Yuuri nods. “Then let’s do this.” He handed Shizuka over to his mate. “I need to sit on that stand alone. So I want you to wait for me outside. Okay?” He watched Victor hesitantly nod. This was Yuuri’s fight and they both recognized it.

That evening, Yuuri and Victor joined Celestino and Phichit at their old rink. Yuuri walked in, running his fingers along the rail. “I spent a lot of evenings here.”

“Did you typically practice in the evening?”
Yuuri snorted and shook his head. “I typically snuck in after hours.” He then sobered. “If I hadn’t...maybe he wouldn’t have…”

Victor settled Yuuri with a touch stating firmly, “Don’t take his blame on yourself. You had every right to jog that path and skate when you needed to. The university created a false sense of safety on their campus.”

Yuuri turned, nuzzling into Victor’s space and the alpha reached up to unzip his jacket so Yuuri could draw close and breathe in his scent. When he pulled back, he shivered.

“Cold?” Victor chuckled.

Squeezing his arms he laughed. “It’s silly. It just...felt like someone was watching me.”

Victor leaned in and pressed his lips against Yuuri’s forehead. “Maybe not so silly. There are probably workers still here.”

Yuuri nodded accepting that explanation. “Let’s go change, I want to skate.”

Twenty minutes later, Celestino was conducting practice for the three skaters in his charge. “From the top, Katsuki.” He happily donned the baby pack, letting Shizuka kick and squeal every time Papa, Mama, or Uncle Phichit skated by. He chuckled when Victor made a silly face towards his daughter. Yuuri had completely undone his facade, and Victor was ridiculous when it came to his daughter or his mate. Celestino would be hard pressed to say he was surprised.

A rattle from the catwalk drew the coach’s eyes and he squinted up into the shadows. Detroit Skate Club’s official rink was unique in that it had overhead walkways for occasional non-skating events supporting various lighting and sound apparati. Skaters were told in no small terms they were to never roam around up there and coaches were too smart to go. “There isn’t supposed to be anyone here,” he muttered but as Shizuka started to fuss, he refocused on her, ignoring the uneasiness. I’m on edge. It’s just because of the reason they we’re here , he decided. But in the back of his mind he kept thinking, they never found him and now Yuuri can identify him...what if...
As the three hour time slot came to a close, Celestino blew his whistle and smirked as Yuuri pushed in another quad-crash. The Italian coach winced as Yuuri came down on his hip, then rolled to his side. Not the best landing to his quad-sal, but one that Yuuri knew well. *Some things never change.* As they skated to the exit, Celestino waited for the others to put on their guards before handing the baby over. He watched the parents fuss over her, baby pulling hungrily at Yuuri’s shirt as he prepared to exit.

“There’s no hurry if you need to take care of her in the locker rooms,” the coach suggested. They had agreed to come and go as a group and he noted Yuuri’s sigh of relief. The young mother look like he was as eager to feed his daughter as Shizuka was to eat. *He’s going to have fun weaning her off the breast.*

Phichit watched as the other two headed towards the locker room waiting until they were gone. Then he turned his black eyes to Celestino with a frown, murmuring, “Did you see Greer in the catwalk?”

Celestino furrowed his brow. *Why would a coach be up in the catwalk? None of us use that.* “I thought I had heard someone. Why do you think it was Greer?”

Phichit shrugged as if the answer were all to obvious, “Because he has a specific gate due to his knee injury. Not too noticeable when you see it, but enough to throw his rhythm off, and obvious to the ear, especially on that rusting nightmare.”

*Phichit, always the one to notice the details.* “I’ll confront him tomorrow.”

“Can’t,” Phichit sighed. “We’re in court all morning.”

Celestino ran his hands through his hair in frustration as Phichit headed towards the lockers. He knew he didn’t have to ask the young man to keep from mentioning it to the others. However that didn’t ease his own worries. He sat on the bleachers to switch his skates out before gathering their gear. He didn’t know how long it would take Yuuri to feed and change his daughter. They had taken a break during practice to change her once but Yuuri was very attentive to her skin care and noted that he didn’t want to leave her wet long in a cold environment.

He closed his eyes, remembering the fight they had before he took Yuuri home all those months ago. Yuuri, hurt, confused, and terrified, was so ready to give her up then. *Would you have regretted it if you aborted her?* He knew he regretted his decisions but part of him wondered if it was because the illegal methods led to him being unable to have others. He rushed, dangerous abortion had almost killed him. The surgery to remove the infected tissue after the fact saved his
life, but made it impossible for him to ever be a mother. *I know you love her now but there is a ghost in your eyes sometimes when you look at her. You wonder if there is a little bit of him in her. I’ve seen you cover it up in a hurry but it’s still there. But you do love her.*

He looked up and smiled as Victor came out soon followed by Phichit and Yuuri, the former fussing over the baby now in Uncle Phichit’s arms. Then the coach warmed up when the baby reached for him when she saw him. It was the hair. He knew that. She was fascinated by it. He’d take whatever advantage he had over the vivacious Thai skater.

Yuuri curled up into his mate’s arms, having trouble shaking off the shivering. “I think it’s my anxiety,” he admits. “Sometimes it makes me cold.”

“Let me hold you,” Victor offered, pulling Yuuri into his embrace. “Do you want to talk?”

Yuuri nodded. “I miss home...I feel safe at home. Here...I didn’t realize how much I would be looking over my shoulder. I keep looking, thinking I might see him. I want to and I don’t want to...part of me wants to confront him. Part of me really doesn’t want him to be near me,” he paused, coming to terms with what truly terrified him, “near her.”

“I’m going to stay near you during this time in Detroit,” Victor reassured him, pressing a kiss into his hairline. “I feel unsettled when you are out of reach in strange places and knowing this place held harm, I can’t *not* be diligent.”

Yuuri sighed, snuggled in closer as Victor released a calming pheromone. Maybe his omega could at least sleep.

Yuuri waited in a holding room set aside for witnesses. He was welcome in court during the proceedings but he decided he didn’t want to watch, worried it would set off his anxiety. Victor sat with him, Shizuka sleeping at that moment in her stroller beside him. He hoped it wasn’t too long before they got to him. He really didn’t want her staying in the stroller too long. Looking around the room, he noticed a familiar face. She was eying him as well. Hesitantly, she stood and approached him.
The girl cradled her elbow in a hand, almost caving into her own thin frame. “Can I...can I sit here?”

Yuuri nodded and patted the empty part of the bench next to him. “I think we had a class together.”

She nodded, smiling nervously and settling lightly in the seat. Holding out her hand, she introduced herself. “Hillary.” She made a face then shrugged. “My mother named me after Hillary Clinton. She said it couldn’t hurt to have a strong omega as my namesake.”

“Yuuri,” he returned taking her hand.

“I...I know.” She looked down at her hand, clasped in her lap. “I didn’t know...it happened to you, too.”

Yuuri looked down towards his daughter, not sure how to respond. Finally, he whispered, “Three days...forced heat.”

She pursed her lips but couldn’t pull her eyes up, “Two days...they caught me in my heat.”

Yuuri blinked at the pronoun, “They?”

She frowned, the memory washing over her. Shaking it off, she pushed forward and then turned to look at him. “There were two of them. Seem to think it was a good joke. Fraternity brothers. A few of us...we were thinking it might be tied to a fraternity. Like a sick initiation.”

Yuuri considered what he remembered. “I’m not sure...I mean, it could be?”

She saw the hesitation in his face, “But you think there might be something more to it?”

Yuuri nodded. “I think all of us are wanting answers.”
“And maybe...this will throw some awareness and stop the cover up.” She seemed to have gathered some courage and strength from talking to Yuuri, he hoped his own would see him through his testimony.

His daughter woke up with a pucker and Yuuri quickly turned to her, lifting her out of the stroller. “I just want to be able to tell her I fought against them.” He settled her into his arms and she wormed her way up to breathe him in. His expression softened and he felt stronger renewing his purpose.

“Yuuri Katsuki,” the bailiff called from the door. *Perfect timing.*

Standing, he nervously handed her over to his mate. “I’ve got to go.”

“I’ll be at the back of the courtroom,” Victor promised.

They both slipped out of the holding room but Yuuri turned back and offered a reassuring smile. She returned it and murmured, “Give’m hell.”

Yuuri gave an hour’s worth of testimony describing in detail the negligence of his care providers. He knew he’d be followed by Celestino who documented Yuuri’s care as his coach. The university hospital really didn’t have anything to counter their complaint and Yuuri was dismissed with minimal cross examination.

Yuuri was outside the courtroom when a recess was called for lunch. He looked up in surprise when a woman approached him, her stride firm and confident. “Hello, I’m Lt. Olivia Benson with the Metro PD and I’d like to talk to you about your case.”

Yuuri blinked at the woman. He hadn’t expected the police to follow through so quickly. “Oh, my attorney’s said you might be contacting me while I’m in town.”

“Do you think you could come by the precinct tomorrow?” she asked as she handed Yuuri her card.

Yuuri reviewed the address then looked up with a nod. “If it will help us find my rapist, I can definitely come by. Do I need to bring my attorney?”
“This will have no bearing on your case with the university but feel free to discuss it with your attorneys.” He watched her sharp grey eyes lock on him. Athena’s eyes. This woman is a warrior. We need to take a statement and based on your testimony, your memory is quite clear with regard to the events.”

Something in the determined way she spoke relit the fight within him. “I’ll be there.”

NOTES:

Yes, I moved Olivia to Detroit for this case. It’s an AU. ;)


On a personal note, shivers is one of the way my anxiety manifests itself. I often feel cold in my extremities which makes sense because your blood rushes to the center when the body is stressed. So I shared this trait with Yuuri.

Chapter End Notes

I really appreciate BluSkates attention to this story. The one going up Wednesday also has a bit of a soft spot with her. Now, for the bad news...in my head, it wasn't a noncon but one of my betas pointed out that it definitely is...so, for those thinking about reading First Class on Wednesday, I want you to know that it does have noncon elements, underage elements, abuse and neglect. I'm actually pretty much starting this when Yuuri gets out, so it's a recovery fic. But there will be flashes back. It has a lot of fluff so it's nature slipped my grasp. But I would love for you to read First Class on Wednesday. Thank you!
Yuuri hugged himself as he stood before the police precinct. He could feel Victor nearby, knew his daughter was safely held in his arms. Swallowing, he closed his eyes and remembered the statement he gave all those months back. He didn’t have much to say then, he was horrified, his memory was a jumbled mess. At that time Yuuri was more interested in the immediate, he had survived and that was the most important part. He wasn’t ready to face the rest of it then.

Now, with therapy and the support of friends and family, he was beginning to better remember what happened. He could focus on the details and push away the pain to find information that would be helpful. He must...but he found himself swallowing down the whimper.

Victor’s hand rested on his back. “Are you ready?”

“No?” he squeaked. He could feel his own tremble. Victor waited and let him find his own feet. Taking deep breaths and letting them out slowly, he finally nodded. “Stay close to me,” he whispered just before they opened the doors.

“Always,” Victor answered equally softly.

The chaos of police work surrounded them and Yuuri immediately felt overwhelmed. He took a
step backwards, but felt his mate’s grounding presence and was grateful for Victor. He made his way to the counter and in a voice that sounded far more high pitched than he liked, asked, “Is Lt. Benson here?” showing them the card.

Soon he was directed into a quiet space and Yuuri felt a short reprieve of relief. Victor kept a firm hand on him and then Shizuka started to fuss picking up on Yuuri’s stress. As Victor lifted her out of her carrier, Yuuri said, “Hand her to me,” his hand shaking but steadying as he felt his daughter settle into his hold. She nuzzled into her mama’s chest and Yuuri sighed knowing she just wanted to nurse to calm herself but at the moment, he couldn’t deny her need. He began unbuttoning his shirt and pulled the bralette and pad to the side giving her the access she needed. He felt calmer instantly, realizing he needed to do this as badly as she did. She was straddling his lap with Yuuri bouncing her, his hand patting her back when the door opened.

The detective walked in, smiling at the omega, “Yuuri Katsuki, I’m Olivia Benson.”

Yuuri blushed a little caught in something so intimate, but Olivia seemed to take it as natural. “Yes, I remember...you weren’t here when I reported the rape originally.”

“No, I’m sorry...I wasn’t.” Her voice was sincere and Yuuri felt instantly that had she been there the investigation, and possibly his treatment at the hands of the university would have been vastly different. “I was in the process of transferring. We’ve been building up the Special Victims Unit and working hard to secure more convictions since I arrived.”

Yuuri was impressed, but he was a little confused by her conviction. “About my case...I was told it was dead, that the mishandling of evidence would make a conviction impossible.”

“It wouldn’t have been impossible...but much more difficult. And we would hate to prosecute and risk him getting off so that double indemnity set in. So we waited, and watched.” He watched as her eyes narrowed, and he could tell that waiting and watching criminals walk free was highly frustrating. “My partner and I were particularly concerned when your case came across our desk given the brutality of the attack.”

Yuuri’s eyes were downcast, not exactly focusing on Shizuka and his hand stilled, knee no longer bouncing her. She fussed a little, breaking away and he blinked seeing to her and handing her off to Victor, turning to put himself back together. “I’m sorry,” he murmured.

Olivia smiled warmly, “Don’t worry about it. I want you to feel comfortable.”
“I’ve been in therapy...and it’s helped. But still...I...I’ve remembered things since then and I am afraid.”

“We’ve learned things since then as well.” She opened a file she had brought into the room. “There have been other cases, omega disappearances. And we think they are related.”

Yuuri looked up, a shiver going through him. “He wanted to keep me...and...I don’t think it was random. When I talked before...to the other officer...he seemed to think it was a crime of opportunity. But...he knew my name and I know I didn’t give it to him.”

Olivia grimaced, knowing his case and how it fit with three she was investigating currently. “That goes with what our information is telling us. We believe omegas are targeted specifically, shopped and after the selection has been made, they are force-bonded.”

Yuuri nodded in agreement. “He forced me into a one-way bond. It was terrifying. I could tell that although he wanted to possess me, he felt nothing for me but...condescension?”

“He didn’t value you as a person.”

Yuuri shook his head and added, “Only as property.”

Olivia paused, giving Yuuri a moment to settle, the she dug for the information they desperately needed, “That night you and your coach filed a report, and you gave a statement, you said you didn’t know what he looked like...but after three days, are you sure?”

Yuuri’s brown eyes rose sharply, locking with her in determination, “I...I’ve remembered some of his appearance. Dark hair, blue eyes...it was long and wavy. He kept it in a ponytail. He was...hairy. His skin darker...like it was tanned. He talked...wealthy?” Yuuri hated that he couldn’t better explain the last part, but there was something about the man’s carriage.

Olivia wrote down the words he shared. “Anything else?”

Yuuri’s eyes rested on his daughter knowing she carried the monster’s DNA and hating to acknowledge it. “My daughter...sh-she’s his.” The words were barely whispered and he suddenly needed to hold her once more, protective arms wrapping around her.
Olivia watched as the omega cuddled his baby. Gently she asked, “Will you allow our criminologist to take a cheek sample for both you and her? It could validate the rape kit.”

Yuuri lifted frightened eyes to Victor. “I-I...don’t want to risk him getting her.”

Olivia held up a hand, shaking her head, “No. You are protected by state law. He can’t get custody of her, he can’t even get visitation rights. He has no rights to her, no claim. There is enough evidence to protect you from that, even if we can’t get him for rape.”

Yuuri held onto Victor’s eyes, not sure what to do, waiting. Victor said softly, “It’s up to you, Yuuri. I support you in this.”

Swallowing, he slowly nodded. As he signed papers, Lt. Benson called in the criminologist. They took a cheek sample from both baby and mother. Yuuri could feel himself trembling, to the point where Victor took Shizuka back into his arms and gathered Yuuri into his side. Yuuri signed more papers, his witness statements, permissions. Then he waited.

Olivia Benson sat across from him, her expression gentle. “I know this is hard. Do you think you could identify your rapist if we found him?”

Yuuri nodded hesitantly. “I know I could recognize his voice.”

“How long are you here?”

“Until the end of the week...I have to finish my part of the trial with the university.” He looked at her curiously, “Y-you were there.”

She thinned her lips and Yuuri got the impression she knew, or suspected something, she wasn’t letting on. However, she dodged that statement and returned with, “I am looking for witnesses in your case, connections that will allow me to make progress with your case.”

Yuuri looked up towards Victor, chewing his lip and then his mate nodded. Turning back, he left her with the assurance, “I can come back if needed. I mean...I have competition schedule and a heat coming up...”
“We can make arrangements and hold off picking up the suspect if needed.”

Yuuri ran his hand over the back of his daughter’s head before asking, “Do you think...he’s still after me?”

She was reluctant to answer but due diligence forced her to answer. “Often with predatory alphas, they view their victims as their property. And rapists are sadist by nature, even if he didn’t want you back, he wouldn’t hesitate to hurt you to keep himself safe. So I do caution you to be careful. Stay with your mate and if you have a group, keep in larger numbers. And stay in populated spaces.”

Yuuri took in this information. Then he thought her what she had said about him, his nature, “Is this...how he was born?”

She half nodded and half shook her head as she thinned her lips. “Some say they are born that way, others say it was the way they were raised. Based on our investigation, it seems to be more of a group mentality, pack hunters with one feeding the others. It’s easier to give yourself permission to do these things if you are backed up by others doing them as well. So no, I don’t think he was born this way.” Her eyes rested on Yuuri’s daughter before she added, “This is not a genetic thing.”

Yuuri left his contact information as well as their hotel accommodations. She pressed another card into his hand. “Please call if you have more information.”

Yuuri studied the card then asked, “Can I call to check on progress with the case?”

“Of course,” she assured him.

Victor helped Yuuri gather up Shizuka’s things as Olivia left them alone. It was done. The police knew that Yuuri could identify the rapist. He glanced up under his lashes. “This is so hard.”

Victor looked at his mate, wrung out from the interview, “I know, my Yuuri. We need to do something to break the tension.”
“I...don’t skate tonight. I was hoping to catch up with an old friend.”

“I don’t want you going alone.” Victor’s voice was adamant.

“Phichit wants to go as well.” Yuuri considered his friend, forever vigilant. Then he remembered who they were meeting. “Ketty is an alpha. She is the one that composed my music for my Free Skate.”

Victor smiled, “Do you mind if I meet her?”

Yuuri chuckled, not sure if Victor was jealous, or interested in stealing her as a composer. “No, not at all. She’d want to meet you. Will you...keep Shizuka with you?”

Victor was surprised but nodded, his voice breaking slightly as he answered, “Of course.”

Yuuri nodded before hugging him. “I’d just feel better.”

Both Celestino and Victor watched the two young omegas with trepidation as they waited for Yuuri’s friend in the hotel lobby. “Are you okay with this?” Celestino asked under his breath.

Victor’s head shook almost imperceptibly. “Not really but I don’t want to put my fear off on Yuuri. He needs some time off from his stress.”

“You could ask to go along.” Celestino looked like he was ready to volunteer as chaperone.

Victor hummed, shifting where he stood, “I could...I want to...but Yuuri didn’t exactly invite me.”

Celestino’s grey eyes rested on the other two skaters. “I don’t like this.”
Ketty came in, though, and Victor quickly realized she was a force of nature as she ran up and wrapped both Yuuri and Phichit in her embrace. She was...a giant of a woman, over six foot tall and filling the space. “Is this your baby?” she squealed excitedly, kneeling down by the carrier. As she fussed over the baby, she lifted golden eyes to meet Victor’s. “Don’t worry, I’ll keep them safe,” she said softly.

Victor finally felt comfortable, Yuuri would be spending the evening with a girl that could easily kick his own ass. “I’m trusting you with my mate.”

“I know...he’s been one of my closest friends for the last five years.” Her voice was teasing, implying that she did have prior claim for knowing Yuuri first and longer. Then she softened and spoke to Victor aside, “I won’t let anyone hurt him.”

They stared at one another sizing each other up before Victor stepped back and nodded. Yuuri knelt down hesitantly saying his goodbyes to Shizuka. Victor knew that was hard as well. Yuuri always had his daughter in reach. But he pulled back, standing up to lean into Victor’s embrace. “Don’t leave her side till you’re home with me,” he murmured.

“I won’t. Thank you.” Yuuri then stepped back and turned to join Ketty and Phichit.

They were sitting in the greasy spoon just off campus, a basket of fries between them and bacon cheeseburgers so deliciously terrible that it had to be where the term greasy spoon came from. Sodas in diner tumblers, and straw wrappers littering the table where they blew them at one another before collapsing in giggles. Yuuri looked across at Ketty, easily taking half the burger in one bite, then to Phichit next to him picking at the fries and licking the salt from his fingers. I missed this. I needed tonight. Yuuri giggled at his friend dipping into the honey mustard and then grimacing as he realized for the umpteenth time he hated honey mustard.

However, Yuuri’s laughter was more subdued than normal and Ketty picked up on it. “Missing her already?” she asked softly.

He laughed weakly and shrugged. “I...have trouble leaving her. I don’t even even like for her to sleep in another room.”
Ketty raised an amused eyebrow and asked, “What does Victor think about that?”

Yuuri shrugged. “He...is patient with me. We have the crib at the foot of the bed but she still ends up in bed with us quite often.”

“All the time,” Phichit corrected, giggling. “She’s a wriggling, giggling bundle of birth control.”

“Well, I mean...we do…” Yuuri trailed off, his face going red.

Ketty laughed as she took a sip of her soda but Phichit looks traumatized. “You have sex in front of the bambino?!!!”

Yuuri drops his head down on the table, hiding at this point as he says between his teeth, “Not so loud, Phichit. And don’t use Ciao Ciao’s words, it’s just weird coming from anyone but him.”

Ketty set her glass back down and pressed in gently, “So, you found a work around.”

Yuuri turned his head sideways to answer her but still laid it on the table. “Yeah...sort of. We...tent her bed.”

Both Phichit and Ketty giggled at his discomfort. “I’ll have to keep that in mind for when I have a mate.”

“What do you mean when...what about Jules?” Yuuri asked, brow wrinkled as he raised his head. Jules had been another in their friend group and it looked like she and Ketty would get together but he hadn’t heard from the dancer since he’d left.

She sighed, shrugging. “I mean...we were fine but then you left. A few weeks afterward, a lot of omegas ‘unenrolled’ suddenly. Class one day, gone the next. Her parents started freaking out and pulled her out of the university. So...I suppose...she hasn’t really talked to anyone.”

“She’s...not talked to me either. I didn’t even know she had left,” Yuuri confessed and Phichit frowned realizing the same was true for him as well. “Is Ashley still here?”
“Yeah, but she’s in her internship so not really on campus all that much. We don’t really see each other.” They watched at Ketty grew somber, thinking of her dwindling group of friends. “Natalia moved off as well. Of course, she graduated, so I guess that’s to be expected.”

Yuuri considered his other friends. Ashley shared his love of dogs and was a veterinary science major. Natalia was another music major along with Ketty. They all lived in the same complex and had developed fairly solid friendships. “I’m sorry,” Yuuri whispered.

Ketty’s expression was soft as she reached across the booth to him. “Hey, it’s not your fault, honey.”

“Yeah, but sometimes it feels like it is. I mean, I’m the one that put myself at risk.”

“No, you have the right to not be assaulted. The person to blame is the rapist,” Ketty sighed shaking her head and Phichit slid his arm around his shoulders. “Yuuri, you went for a run, something you’ve done a thousand times.”

“Enough that someone noticed,” Yuuri argued bitterly.

“You think it wasn’t random?” Phichit asked, his eyebrows narrowing as he considered Yuuri’s words.

Yuuri pursed his lips, shaking his head, “It...was easier to think it was random...but...he knew my name.”

Ketty and Phichit met each other’s eyes. “You...were so disconnected after it happened,” Phichit began.

Ketty nodded. “And then you avoided thinking about it throwing yourself back onto the ice.”

Yuuri thought back to where he was those days after he was found, how he had changed once he found his footing again, “I think...once I started feeling safe, things came back to my memory. I...sometimes wish they stayed locked away.”
An hour later, they argued over who would get the check and while Ketty and Phichit flipped a coin to decide, Yuuri slipped his credit card to the patient waitress. They started walking out to the parking lot but then Yuuri stilled, his eyes darting around him.

“What’s wrong?” Ketty asked noticing that Yuuri was on alert. Phichit drew close.

“I...don’t know. It feels like someone is watching me.” He then shrugged it off as they climbed into the car. “I’m probably just on edge because of the police station. It’s brought a lot of memories up.”

Phichit glanced around through the window as they started to pull out of the parking lot and spotted movement in the shadows. He shivered and turned to meet Ketty’s eyes in the mirror. “Let’s just get the two of you back to your rooms,” Ketty stated firmly.

Back at the hotel, the alpha insisted on escorting them back up to their room. “It will give me a chance to see Yuuri’s mini-me.”

Yuuri smiled at that thought and couldn’t deny her. Using the key card, Yuuri called out, “Vitya, are you decent? Ketty wants to see the baby again.”

Victor came around the corner in sweatpants and a t-shirt. “Yuuri!”

He stepped into the room inviting the other two in and Yuuri noted the door connecting the rooms was open and Celestino was sitting at the table. “Poker?”

“A good way to pass the time but Celestino is a card shark!”

Yuuri and Phichit both snorted. “Who do you think taught me to play?” Yuuri added. “I hope we still own a house.”
Victor shrugged and answered, “I figured it was Minako...or maybe Mari.”

Yuuri shrugged, a non-committal smile on his lips as he gathered his daughter in his arms. She fussed happily and buried herself into his neck. “Oh...you fed her,” Yuuri murmured in disappointment.

“That’s why you express your milk, my Yuuri.”

“Did she...was she okay with the bottle?” Yuuri was happy his daughter was sated, but had to admit that small pang of jealousy.

“She fussed a little around the nipple but then figured it out. You selected that type because it was the most natural.”

Yuuri knew Victor’s words were meant to be reassuring but he felt like something was taken from him. He forced a smile and handed her over for Ketty to play with. His friend bounced the baby on her hip.

“How was your evening out?”

Yuuri opened up his mouth to say something about how he got creeped out in the parking lot but then closed his lips over the words. Victor noticed and looked from Yuuri to Phichit to Ketty.

It was Ketty that spilled...perhaps because they had a promise alpha to alpha. “It was fine but Yuuri got spooked in the parking lot.”

Yuuri shot Ketty a look, then turned back to Victor, “It was nothing...I told you I was just on edge.”

Phichit darted eyes from one to the other but then said, “Well, I thought I saw a shadow moving as we pulled out of the parking lot.” He saw Yuuri’s eyes on him, and shrugged.

Victor met Celestino’s eyes and an unspoken agreement went between the two. “I think it might be best if the two of you don’t go out alone while we are here,” Victor stated. “Even together.”
“Even in this hotel,” Celestino added.

Both of the omegas looked stricken as they felt their world get smaller but then Ketty echoed their words. “I think it will be for the best, boys. And don’t ignore your instincts, Yuuri. You were right tonight.”

She handed the baby over before hugging each of her friends. “I’ll be in touch.”

“Thank you for going out with us,” Phichit called. After she left, he turned and hugged Yuuri goodnight before following his coach back to their room.

In bed that night, they could hear Phichit and Celestino talking in the next room over. Victor was quiet at first but finally murmured, “Are you mad?”

Yuuri shook his head. “No...not really. Just...I wouldn’t have said anything.”

“Why?” Victor worried that Yuuri would ignore his instincts and get hurt.

“It seemed like...nothing.” Yuuri couldn’t put it in words, I just had a feeling, that’s all. “I just didn’t want to alarm anyone.”

Victor reached out, touching his shoulder, “But what if it’s not?”

Chapter End Notes

So tomorrow (Monday), I'll put up Sirin. Wednesday, the new fic...and I will put Gravity up somewhere between Thursday and Saturday depending on how my schedule works out. It's all good. One crazy week...I think. I can deal with this. Also, this is the last written chapter of Truth. It's plotted out. I just have to sit down and write and the new story took up all of my head space last week (and it's BluSkates' current favorite...). So if the next chapter is delayed, don't lose heart. It's the next one up to write. I just have to work through my crazy week. ;) Have a happy first week of December!
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Still in Detroit, our team finds themselves more than once looking over their shoulders.

Chapter Notes

Get you a cuddle buddy this chapter...because it's going to put you on edge. Just remember...I believe in happy endings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yuuri’s knee bounced with hemmed up nervous energy after sitting in court. He elected to watch the proceedings this time and although Victor never left his side, he was still not sure it was a good idea. However, as hard as they tried the defense was faltering in breaking down the arguments of Yuuri’s attorneys. There were too many witnesses, too many things gone wrong and covered up. He focused on Lt. Benson and watched how her eyes narrowed with certain parts of the various testimonies.

His breaks were taken over with caring for his daughter, which was good as it gave him little time to overthink. Slipping into the witness holding room, he fed her in the company of the other omegas. Victor was close by but gave Yuuri this space. One of the omegas watched with cautious eyes and Yuuri waited. They were all hurting and and desperately seeking their way out of this.

“So...you kept their baby? Even after all they did to you?” she asked. It wasn’t an accusation, but the girl’s voice carried her hurt.

Yuuri nodded. “I wouldn’t have if they allowed abortions for male omegas...but now, I can’t imagine life without her.”

She looked from Yuuri to his daughter...his beautiful perfect daughter. “I...was able to get an abortion. I try not to think about what might have been.” She laughed, bitterly, looking down. “My mother said there were no sadder words than ‘what might have been.’ It's just...every time I went to the doctor, it felt like I went through it all over again.”
Yuuri saw the struggle in the young woman. “You’ll be back in an ob/gyn’s office again. On your terms.” He shifted Shizuka, who was happily feeding. “But I know what you mean. It took a long time and good support to be able to move past the pain. Somehow along the journey, I fell in love with my daughter. My mate helped me, though...because...I didn’t really love myself either.”

She hugged herself and lifted curious eyes Victor’s direction. He sat talking quietly to Phichit. “He’s good to you?”

“Very good to me. He never wavered even though I made it hard on him.” Yuuri’s eyes followed the girl’s to his mate. “I pushed him away so many times. I thought he’d leave more than once but he held fast. And...I never really wanted to leave. I never could bring myself to tell him to go back to Russia.”

“It hurts...to let someone love you. I broke up with my fiance. I can tell he wants to be friends but I just...can’t. Not right now.”

Yuuri turned back to study the girl, obviously struggling. “I think the most important part of my recovery was counseling. Tell me you’re seeing a counselor.”

She darted her eyes away, shrugging, “I did...on campus. It wasn’t worth the time.”

**Why doesn’t that surprise me?** “Find someone independent,” Yuuri pressed. “I went through some intensive therapy called EMDR to help me move past the trauma. I still find triggers, though.”

“I don’t know if they have anything like that around here.”

“You could ask your therapist...when you get one,” Yuuri suggested. He switched sides and she continued to feed as he covered them both once more with the blanket. “I didn’t really plan to be a mother...certainly not in the middle of my career...but she helps me find my smile again.”

The girl’s eyes were on his daughter again, the chubby, happy face, the perfect little fingers clenched into fists. “Maybe...sometimes I wonder if I should have…”

“There are regrets no matter which decision you go with,” Yuuri reassured her. “Some days I look at her and wonder about what parts of her are me and what parts are him. I’m...happy with my
decision to keep her. I didn’t really have many choices. However, my mate pointed out the importance of choice...always. So he never put his influence on my decision. And now I’m at peace with it.” He peeked up at Victor, meeting blue eyes across the room. “I knew he wanted her...and to him, she is his. She’ll never know the lack of a father.”

“If I had a supportive partner…” She trailed off once more, her eyes wistful.

Yuuri held Shizu closer with his arm and reached out for the girl with his free hand. “Or you might have made the same decision anyway. I...made peace with my daughter in my life because I had no choice but to have her. I don’t know...and I try not to dwell on...the what ifs.”

The court finally adjourned for the day and Yuuri was surrounded by his coach and his mate, Shizuka on his hip, her bag on Phichit’s shoulder. They moved in a small huddle towards the door and out to their rental.

In the safety of the car’s confines, Yuuri closed his eyes, one hand on Shizuka. Victor rode in the back with him, giving the front seat to Phichit who chatted with their coach about the various people they talked to. Victor reached over and covered Yuuri’s hand on their daughter with his own. “Are you okay?”

Yuuri shrugged. “What’s going on the rest of the day?” The stress of the day could be heard in his voice.

Victor pursed his lips, tapping his index finger thoughtfully before answering. “I thought we’d have dinner in...we don’t have ice until tomorrow.”

Yuuri grunted. “I could use some time on ice. One more day of this.”

Victor thinned his lips and nodded. The strain of being in court, of being in Detroit was weighing heavy on everyone. Celestino would testify tomorrow, telling about the condition Yuuri was found in, the location, and where Yuuri was processed. Victor knew he would be holding everyone together until it was over. He lifted his eyes to meet the coach’s dark grey eyes in the mirror.

Phichit turned around to look at his friend and then to Victor. “Maybe we should go out...shake all of this negativity out of our system.”
The alpha had to admit it sounded tempting. “I really don’t want you two to be someplace where we could get separated,” Victor began cautiously. The Thai skater hummed in agreement although his disappointment could be seen in his form turning back to the front. Glancing towards Yuuri, he saw his mate was also looking a bit daunted. “Maybe dinner...we all need to eat,” he compromised.

Both Yuuri and Phichit perked up a little at the promise of a night out. “We could go to that Italian place coach always took us to after a win,” Phichit suggested excitedly, his eyes begging Celestino.

The old coach chuckled warmly although Victor could hear his own unease. “I’ll call Angelo and see if we can get a table.”

Yuuri stood by the door in dark jeans and a deep red pullover. Victor’s breath caught at how that color pulled the red out of his partner’s cinnamon eyes. “Are you feeling okay about tonight?” he asked as he turned to straighten his button up and sweater.

Yuuri laughed hollowly. “I was about to ask you the same. I’ll...be glad to be home. I miss Yura, the dogs, Mila, and the boys. I miss...my own bed. And I definitely miss not being on edge all the time.”

Victor sighed as he stepped closer to Yuuri pulling him into his embrace. “Agreed...on all of that.” He dropped a kiss on Yuuri’s upturned lips and tasted Yuuri’s sigh. He then held still as Yuuri pulled his shirt to the side and breathed in his scent. It had been awhile since he’d done that and the motion both comforted Victor in its intimacy and worried him in that Yuuri’s stress was high enough that he needed this. “A couple more days...then we’ll be home.”

A knock on the adjoining door drew their attention and they turned to greet the other two as it opened. “Ready?” Celestion asked. He looked sharp dressed in pressed jeans and a black pullover. Phichit stood nearby with a green sweater that really showed the omega’s youth.

“Is that your old school uniform?” Yuuri asked critically.

“What?!? No, of course not.” Phichit looked down guiltily tugging at the white shirt underneath self-consciously.
Celestino placed a protective hand on his skater’s back. “We thought if he looked younger, maybe he wouldn’t stand out as much. He doesn’t have the protection of Victor’s scent.”

Victor nodded in agreement. “Anything that might help.” *But if you’ve already been made, that uniform isn’t going to fool anyone. And to the right predator, it could make you more attractive.* Yuuri glanced up and read the worry in his frown, squeezing his hand. “Let’s go.”

As they walked into Angelo’s, Celestino was greeted by the owner and chef personally with a warm hug and several lines of Italian before he turned to greet the rest of the party. “I reserved a private place in the corner for you all. My friend explained that things have been uneasy.”

“Thank you,” Victor replied softly appreciating the thoughtful gesture.

The booth provided additional security as Victor settled Yuuri next to the wall, Celestino doing the same with Phichit. Rather than a high chair, they settled Shizuka between mother and father. Yuuri reached for the black napkin and spread it over his lap as the peppercorn bread and dipping oil was laid out. After asking for water since none of them wanting to be fuzzy headed, they looked over the menu. Soon their water arrived along with the complimentary salads.

“Maybe we can share a dish,” Yuuri suggested to Victor. “The servings are generous.”

“We could order family style,” suggested the coach. Once the waiter arrived, he put in the order for the table and received satisfied nods from the others. Soon, the *tomato caprese salad* with a balsamic reduction was served and they passed the plate around.

“This is a much better idea than individual meals,” Victor commented.

Celestino shrugged. “It’s how we do it at home.”

That was followed by a *chicken with tomato basil cream sauce* served over fusilli pasta. It was a heavy meal but none of them had eaten well throughout the trip. As the weight of dinner settled in on them, Yuuri drooped against Victor’s side, Shizuka in his lap already asleep.

“I guess we’d better head back to the room,” Celestino suggested as he started to settle up the bill.
“I should get that,” Victor argued reaching for the ticket.

Celestino pursed his lips, shaking his head. “My place, my bill,” he stated. Victor noticed how the coach’s dark eyes kept darting around the room, seeking one corner more frequently as the night drew to a close.

Once Celestino signed the receipt, they headed out the door. Phichit and Yuuri didn’t feel anything unusual in the Italian man’s step, but his hurried pace drew attention from the maitre d’ who nodded in understanding on their way out.

Halfway to the car, Yuuri started shifting uncomfortably and looking around. The raven head darted around, eyes searching into dark corners. To his side Phichit was doing the same. Victor’s arm slid around Yuuri protectively, pulling Phichit into his other arm. A low warning growl emitted from his throat and Phichit started to tremble. Yuuri focused on holding tight to Shizuka and following Celestino’s swift steps to the car.

As Celestino unlocked the car, Victor ordered them firmly, “Get in.” He handed both of them into the same door, taking Shizuka to slide Yuuri in, then returning her before locking the door firmly between them. Across the hood he met Celestino’s eyes as they searched out, locking on one spot finally. The coach nodded to him then climbed in and started the car. Victor looked around once more uneasily before climbing into the front passenger seat, securing the door behind him.

As the car drove off, Phichit started babbling nervously. “That was so weird. It was like I could feel someone’s eyes on me. Like someone was targeting me personally. That’s ridiculous, isn’t it?” He laughed weakly, then faded into silence as the others didn’t join him.

Yuuri reached across Shizuka’s car seat and took his hand. “Phi…”

Phichit cut him off, “It’s like that night, isn’t it? Did you feel like you were being watched like that?”

Yuuri heard the panic rising in his friend, and kept his own voice steady. Shrugging before slowly shaking his head. “No…but I didn’t know I should be nervous. I was focused on my music and running home. Maybe if I had been more aware…”

Phichit whined softly. “I’m sorry, Yuu…I shouldn’t have...that…it’s not your fault you didn’t know you were in danger.” Looking up towards Victor, the youngest omega studied his tense lines.
“What...did you get out of all that?”

Victor and Celestino exchanged glances before he said quietly, “That was the scent of a predatory alpha on a hunt. You wouldn’t have been able to smell it, but something deep in your instincts told you of their presence.”

Phichit shivered more violently even as Yuuri held onto his hands. “He was after me,” he whispered.

“You’re safe, Phichit...you’re with us,” Yuuri tried to reassure him.

Ciao Ciao looked back through his rearview mirror. “I’m taking the long way back, Phichit. I learned how to drive in Italy. Trust me when I say I can lose him.”

The passengers remained tense in the winding, hour long journey back to their hotel. Victor’s eyes kept sharp in the mirror and glancing back, looking for something familiar in the darkness. “I think we’ve lost them,” he said quietly at one point. “We’ll call the Detroit police when we get safely to our rooms.”

Celestino grunted. A glance back showed two omegas holding both pairs of hands. Thankfully, Shizuka remained asleep.

---

NOTES:

I started here when I started looking for their meal but then I decided to go with the base recipe for what I made for dinner tonight. I used leftover jars of ingredients but it came down to garlic, fresh basil, sun dried tomatoes, artichoke, and alfredo sauce. I did watch something similar to the caprese on the Food Network earlier today which inspired the appetizer.

Chapter End Notes

No Phichits were harmed in the making of this story. Could you imagine the hate mail I'd receive? Besides, I can't hurt our little hamster king.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

The after affects of their night out.

Chapter Notes

I'm posting early so I don't get caught up in the holiday rush and forget. Safe travels for those on the road. Happy holidays!

The small party arrived at the hotel and the two older men hustled the young omegas and baby into the elevator, effectively blocking them in and politely declaring the elevator closed to others. Phichit had fallen into stoic silence, staring straight ahead. Yuuri hovered protectively next to him, casting worried looks between the other two men. Once they reached their room, Celestino went inside and checked both spaces before Victor let them enter.

Phichit stood in the middle of the room, listless. Yuuri strode past him and began undressing his daughter and getting her ready for bed. She fussed a little and he cooed softly promising she’ll eat soon. Victor had stepped back out in the hall and he had a feeling their coach had done the same. Both men standing guard, suspiciously eyeing anyone stepping from the elevator.

“Phichit,” Yuuri said softly trying to draw his friend out of his state. “Come, play with your niece while I get her some fresh clothes.” At the invitation Phichit started moving, albeit mechanically, then slowly relaxing. The task seemed to help ground the Thai skater for the moment and he came to Yuuri’s side, stretching out beside the baby.

Yuuri slowly relinquished her to his care and went to look for a onesie. He’d been hand-washing and drying in the bathroom and soon he returned with a warm, damp cloth and clean pajamas from a couple of nights prior. Working quickly, he removed the wet diaper and bathed her off with care.

Phichit watched thoughtfully. “I never really pictured you with a baby,” he said quietly.

Yuuri looked up. “Honestly, I never did either...but now, in time I wouldn’t mind having more.”
He smiled at his friend’s wide eyes, “After I retire. I lost a year and a half to pregnancy, unplanned and for a long time, unwanted. But...I’m at peace with keeping her. I’m glad she’s in my life, and I’m part of hers.”

“You didn’t decide until the last minute, though,” Phichit murmured.

Yuuri shook his head, laying the washcloth aside and securing the diaper. He reached for the sleeper, blue and covered with light and dark brown poodles, pink bows in their ears or tails. She kicked her feet giggling as he played with her to put them into the legs before snapping up the legs and front. She reached up to grab his face, and Yuuri melted into her touch, turning to kiss her tiny palms. Pulling back, he looked at his friend. “If she had been Victor’s, there would have never been a question.”

Phichit had relaxed noticeably watching mother and daughter interact. “Except you both hadn’t slept together at that point…”

Yuuri blushed a little, “Well, slept yes, sex no...I just...I wanted to believe it so much because it made her easier to accept in the beginning. But...Victor knew the truth and loved her anyway. I think...I think that helped me to let my heart go and love her as well. But even at that last minute, I wasn’t sure. I was...afraid.”

Phichit let her chew on his fingers while he studied the small form. “I’m...not ready to be a mother. I don’t know what I’d do.”

“No one would...not unless they’ve been there before. And then again...each situation, each child is different. At some point...we have to make peace with our decisions.” He turned thoughtful, determined. “But...I should have had the option of more decisions...especially concerning my body.”

Phichit nodded. He watched Yuuri remove his shirt, comfortable around his old roommate in a half nude state, and lift his daughter up to nurse. “Is it weird?”

Yuuri raised an amused eyebrow. “Nursing?”

Phichit blushed and shrugged. “I mean...we’re men. How did we develop this ability to do these things.”
“You and I know there are a lot of theories regarding that...religious, scientific, all the way to conspiracy theories talking about alien races.”

Phichit agreed with a laugh. “I like the one where the ambiguously gendered aliens came down and reproduced children with us creating the various strains of humanity. Shane’s documentary on Jeffree Star actually talked about it.”

Yuuri smiled, “I think *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* actually did the best job explaining that one. Or the one where the gods took mates among humanity and those who accepted their seeds, became omegas. Their offspring varying between alpha and omega, the alphas being almost godlike.”

“Like Perseus and Heracles.”

Yuuri grinned and nodded. Turning his attention back to his daughter, he murmured, “It’s a curiosity to know when and how it happened, but the whens and hows don’t matter in the end. Just what is. And that’s that I have a beautiful daughter who is wholly dependent on me.” She cooed in response as she suckled at his breast.

Phichit furled on the bed, resting his chin into his hands and studying his friend. “Do they...get sore?”

Yuuri laughed and nodded. “Sensitive at the very least. I have some cream my mom sends me that helps. If I can remember to put it on after she nurses. It’s safe for her, vegan...based on coconut oil. They get cracked and sore if I neglect them. And Victor...he gets upset if I don’t take care of myself.”

Phichit laid back staring at the ceiling. “He’s very attentive. I’m glad...you found each other.”

“He was from the start. Sweet and tender. I didn’t know how to respond. It made it easier to believe the lie. I couldn’t believe that he’d be that way if the baby wasn’t his, if there was no chance.” He switched breasts as he thought about it. “It’s hard...for me to accept being loved. I almost have to have a reason.”

Phichit’s eyes widened at his friend’s admission, “Oh, Yuuri...you are one of the easiest people to love and your strength has always been admirable.”
Yuuri huffed in protest. “My strength? I’m an anxious mess!”

The Thai man sat up, “I know…and you don’t let that stop you. Many would. Most wouldn’t push themselves to perform as you do.”

Yuuri nodded, his daughter finally turning away from the breast, finished. “Will you hold her while I put myself back together?” Eager hands took her with ease and Yuuri slipped back into the bathroom. He’d focused on his daughter during the feeding not wanting his stress and worries to sour her milk but as the task finished, he could feel himself shivering. *Hold it together and keep Phichit distracted, Katsuki.*

---

Out in the hall, Victor was on the phone with the Detroit PD. “We were outside a restaurant. Angelos...no, I don’t know which one...let me hand the phone over to my mate’s coach. He knows the area.”

Celestino buzzed off the address and reported what he observed. The police promised to patrol through the area but without any identifying information beyond an intrusive, predatory scent, they really had nothing to go on. They would survey the area but there was really nothing they could act on officially.

Handing the phone back to Victor, the alpha asked when Lt. Benson would be in and asked if she could call them back in the morning.

---

Phichit was reluctant to let go of Shizuka but Yuuri knew he needed to get her down. She wouldn’t fully go to sleep while being held. She liked the space of her bed for her initial rest although was quite willing to join her mama in the early hours of morning for feeding after being changed.

Yuuri turned back to Phichit after he settled her into bed and could see the edges crumbling for him as well. “Oh, Phi…” He went immediately and pulled his friend into his arms. Phichit curled into his arms and finally let himself fall apart. Yuuri could feel his body shaking along with Phichit’s.

“Th-they were after me, Yuuri,” he whispered. “Me in particular...why? I haven’t been here that
long. How could they have found me so quickly?”

“That’s...a good question,” Yuuri admitted begrudgingly. “Remember when I told you that he knew my name? Once I remembered that detail, I realized I’d been stalked and I wondered how long they’d been watching me, waiting for the right moment, the right opportunity.”

“Is someone just putting in orders for omegas with certain specifications, Yuuri?” Phichit squeezed into his friend’s embrace tighter. “How...deranged is that? How can someone think that is okay?”

Yuuri thinned his lips remembering what Lt. Benson had revealed. “Some...alphas, some don’t think of us as human. In their mind, we are theirs for the taking, created just for them...and they would have us enslaved to suit their needs and wants. And maybe some would treat their omegas well after acquiring them but I doubt most alphas...of that variety...would care too much. It was a one way bond, Phichit. He sought to own me, not mate with me. He planned to keep me in my place.”

Phichit shivered thinking of what his friend had gone through. His voice came out in a whisper, “Why do you think he let you go?”

Yuuri shrugged, “Honestly? I think Ciao Ciao...he kept the heat turned up so high dragging in international interests that the creep had no choice.”

“You’d think that would somehow...insulate me.”

Yuuri nodded as he considered the thought. “What if someone...is brokering us? Someone picking out the, ah, merchandise for them to shop, for them to hunt. They put out the specifications and the broker finds the targets.”

Phichit blinked his mouth opening at the horror of that thought. “That...doesn’t put me at ease.”

Yuuri shivered. “Me, neither. Sorry I said anything.”

Phichit was quiet for a moment. Both men holding each other, letting their bodies calm after the break. Then the younger man asked, “Is that what you’ve been thinking?”
The older man nodded, his eyelids lowering as he bunched in his shoulders. “It’s just that...the one who took me, he knew who he was grabbing. And I’d never met him. I’m intensely private. How else could he have known me?”

Phichit looked up, black eyes meeting rich brown. He sat up, “It could have been a crazed fan.”

Yuuri shook his head, arms loosening from his friend’s shoulders. “He didn’t talk to me about skating. He called me his omega whore.”

Phichit’s lips parted as he thought about it. “I...don’t like this.”

“Me, neither. I think...we need to only do the necessary from this point forward. Maybe even order in for our meals,” Yuuri suggested. His eyes strayed to his daughter. “I’d hate to know what they would do to her...and I’d die trying to keep her out of their hands...but...that thought terrifies me.”

Phichit nodded wrapping his arms around his knees. Yuuri slid across the bed next to him pulling him into his embrace. Pressing a kiss into the younger omega’s silken hair, he promised softly, “We’ll keep you safe.”

“I just wanted to be here for you, Yuuri...why did they have to come out and come after me?”

“Because...male omegas are rare and tend to show up in dance related sports.” He wasn’t sure what he wanted to share. He didn’t want to scare Phichit, but he did want him safe. “I am concerned it’s someone at the rink.”

Phichit gasped, “A hunter?”

“A broker,” Yuuri said quietly, holding onto him. “You’re safe now, Phi...sleep.”
Victor stepped into the room and found Yuuri holding Phichit, his hand soothing him in gentle strokes. “I don’t think they followed us but I spoke with the desk clerk to make sure no one had been wandering in the lobby, or the front of the hotel. They confirmed it, nor did anyone call asking for our rooms. They have had no inquiries but were appreciative of the warning. They alerted security. Celestino stood in the halls that entire time and saw no one except a very nice elderly couple that will probably give us odd looks at breakfast tomorrow.”

Yuuri smiled at Victor’s attempt at levity. “Thanks. He’s...not doing too well. It really shook him up.”

Victor’s expression was soft. “Do you want him to sleep here?”

Yuuri shrugged but held onto his friend. “I just want him to be safe.”

“Why don’t you hold onto him while I clean up then I’ll carry him to his bed. We can keep the door open.”

Yuuri nodded in agreement and Victor felt his eyes follow him into the bathroom. Victor made quick work cleaning up, the shower short and serviceable. He’d tend to his hair with a fresh shower in the morning. Pajamas on, he reentered his room to find Yuuri in the same position as he had left him.

“He can stay if you prefer, I’ll sleep in his bed,” Victor offered.

Yuuri’s eyes went wide and he shook his head. They hated being apart, sleeping apart. Victor nodded firmly and reached down and scooped up the tiny omega from Yuuri’s arms. He watched Yuuri pick up a blanket and follow. “It has our scents,” he explained quietly. “I think he’ll feel safer knowing we’re close.” Celestino spotted them entering the room and moved to pull back the bedding for Phichit. Victor settled him into the sheets and Yuuri tucked the blanket next to his cheek.

“Don’t worry, Yuuri. I’ll keep an eye on him. It’s my job and I take it seriously,” Celestino assured him.

Yuuri knew he meant it. On impulse, the Japanese omega moved into the coach’s arms, hugging him close. “I know I haven’t been easy but thank you...for not giving up on me, for continuing to look for me.”
“I could never give up on you. How could I do anything else?” Celestino replied, a gravelly warmth in his voice as he held his student close. “It tore at me when you disappeared. It tore at me to watch you falter after we found you. I didn’t know how to help you. I’m sorry you thought I abandoned you.”

Yuuri shook his head as he stepped back. “I wasn’t in a good place mentally...but I needed to get away from here. I’m ready to leave Detroit again...I just...I can’t not fight. Maybe if they can find the ones who are in charge of this ring, we can stop this.”

“Let them do the work. You stay safe, Yuuri.” The coach studied his student and held his eyes until he was assured Yuuri wouldn’t do anything stupid. “Let’s finish this business and go home. Maybe next time you’re in America you can come to the new facility.”

Yuuri smiled, his expression bittersweet. “I’d like that. Thank you for working with me like this, through Victor.”

“Of course, Yuuri...it’s not ideal but sometimes we have to be flexible. And you need to be with Shizuka’s father...her true father.”

Yuuri’s eyes trailed across the room where Victor leaned against the door facing. Nodding, he agreed. “I do.” Turning back to his coach, he murmured softly, “Good night. We’ll leave the door open if you or Phichit need anything.”

“We’ll be fine but feel free to leave it open for your own peace of mind.”

In their own room, Yuuri settled into Victor’s arms and the alpha tilted his head to the side to give Yuuri access to his scent. Victor’s hand slid up under Yuuri’s shirt, his wrist distributing his scent along the omega’s body. Yuuri’s touch answered him in kind, and soon Yuuri found his center enough to settle. “I was holding it together for Phichit,” he whispered.

“I know, solnyshko. He needed that but now it’s time for me to take care of you.” Victor was quiet, looking for his own words. Finally he closed his eyes and forced them out. “Did you...feel targeted tonight?”
Yuuri considered their evening. He was on edge and could sense danger but it didn’t seem to be focused on him. “No, not this time...but that sensation, that...intensity, it’s what I encountered before. I think they knew I belonged to you this time.” He frowned as he looked for his own words. “What...exactly...is a predatory alpha?”

Victor frowned. It was a topic he never wanted to have to explain but now had to in order to protect those he loved. “It’s...an alpha that has muted their protective instincts or perhaps weren’t born with them. They view omegas as property, not people. They rarely properly bond with an omega using a two-way bond but only use a dominating bond, which would require reinforcement every so often or it fades...probably because the omega would reject it. It’s...not a marital bond, or a mating bond...it’s not a bond at all. It lacks that sort of intention. It’s a leash. With it being open, they can bond with multiple omegas who would have to do as their alpha directs while under the alpha’s influence. Some use it to force omegas into prostitution and the sex trades. Others use it to...build their own personal harem.”

Yuuri shivered thinking about the possible fates he escaped. It may not have been one alpha but several trading him back and forth. “He would have kept me if Celestino had let up on the search.”

Victor tightened his arms around him. “I think so, too...he didn’t realize how well known you were, perhaps...or didn’t take into account the heat that would be on your case.”

“But Phichit is even more popular with fans than I am,” Yuuri argued. “His social media presence alone would have so many eyes looking out for him.”

“Which means the alpha had no intention of letting Phichit out once he caught him. Either for personal use or trade.”

Yuuri shivered. “When I first went on this journey, I never dreamed how far-reaching it could be. Do you think the university is involved?”

Victor nodded hesitantly. “I think at least someone high up is involved.”

“Fuck,” Yuuri hissed, burying his nose into Victor’s scent once more. “I think...someone at the rink is working as a broker for this group...a provider of information. I’m very private about my activities.”
Victor pursed his lips thinking of the man they met the first day and his immediate dislike of him. “What do we know about Greer?”

Yuuri blinked up at him in surprise. “That...would be too easy.”

“Sometimes the most obvious answer is the answer,” Victor pointed out.

“But why?”

“There could be a million reasons but most likely money issues. It would be interesting to see where his money funnels.”

Yuuri considered the night and murmured, “I know tonight, the parking lot, I wasn’t afraid for myself. I felt...protective, determined. I needed to get Phichit and Shizuka to a safe place. I don’t know that I’m out of danger but tonight, they were after Phichit.”

They lay silent as they thought about how they weren’t exactly looking for one attacker, one alpha, one predator. There was a ring of predatorial alphas hunting omegas, somehow justifying it in their minds, perhaps through some sort of group mentality.

And maybe someone at the university and perhaps even at the skate club were involved with more than just a payoff.
Victor is rudely awakened after a long evening...only to deal with the police.

Hey all! I need to write more on this but here it is! I hope you enjoy it. Some more Olivia time.

Victor’s eyes opened, sandy and tired, his hand going up to push his hair out of the way. What woke me up? He felt as if he’d just gotten to sleep. He heard restless movements in the crib but Shizuka hadn’t worked herself up to noises. Yuuri had several nightmares during the night but was now sleeping soundly. Reaching for his phone to check the time, it vibrated once more and he spotted the flood of text messages on his screen. Ah, it was the angry kitten.

Yura/ Old Man, I didn’t sign up for this shit!

Yura/ Oh, god...why me!

Yura/ You’d better be coming home soon!

Yura/ I may kill a man. I’m close.

Victor figured on that note, he’d best call the blond brat. Slowly removing himself from the bed he watched as Yuuri continued to sleep. Moving to check on Shizuka, he sent the call through and then eased into the bathroom. He hoped he didn’t disturb Yuuri or the others. “Good morning, zvyozdochka ,” he answered in hushed cheerfulness.

“Don’t good morning me...and why are you awake?” the teen grumbled.
Victor rolled his eyes, only a teen would ask why someone couldn’t sleep through a series of text messages. “I don’t know...maybe because someone was blowing up my phone?”

Yura huffed. “I thought it was better than murder. He’s gone now. Headed to the rink.”

Victor squinted his eyes, thoughts still fuzzy, “Who?”

“Georgi...he came over and crashed on the couch groaning about Anya.” Down the line the young man emphasized his dislike for the ice dancer by mock-puking her name. “Why the fuck is he dating that bitch?”

Oh great, she’s back. “Are they together again? And language, Yura,” Victor corrected as an afterthought. However, he had to agree, she earned that title.

Yura snorted. “Hell if I know. I just know he left the floor covered in tissues. I finally took the dogs out and told him I had to get ready for practice. I guess he took the hint.”

Movement caught Victor’s eye and he looked up as the door opened and curious brown eyes peered around the door. Covering the mic, he murmured, “Sorry, love, Yura ended up with Georgi duty.”

Yuuri made a face. “That can’t have ended well.” He wet a washcloth with warm water. “Shizu wet through.”

Victor saw his escape and tooked the cloth. “I’ll clean her up and you talk to the kitten.”

Yuuri looked startled, staring into the phone as Victor took off. “Hello?”

“Katsudon! Oh, thank god! The old man is useless.”

Yuuri laughed, sitting on the edge of the tub. “What’s going on? Why aren’t you at practice?”
“Long story...Georgi came over last night and cried all night. I just got him out the door.”

“Yakov’s going to be pissed.”

The teen groaned. “I know...but...I don’t know what to say to those things. It’s not like I’ve dated. Not really.”

Yuuri sighed, smiling softly towards his reflection. “Just be kind...in your own way, and hand him off to Dmitry and Ivan. They are supposed to have Georgi duty while we are gone. We trade weeks.”

Yura tsked into the phone, “He seriously needs to get some help. I’m thinking codependency should be in his vocab!”

“You’re not wrong. I might bring it up next time I’m talking with him. Now, how are you?”

He heard a grunt before the teen answered, “I’m fine...place is quiet without you and the old man.”

“I know...we’ll be home soon.” The angry kitten was all prickles and thorns on the outside, but he was very loyal in his affections and had grown to love his makeshift family.

“How...are things going there?” The voice was sincere, but worried.

Yuuri thinned his lips because the last thing he wanted to tell the boy was about the craziness they’d dealt with. “The case is progressing and so far it appears to be in our favor. My coach is testifying tomorrow...well, I guess today. We’ll have practice tonight and start packing up to catch our plane tomorrow.” He sighed as he thought about the past week. “I’m ready to be home.”

“I’ll make sure the place is clean. Maybe even make some piroshkis.” The teen was exuberant, not caring to hide his enthusiasm at their return.

Yuuri chuckled. “You’re only backing up Victor’s claim that it’s the only thing you know how to cook.”
“Well, it’s filling and it reheats well. Better than that nasty-ass borscht he makes.”

“I miss you, Yura,” the omega said softly, happy to hear from the teen even if it was the middle of the night.

“I miss you, too. It’s going to be okay and then you’ll be home.”

Yuuri heard the loneliness in the boy’s voice, “I can’t wait... are you good, now?”

“Yeah, I’m going to pawn him off on Ivan and Dmitry next time.”

“Do it nicely,” Yuuri said using his mom voice.

“Yeah, yeah,” the Russian Yuri responded. The baby started to sputter in the next room. “You should probably get that. See you soon.”

“See you soon, Yura,” he responded before ending the call and going to his daughter.

“I could have fed her,” Victor argued. He was already pulling out a bag of expressed milk from the hotel fridge.

“I’ve got this,” he murmured softly pulling his shirt off and feeling relief as she found her nipple. “I need this,” he added. “And I needed to hear Yura’s voice.”

“Yeah, even if it’s at this hour it’s nice to hear from him.” Even if he yells and curses. He thought of what the boys had been facing. “Georgi is a lot to handle. Just like this gal, I think we’re going to have to let her sleep with us tonight but I’ll go clean up her bedding and pajamas.”

Yuuri hummed, focusing on the little one now dressed in fresh pajamas, pink and covered in ballet dancers, a gift from Lilia. Her intense blue eyes stared up at him as she cooed while sucking. He smoothed his hand over her downy soft hair and allowed the warmth of loving his daughter fill him up. Somehow that magic chased away the demons in the shadows. When she switched breasts, he
settled into bed curling around her and listening to Victor humming softly while he worked in the bathroom. He really was lucky in his mate, in his daughter, in Yura...in his family. They all worked their magic on Yuuri keeping him grounded and feeling safe. He didn’t even notice the easy purr slipping from him as Victor curled up behind him, pressing a kiss on the back of his neck. Unbidden, almost as if he’d been thinking about it and maybe he had subconsciously, he whispered, “When my heat comes, I want you to bond with me and make me yours.”

“Yuuri…”

Yuuri turned in his lover’s arms, showing the older man his determined face. “It’s not...because I’m scared. It’s because that’s where I belong, where we belong. We’re a family. I want evidence of that. I know I was reluctant at first because I thought it would take away from my fight. However, without you, without Yura, without Shizuka, I wouldn’t be fighting...and I want my family unified.”

“Are you sure it won’t trigger you?” Victor asked, his own voice heavy with concern.

“It...might...but I don’t know. If it does, we’ll figure it out. We always do. I just know...I need to be yours.”

“You are mine,” Victor said softly. “Just as I’m yours. But...if this is what you want, we can do this.”

Yuuri smiled at the equality Victor always phrased their relationship with. He shifted again, favoring his side for sleep. “We’ve still got another three months, maybe four depending on my hormones. But...I want this.”

“Perhaps when we go back home, we can have an affirmation ceremony with your family. Something simple and us. I know you want to visit with Dr. Ito...do you want to have your heat there? In Hasetsu?”

Yuuri shivered thinking about it. “We could. That way Mom and Mari could take care of Shizuka. I wouldn’t worry about her.” He then frowned. “But competitions! They’ll start soon after.”

Victor pressed a kiss into the crown of Yuuri’s head. “They will...and there is nothing we can do about that. We can regulate your heat schedule after that but until then, we have to go through it naturally.”
“What about...your rut?” Yuuri asked cautiously.

Victor thinned his lips looking over Yuuri’s head. “I think...I can suppress a little while longer.”

“Vitya…” The disapproval in his voice was not disguised.

“I will not add to your trauma with my...biological need,” he bit out, tightening his embrace and tucking Yuuri under his chin. He felt his daughter squirm, causing him to let go somewhat. A small head poked up from the crevice formed between their two bodies.

“Papa…” slipped out of the babble of nonsense words and she reached out to climb up his body. Shifting on his back, he felt Yuuri move into his shoulder while Shizuka settled onto his chest pulling his shirt away to find his scent. Like mother, like daughter. He pressed a kiss into her downy hair and then into his mate’s.

At some point, they fell asleep, waking up later to voices in the other room. Phichit peered around the door. “We ordered breakfast. We didn’t know when the police would arrive and we are supposed to be at court by ten.”

Victor stretched and yawned tiredly and Yuuri grumbled in protest, pulling Shizuka into his arms as Victor slipped from the covers. He definitely needed that other shower that morning.

Half an hour later, he sat in the other room talking with Celestino while Phichit bounced Shizuka in his lap. Yuuri was in the shower but had left the sheets in protest, stumbling in like a zombie.

As the door knocked and room service was announced, Phichit moved closer to Victor and the older man could sense the fear in the small form. The only scent he could offer was familial and that wouldn’t protect him although it might provide some comfort. Yuuri’s or Celestino’s would be better, though. He made a decision and took out his phone.

Victor/ How are you?

Chris/ Fine. Skating and being daddy to my Gabe. He’s all over the place now.
Chris/ I wondered what you’ve been up to.

Victor/ Still in Detroit. It’s been interesting.

Chris/ Good interesting or bad interesting.

Victor knew he wouldn’t have this conversation over texts, but did want to tell Chris more of what had happened...what he learned and what he suspected.

Victor/ More of the latter. I’d like to bring another alpha along should we have to do this again. Someone targeted Phichit.

Chris/ Mon Dieu! Is he okay?

Victor/ He’s fine and I’ll call when I can talk without upsetting him but...it looks like there is a ring of predator alphas in this city.

Chris/ Fucking shit!

Victor/ Exactly. I can’t ask Phichit to come again, I can’t even suggest it. But I know Phichit will insist...for Yuuri. So, I need some backup. Ideas?

Chris/ Phichit is friends with Leo.

Victor/ Who is practically mated to Guang Hong.

Chris/ Seung-gil. I mean, he’s a bit aloof but he and Phichit get along pretty good. Maybe...you could take Georgi.
Victor grimaced at the thought, feeling guilty but knowing the Russian would be of little help. *Georgi is a wonderful friend, and he means well...but no.*

**Victor/ I need someone reliable and he’s beta.**

**Chris/ well, the alphas I know include Mila, Leo, Seung-gil, Michele, and Cao Bin.**

Victor frowned at that list. Maybe he should talk to Yuuri. As that thought crossed his mind, his mate entered the room a little better in spirit after a long shower. He knelt down before Shizuka and to check on Phichit before moving to sit between the omega and Victor. “What did we order?”

“Bagels and cream cheese to go with coffee,” his coach offered.

Yuuri nodded, picking up a half bagel from the dish. He carefully spread the cream cheese and before nibbling on the edge, frowning intensely at the coffee but not complaining.

“I could send for something else,” Celestino offered.

Yuuri shook his head. “My appetite isn’t cooperating this morning. It will be fine. I’ll be fine. I just...I need to get this over with.”

They all felt the same if they were all honest. Even Shizuka was fussy and unhappy. Yuuri gathered her to him and slipped away from the others and into the privacy of his room. The coach watched in concern and leaned forward. “Is he okay?”

Victor shrugged. “He has a counseling session scheduled the day after we get back home. It’s...everything. He didn’t sleep well last night.”

Nodding towards Phichit, the coach commented, “This one didn’t either.”

Phichit shivered. “Nightmares of someone grabbing me. I’ll be glad to be home, too.”
“If we have to do this again, maybe you should stay home where you’re safe,” Victor suggested.

“I’m going to be here with Yuuri,” came the determined declaration. Victor could hear the death of his argument in the voice of the younger man. *Yuuri, your friends will walk into the pits of hell for you.*

Looking over at Celestino, he asked, “Do you have an alpha coach that could keep watch over him?”

He shook his head knowing where Victor was going with this. “They’re all married.”

He heard a huff, and Phichit stalked out to join Yuuri. “Today...is going to be fun.”

Celestino waited until the young skater had left the room, “He is just as independent as Yuuri. One of the qualities I look for when scouting skaters, especially omegas. I want to celebrate their independence. Things like...yesterday...it sets us all back a hundred and fifty years.”

Victor nodded in agreement. Although abolished in Europe in the early 1800s, slavery still persisted in the Americas until 1865. This was true for many populations including omegas. They slowly found their voice and fought for rights. But the just because the laws change doesn’t mean society or culture does. Prejudices and bigotries persist, and in some cases became stronger. Because of that ignorance they were still fighting. Every time they took a stride forward, someone tried to silence them. Victor hated it intensely. It went against his very nature. He only wanted to keep Yuuri and Phichit safe. He even wondered if Celestino was immune although the proud omega could rival many alphas. *You could kick my ass, no question.*

“I think we should keep this in mind...but maybe we’ll be finished here,” Victor said quietly.

“Hopefully.”

A knock at the door in the other room pulled Victor’s attention. Standing up, he strode into the space and could see both omegas staring at the door, frozen.

“Hello, it’s Olivia Benson from the Detroit SVU. You called and asked me to stop by.”
Phichit and Yuuri visibly relaxed at the sound of her voice through the door. Victor would be lying if he claimed he didn’t breathe a sigh of relief knowing it was her.

Victor opened the door and invited her in. She took in the two omegas working on entertaining the baby before focusing on Victor. “You said you had an encounter.”

“Indirect. We got them out before they could strike but the predatory pheromone was definitely in the air.”

Olivia’s sharp eyes met his, “Do you have any identifiers?”

“Cloves,” Yuuri said quietly, his voice cutting through the air. “And something...peppery in their scent. I don’t know it.”

“You were close enough to pick up his scent?” she asked looking from Yuuri to Victor.

“They were projecting...and they marked the territory,” Yuuri stated, his voice calm, focusing on the facts like Abramovich taught him. “The air was heavy and I could tell they were trying to intimidate us into submission but Victor pushed back.”

“His growl,” Phichit breathed.

“And what do you remember?” she asked, turning to the Thai man.

“That...I felt targeted, I didn’t even know alphas could be that specific.”

She exchanged glances with Victor before saying, “If he’s turned predatory, he can be very specific.”

Phichit tilted his head at that word. “You...know they were male?”

“A patrolman went to the area with one of our criminologist. We were able to pick up the intense scenting you described. With direct scenting, we can pick up some residual DNA. Sex is the easiest to pick out of those tests.”
Phichit hugged himself. “Are we going to be able to safely leave?”

Olivia watched the young man fold in on himself. She softened her voice, telling him of the protections they had planned. “I’ve assigned a unit to stay with you as you go through your day.”

“We go home tomorrow,” Yuuri offered quietly.

“Call us and we’ll escort you to the airport,” she offered. “And if we call you back to Detroit, you’ll be protected. Housed by us and transported by us.”

Yuuri looked over towards Victor and held his blue eyes. “If I come back, please arrange it on as tight a schedule as possible. I don’t think... I know I don’t want to bring my daughter back. She can stay with her surrogate grandmother Lilia where I’ll know she’ll be safe.”

“We’ll do our best,” Olivia promised.

“Thank you, Olivia. For everything.” Yuuri held out a hand, feeling her firm handshake.

The detective offered a reassuring smile. “We’re working together on this. But we don’t want you to be in danger through the process. Finish your day in court and go home. Stay safe.”

“Thank you,” he repeated softly and watched her leave. Turning to the others, he said, “So court, a late lunch, then practice. Let’s get moving.”

Chapter End Notes

Where are our thoughts now?
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Time in Detroit winds down...what revelations will follow them home?

Chapter Notes

Evening all! I have a busy week and I was afraid I'd get caught up in the craziness and not put this up. So either 6 days late or 1 day early. Your pick. Cuddle up with a fuzzy blanket.

Yuuri listened as his coach testified. It was only then that he truly grasped how much the older omega had been affected by the horrific events and the aftermath that followed. Yuuri sat, tears glistening his eyes as he learned how much Celestino had fought for Yuuri, how much it hurt him to send his student home to his family, as though he were complicit with the university’s appalling handling of the case. Yuuri learned from the man’s own voice how it had practically killed him when he had gone missing, and broken him when he learned he had no choice but to force him to return to his family for his safety. As the court broke for recess, Yuuri leaned in and asked his mate, “Will you find me a quiet place?”

Victor saw his mate breaking in front of him and quickly spoke to one of the court officers. Soon they were led to a small room where Yuuri could work through his emotions. It was an odd little, non-denominational chapel set off to the side with a single bench facing an interfaith religious affectation. Yuuri settled on the bench, drawing his legs to his chest and let his tears fall. He could feel Victor settling behind him, legs straddling the bench. He slid a hand up and down Yuuri’s back.

As the tears fell freely his choke out, “I hurt him.”

Behind him Victor sighed heavily, the hands moving up to the shoulders, gently coaxing Yuuri to lay back into him, “Yuurii...”
Yuuri bolted forward, it wasn’t a rejection of Victor, but of the comfort he offered. “No, I hurt him. When he took me home, I lashed out at him.”

Reading what Yuuri needed Victor spoke slowly, trying to cut through the emotions to Yuuri’s reason. “He understood.”

A sharp, bitter laugh escaped under the sobs, “That doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt.”

Victor wrapped his arms around Yuuri and pulled him into his chest. “He knows whatever words you spoke were coming from a place of hurt, and they weren’t really for him but for the man who hurt you, for the university that swept you out of sight, for an unfair world that left you with almost no choices. He knew that, just like he knew you would eventually find your way, heal, come back stronger.” Victor kissed the black hair on the crown of Yuuri’s head. “It hurts because he cares so much about you, we all do. We take some of your pain, and we put it on ourselves because that feels better than to watch you shoulder it alone. It’s not the best, but it’s all we can do. It hurts...because we don’t always know how to make it right. We do the best we can with what we have, what we know. Yet in the end, we don’t know how to fix things. It’s...our helplessness that hurts us. That’s what hurt Celestino, being unable to help you, unable to fix it...not your words.”

Yuuri rested his head into Victor’s chest, turning around so his cheek could make contact. “I love you.”

“I know,” the alpha whispered softly.

Yuuri snorted, “Don’t quote Star Wars to me, Nikiforov.” He inhaled deeply, enjoying the rich scent of his mate surrounding him, “I don’t think I could go through this without you. So many here...they have no one.”

Victor kissed Yuuri’s forehead and then caught his lips in the awkward angle they found themselves. “They will find their way just as you found yours,” Victor murmured.

“We leave tomorrow...and I don’t know if we are any closer than when we came.”

“When we came, you didn’t know someone was still investigating. You provided statements that could help them look at the case with fresh eyes. This court case possibly revealed witnesses and victims of that case. We are closer...and there is a clearer picture as to what we’re up against.” Somewhere deep inside him Victor had another reason to know they were closer, the scent, the
feeling of the threat he had been sensing since they arrived. *If we weren’t getting closer to the group responsible for this, they would back off. The fact that they are trying to approach us only makes it clear…but why not just close ranks and disappear. What can they want?*

Yuuri settled into Victor and murmured, “I want to go home.”

“I know.” They remained still until they heard a cry erupt. Yuuri looked up as Phichit came into the room.

The little Thai man moved closer, carrying the baby wiggling and fighting Phichit more and more with each passing moment. “Sorry…she only wants her mama.”

Yuuri sniffed, wiping his eyes. Finding a smile through his tears, he murmured, “She’s probably hungry.”

“Why don’t you see to her here in privacy?” Victor suggested. When Yuuri nodded, unbuttoning his shirt and settling her against his breast, the alpha added, “I’m going to step out, but I won’t be far.”

“Ciao Ciao is right outside,” Phichit offered as Victor left the room.

In the hallway, Victor spotted the coach leaning against the wall opposite the door. “Keeping an eye on us?”

Celestino shrugged. “Old habits. I’m not used to having an alpha on duty.”

“It can’t hurt to have an extra set of eyes,” Victor pointed out, joining the man. He pulled a small water bottle from his coat pocket. “He’s had so many emotions wash over him during this trip. Perhaps next time, we’ll meet you at the new rink…less stress. It will allow you both the opportunity to properly work through things.”

Celestino nodded in appreciation. He would never admit it but giving testimony had left him
empty and open in a way he had never felt, and one he hoped he would never feel again. “I hate that he feels bad for what took place. It was my job to make sure he was safe...and he was still processing so much at the time. I knew the States, especially Detroit and campus, wouldn’t be safe. The university was putting pressure on me, the rink, other skaters...all to get us to say Yuuri hadn’t taken his safety seriously, to divert attention. I worried that had he stayed...something worse might have happened. When I told him I was taking him home I knew he would be hurt...I didn’t expect anything but a backlash.”

Victor pursed his lips, receiving back the bottle and taking a sip for himself. “He still feels guilty. I know that you two can work through this, but I think all of this has him raw.”

The older coach grimaced, “It has to.”

They stood in silence watching the door when Victor shifted and turned. Something in the air turned sour, Victor felt an anger wash over him that he didn’t recognize right away. A low growl slipped out of him, instinct overlaying thought. He widened his stance, dropping the bottle of water to the floor, its contents spilling out unnoticed. At his side Celestino’s eyes followed. The Italian man, never a traditional omega, rose up to full height, both hands squeezing into a fist.

“The same scent as last night,” the omega confirmed as they both moved to stand near the door of the chapel.

“It is possible they are university officials. It would explain the cover up,” Victor murmured. He felt torn, wanting to stay as close as possible to Yuuri and wanting to put a face to the threat. He had to plant his feet to keep from chasing down whatever he was sensing and ripping it apart. However, his greater instinct lay in protecting Yuuri. Then he was there, his hand on Victor’s shoulder.

“It’s time to go,” the younger omega whispered softly before turning away from the threat, Phichit was situated between Celestino and Yuuri, Victor following behind like a barrier between them and the threat. As soon as they exited, Yuuri nodded towards their escort.

“There was someone inside projecting the same scent as last night,” he explained. “Will you get us safely to the hotel?”

“Of course, Mr. Katsuki.” He leaned in and radioed in the report before leading Yuuri and the party down the steps and ensuring he was safely in the sedan. Celestino pushed Phichit inside the opposite door.
They were silent as the coach negotiated into traffic. “About practice tonight…” the coach began.

Yuuri groaned. He knew what was coming. “I hate that I have to give up more of my time, more of my freedom because of these fucking assholes.”

Victor raised his eyebrow at Yuuri’s language. Seldom did he swear, and rarely in front of their daughter. But he had to agree with his mate, these fucking assholes were really getting in the way…and too close. He understood where his mate was coming from and hated it just as well. “What if we went…elsewhere?”

The coach hummed. He had some resources. “Let’s get to the room. We can properly arrange things from there. Then maybe…shift our schedule.”

“True, Greer will expect an evening practice,” Yuuri pointed out.

“I can’t believe…he is one of us,” Celestino groaned. While he had never liked the man, it was difficult to accept that a member of their rink, their skate family would do something. He hated that the danger had been so close, that another coach had sold them out.

“The question I want to know is why ,” Yuuri murmured. He heard agreement in their silence.

Yuuri stood near the rail in Dearborn. They found ice time at a local public rink, the manager had been a fan of Celestino’s skating and was more than happy to clear the ice for them. Phichit had just finished his free skate and was now listening to both his coach’s critique and Victor’s. Yuuri couldn’t help but smile as he watched an expression he rarely saw on his friend. Overwhelmed but in a good way. He could tell the Thai skater was taking in each bit of information and assimilating it into his program.

Then, it was Yuuri’s turn. He took his position and closed his eyes, pulling the music forward into his thoughts. Remembering how he felt so isolated, fighting alone in those early days of skating. He ignored the outstretched hands offering help, always feeling like he had something to prove, had to somehow be worthy, and the only way to do that was standing alone. Then the transition…he could no longer do things on his own, he had to recognize and accept the support. He saw how Victor came into his world, sweeping in and pulling him from the darkness. He had been
lost before Victor. And now...he danced. Once more, he found his feet on the ice, his balance, his
strength through others. Once more...he could fly.

Landing his second quad he pulled out of landing position quickly. Toe pick scraped into the ice
as he came to a halt. Brown eyes looked up and froze.

Victor felt the shift in atmosphere and followed those brown eyes. In the shadows of the stands, he
could just make out a pale figure looming far off. It was just an instant, his eyes meeting the
alpha’s, and then they were moving, hastily exiting out of an upper door. Victor ran out to catch
him on the stairs but whomever it was knew the rink and avoided the stairs in his escape. Victor
ran up the steps and looked down both passageways. He spotted numerous doors and escape
paths, sighing heavily for a moment he realized that he was away from Yuuri...Victor had to get
back to his mate.

Returning to the rink, he nodded to Celestino who had already called Yuuri in off the ice, keeping
both of the younger men within arms’ distance. The skaters were changing to their shoes. “You
stay with them. I’ll go get their gear from the locker rooms,” the coach offered.

As he drew near Yuuri, his mate asked, “Was it Greer?”

Yuuri pulled at the laces in fury, “I’m...not sure that it was.”

“Was it the man from the courthouse?” Phichit asked.

Victor shook his headshrugging. “I just...don’t know. It felt...different.” Turning to Yuuri, he
asked, “Did you pick up on anything?”

Yuuri lowered his lids, focusing on his shoes as he considered the question. “It felt...familiar. I
can’t quite place it. I just...want to get Shizuka back to the room.”

“That’s where we’re headed.” Spotting the coach near the entrance, he guided the omega to his
feet. “Let’s go, you two.” Scooping up the baby carrier, they moved towards the exit and coach.

“Hopefully we won’t have to return to this hell,” Victor suggested. Detroit had left a bad taste on
his tongue.
Yuuri nodded, his expression set, focused on getting his family to safety.

In the safety of the hotel room, Victor tried to get Yuuri to talk to him about what he sensed. But in panic, Yuuri kept checking on the baby, continued to look out the window, double checking the locks. Victor finally got him to settle into a hot bath but only if Shizuka was in the room with him. He ordered their meal in, having it delivered to Celestino’s door. Just as well. Phichit had camped out with Yuuri in their room. The youngest omega now kept Yuuri company in the bathroom, distracting Yuuri with talk about skating. As Victor accepted their meals from room service, Phichit helped Yuuri from the bath, noting how Yuuri wasn’t quite himself.

As Yuuri picked through his food, the other three watched in worry. Celestino motioned Victor to a further side of the room, leaning in to speak unnoticed. “It’s like he was before,” the coach murmured.

“If it were the one after me, Yuuri would react differently.” Phichit offered from behind, he had followed unbidden. “He’d be protective of me. He’s...scared. I think he knows more but is afraid to admit it.”

Victor thinned his lips at the youngest omega’s words, always alert. There was no chance they would be able to hide their worry from him. “I am worried it was not Greer,” Victor said softly. “I am worried it was him.”

They all rested their eyes on Yuuri now curled up around his daughter protectively. Something was indeed different about the omega.

The morning couldn’t come too soon and then the four were packed, heading to the airport. They remained together as long as possible before parting to their separate flights. Yuuri seemed to pick up once they were settled into their seats. “I just want to be home,” he reassured Victor. “That’s all it is.”
Victor nodded, not entirely convinced but hopeful that their return to Russia would help Yuuri feel safer, allowing the younger man to return to himself. “We’ll be home soon, lyubov moya. Soon.” Victor slid a reassuring arm around his mate. But he couldn’t let go of the uneasiness beneath his skin. Yuuri looked up wrinkling his nose undoubtedly sensing Victor’s internal stress. “Sorry, love...I’m also ready to be home.” It wasn’t a lie...but not quite the truth, either.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

Back in St. Petersburg, everything should be peaceful.

Chapter Notes

Hi! This should have gone up on Monday but here we are! Hope you are staying warm...and grab a fuzzy blanket because there are some chilling reveals in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Walking through his own door, Yuuri visibly relaxed and then his smile brightened as he lowered to his knees to greet Makkachin and Vicchan.

Yura followed the dogs to greet them with grumpy hellos. “Let’s see what damage you did to my niece in all of this.”

Victor hid his smile by putting away jackets and dragging luggage to the other room. There was laundry to be sorted and washed. He knew Yuuri, knew the Japanese man would sleep away his jet lag between feedings over the next day.

Glancing at his phone, the alpha noted the confirmation text from Celestino that he and Phichit had made it home safely along with several voicemails from Yakov. He texted Celestino back, but grumbled and decided to ignore Yakov a while longer. Carrying the first load of laundry back through to the washer, he spotted Yuuri stretched out on his side on the carpet. Vicchan exposed his belly for scratches, tail thumping eagerly as Yuuri’s fingers ran over the spot. Yura sat facing him, legs butterflied and a somewhat alert Shizuka indulged his attention while the blonde bounced her up and down. Makkachin curled around Yuuri’s head keeping an eye on the small group.

This is my family. Victor smiled at the silent acknowledgment before continuing with the chore. Tomorrow. We’ll deal with life tomorrow. For now, let us enjoy this.
Life, or at least Yakov, was not so generous and soon his phone rang. Digging it out of his pocket, he heard the gruff bark of the older coach greeting him. “We have a lot of work to do before you head off to Thailand.”

Victor smiled, Yakov wouldn’t be Yakov if he were the exacting master he’d grown up with. “I know, Yakov. I know. Yuuri needs to rest…”

“But I know you, Vitya. You don’t take a day off to rest unless I make you.”

*True*. Even when sick with the flu, Yakov had to send him home. “I’ll be there... tomorrow. Yuuri will be fine on his own here in our apartment.”

Over the line Victor heard Yakov pause, “Of course he will. Why wouldn’t he be?”

His eyebrows furrowed. “I’ll talk to you about my concerns tomorrow, please...in the privacy of your office.”

There was silence at first then Yakov’s voice softened somehow without losing its gruff edge. “Fine, we’ll talk then. Make sure you family is secure tonight.”

Victor breathed out, “Thank you.”

“And if Yura is there, make sure he gets to practice on time. That boy’s been late every day this week.” Yakov’s soft spot was reserved for Yuuri and *Yuuri alone*.

Victor chuckled into the phone. “Don’t worry. He’ll be there, full of grumpy and spit.”


“I’ll be there.”
Disconnecting the call, he turned to see Yuuri watching him with concern. “So early?” Oh, not concern. He just wants his beauty sleep.

Victor pulled Yuuri in for a quick peck on the forehead, smiling at the sleepy angel. “Not for you, love...I’ve pulled the coach’s card and got you a day off to rest. As for me...Yakov demands my attendance.”

Yuuri sighed, moving into his arms, settling into his chest. “I know you’re worried about me.”

Victor’s fingers slid into his hair. “It’s been...that kind of week. I think I had almost every fear dragged to the forefront.”

“Me, too. But we’re home now...and they are in Detroit. So far away.” Yuuri’s voice muffled as he nuzzled into Victor’s chest, inhaling the scent deeply.

Victor concentrated on his happiness at being home to ensure his scent stayed soothing, “Let’s hope they stay there.” He couldn’t deny the worry he had that their troubles would chase them.

“I need to believe they will,” Yuuri whispered, hugging him once more. Victor could feel him slipping into sleep mode.

Victor pulled back, looking at his mate’s face; heavy bags hung under the brown eyes. “Yura and I’ll watch Shizuka until she’s ready to sleep. Why don’t you take a shower and go to bed?”

Yuuri sighed and looked back towards the bedroom. “I hate to leave you with all of the work.”

“It’s not work where you’re concerned, my Yuuri. It’s...my privilege.”

Yuuri snorted at the cheesy line, but was appreciative of the sentiment. He reluctantly left Victor’s arms and the blue eyes followed the omega into the shadows of the bedroom. When he heard the shower, he rejoined Yura, the teen studying Victor with more insight than Victor felt comfortable.

“What happened in Detroit?” The little voice resembled Yakov’s more and more every day, especially when cutting through to the truth.
Victor considered lying but he knew he sucked at it. He thought about dodging Yura with some
glib statement, but he was honestly too tired. And the best way to keep Yuuri safe was to make
those around him aware. Especially...if Yuuri was intent on denying the idea of being followed.
He considered the boy sitting across from him. He trusted this young man and knew he had
Yuuri’s back to no end.

“I think...Yuuri’s rapist found us.”

“Blyad!” The large green eyes blazed as he practically spat the word.

Victor instinctively wanted to correct Yura’s language, but bit his tongue and nodded. “He
ran...and I couldn’t catch up to him. I’m not sure Yuuri put it all together. I think he wants to deny
it.”

Yura narrowed his eyes, “But you think the fucker is going to chase after him.”

Victor winced at the language...no, he winced at having his greatest fear put into words and made
real by another but he nodded. “Maybe...I’m just being overprotective. I want to keep my Yuuri
safe, my daughter safe. I can’t imagine what her life would be like in the hands of that...man.”

Yura looked down at the baby already starting to fall asleep in his arms, his expression full of
thought, before he verbalized them. “You need to tell the others at the rink. We will all look out
for Yuuri and make sure he doesn’t go anywhere alone. You remember how we all closed ranks in
the past, we can do it again easily. Hell, even Mila can kick some rich American alpha’s ass.”

Victor snorted, “Mila can kick your ass,” Victor pointed out.

“Shut up, asshole.”

Victor waved his hands in defense, “she could kick my ass too, don’t be offended. She has to date
hockey players because they are the only ones brave enough at this point.” He smiled. He missed
this. “So...niece?”

Yura ducked his head, looking back at the little girl sleeping peacefully in his arms. He drew her a
little closer and suddenly the Yakov was gone from his voice, leaving only the lighter voice of a boy, “I mean, you said I was family.” He stared at the silver haired man and then scowled. “You didn’t think I would let you be my dad! Fuck you!”

“Language,” Victor teased as he reached over to cover Shizuka’s ears. “I don’t want your nasty mouth to inspire the first words out of hers.”

“You should tell that to your husband,” Yura smirked.

_Husband_. Victor smiled at the sound of that.

Of course Yura rolled his eyes at the reaction. “Don’t get all dopey eyed on me.”

Silas McElroy watched the others in the club discussing the surge of interest in omegas. He hated his association, forced upon him by his oppressive, bigoted father. When he joined in college, he didn’t think it would be this bad...it was horrible and vile. As he surveyed the din of conversation, he could hear his worries personified.

“I’ve got two sons off my omega. He is a pretty little thing. Properly submissive, doesn’t make waves.”

“So the male omegas, they only make sons?” one of the younger patrons asked.

Silas looked over to the conversation to watch the man answering with a shrug. “I have a daughter...time will tell whether she be omega or alpha. But a pairing between alpha and male omega rarely results in a beta weakling. And an omega heiress can be bartered for favor.”

McElroy felt bile rise in his throat and downed his drink in distaste. How he managed to stay a member of this group without his sensibilities or sanity being eroded was beyond him. He kept quiet, and tried to talk as little as possible. He moved through the small gathering of elites listening to the complaints, his ear settling on another conversation.
“And they are properly submissive in my home. The problem is that some have gotten loose.”

“Your problem is that you haven’t properly trained any of them. A little discipline and making one an example is all it takes.”

“You can’t train them if you fail to hold them long enough to break them.”

“Donovan failed to keep that omega he snatched two years ago. Now we’re all under scrutiny.”

“But would we not have been under investigation if he had succeeded?”

McElroy slowed, thinking of the story he had heard a few years back. One of the members got into pretty big trouble with some of the older members when they took a famous omega, but he had never learned much about it.

Another nodded, his voice deeper and Silas noticed that when he spoke people listened. “Low profile omegas do not catch police attention. Sure, their parents put in complaints, but we all know what happens to those.” He flicked ashes from his cigarette into the trash. “However, if that omega is an international figure of some regard, then they will draw interest.”

“And reporters,” piped in another.

“It’s bad business,” replied one of the others before downing his drink.

McElroy was a man in his late twenties, and part of a fraternity of brothers that knew the value of an omega lay in their ability to birth strong alphas. This group dated back years, generations, and had members from some of the wealthiest and oldest families in America. There were similar groups overseas, mainly Europe. Silas stopped and thought about the group he was forced into. These men...if that’s what they called themselves...wanted strong alpha sons and were ready to get them at any cost, but that was the lie they told themselves. It was something deeper and sicker, it was the idea of owning another human, being able to use them sexually and then slowly break that person apart, using that person’s body and instincts against them as the ultimate humiliation. He was an alpha, his father was an alpha...Alphas rarely came from a pairing that involved a beta.

At one time, generations ago, the alpha would have wooed the omega. It was about offering yourself as a protector, as someone that the omega could depend on for kindness, shielding from
the outside world, and then together creating a strong healthy child because of that pairing. Now, alphas were powerful and took what they wanted in business and in life, leaving the omegas broken after using them for pleasure and breeding, then finally discarded them. And if it upset someone’s sensibilities, a well placed bribe could quiet the unrest.

He knew this crew, this club, this fraternity of alphas. He knew what could be done because he grew up surrounded by it. As a child his mother, an omega, had shielded him from the ugliness of her life. But as he grew older she couldn’t hide the truth from him. He saw his father for what he was, saw his friends for what they were. He knew they had the power...But his sister was omega and he’d hate for her to fall into their hands, traded for power and gain. He heard the secret whisperings of his omega mother and learned what his father was, heard another philosophy, knew of her taking.

He felt the pressure from his father and grandfather to take his own omega.

He had no taste for it.

Any of this.

He wondered if there were others in this fraternity that felt the same. He always felt horrible for being part of her pain, even though she assured him he was never part of it. He knew he had failed her. He couldn’t fail his sister. So he joined the group, played the game. Listened when they talked and pretended to the edge of his sanity to go along with it.

“It was that figure skater that brought this on.”

McElroy snapped out of his memories, listened with interest. An omega with the courage to take down an empire. He couldn’t help but smile to himself. If he couldn’t find help from within, maybe he would look from without.

Wealth had its own privilege and often found itself above the law. But for one man, his conscience wasn’t dead.

Across the room Jaimeson Donovan, Jaimie to those close to him, watched his old college
At just shy of thirty, he also felt the pressure to breed, to create a legacy. The only difference was he’d tried...it was just that his tastes were very particular. He remembered the feel of that particular omega beneath him, the way he fought, and then the sweetness of the surrender. The way the light in those eyes just died the one time he’d dared to look in them. He could never forget what it took to let him go. But then, months later, to see the boy with a child, he had to wonder if the child was his. She looked old enough...the timing was right. But there was already an alpha watching over him. An alpha who had oddly not bonded with the omega. Surely if it were his child, they would have bonded, he would have claimed them both openly.

*He’ll likely be competing at the Asian Open at the first of August.* He pulled out his phone and checked the roster. Smiling in satisfaction, he booked a ticket. His eyes rested on McElroy across the room. *Too bad your sister is kept so far away. No doubt your father plans to trade her for a business alliance. One in the bedroom and one on the side is a nice set up.*

He slipped away from the room with its arguments. Greer no doubt had some information for him. He wondered if his brother had any success with his own hunt. Greer had eagerly given up the location of another omega to them for the cover of his debts. Particular tastes such as their own required the right influences.

He’d pull strings and gain the promise of favor at the coming event. His family, after all, was a strong sponsor in the figure skating community. After seeing the omega dance across the ice, he knew his path was set.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, wow! What just happened?
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Yuuri is back in St. Petersburg but something is brewing in Detroit.

NOTE: TRIGGER WARNING in the ENDNOTE.

Chapter Notes

Okay...we have a fluffy start but you want to have your fuzzy blanket on hand.

St. Petersburg, Russia

Yuuri rolled over with a groan. He hated the effects of travel on his body. How Victor managed to pop right out of bed as if he didn’t need any adjustment baffled the omega. He reached for his daughter, smiling. He appreciated that his mate settled his daughter in bed with him after changing her. The raven haired man nuzzled into her matching, downy hair. It was getting longer: he could put tiny pigtails in it. When she smiled up at him, that smile held the buds of two front teeth just cut through the skin, which was further indication that it was time...to wean her off the breast. He sighed, sad to let go of that closeness. It was something just for the two of them. Maybe he was being selfish but he didn’t care.

As if sensing Yuuri’s wakefulness, two blue eyes fluttered open and chubby baby hands reached for him. She pulled free of the blanket wrapped around her and Yuuri could see Victor had dressed her in a blue dress and tights. *Impractical*. Her knee hung up on the dress as she tried to pull up and stand beside her mama. He sighed. “We’ll fix you right up, Shizu-chan.”

Settling her in the middle of the bed with his legs wrapped around her as a means to keep her still while he started stripping her down, he leaned forward to blow a strawberry on her tummy. Sweet giggles erupted out of the little girl, causing her to wiggle more. Sitting up, he sighed, his smile bittersweet. *I almost gave all of this up.* His thoughts darkened for a moment, thinking back to the hardest time in his life, before Victor had arrived and helped him fall in love with her. Shizuka babbled at her mother, concerned at the change in the scent she picked up on with the emotions going on in the omega.
No, don’t focus on the negative when something so beautiful is sitting right in front of you. Shaking it off, he reached over the edge of the bed to the diaper bag and pulled up the supplies he needed, including a shirt and pants. As she flipped over, he smiled at the poodle butt appliqued into the blue pantseat, the matching top having poodles on the tiny pockets and on the collar. He reached for his little runaway and heard her giggles start again as she tried to get away. Pulling her back to him, he wrapped his legs around her once more, this time to get little soft bands into her hair making tiny dark brown pigtails.

Would our babies have my hair or yours? He shook off that thought because Shizu was Victor’s daughter in all important ways. He hated the ugliness suggested otherwise. Swallowing an unexpected sob, he forced a smile and rolled them out of bed. I’m just tired. Too much travel, too many emotions on the surface.

He spent the day tending to outside matters. His trip to the Asian Open, his trip home to his parents after. He hadn’t competed in the Asian Open his last two years as an international figure skater, but Victor thought it would be a good place to re-stake his claim on the figure skating world, a place to get his feet wet. Yuuri slowly agreed, and now he could see the intelligence of it. It was closer to home, less stressful, and familiar.

He checked the time and decided that there was really no good time to call home these days. Sending the call through, he was glad his sister answered. He hated voice mail. Her familiar moshi moshi greeted him and warmed him up inside. “Hi, Mari,” Yuuri returned. “How are you?”

“I’m great, baby brother. Mom said you’re coming home soon.”

Yuuri smiled at the familiar nickname, he was a grown man and mother to a baby girl...and still her baby brother. “Yes...I thought I’d rather Shizu-chan be with family while I deal with my heat.”

His sister snorted at his wording. “Okay, no problem. We’ll take care of her.”

“There’s more.” He shifted the phone, he knew his sister would always have his back but he was still bad at reaching out for help. “I was hoping...would you mind coming to the Asian Open and taking care of her while I skated? I just know...I wouldn’t worry if she was with you.”

Mari voice was warm on the phone, the aunt thrilled to be asked. “Of course, Yuuri. Minako and I were wanting to come but the rooms were all booked up.”
“Well, my room has an attached smaller room. The beds…they are twins but…there are two of them.” He also was happy to think that they would be so close by.

“Oh, that’s perfect! Okay, don’t worry, little brother. I’ll take care of you.”

Yuuri breathed out a sigh of relief, “I’ll text my hotel and flight information and make sure you are both listed as occupants in case you beat us there.”

“No worries. We’ll be there.” She was firm in her words, letting him know that she could easily speak for Minako. Both women supported the omega and his return to skating enthusiastically.

As he disconnected, he was happy one worry was out of the way. He then made the call to Dr. Ito’s office. “Hello? I’d like to book a preheat appointment.”

“Are you a current patient of Dr. Ito?”

“Yes, well…I don’t live in Japan but she delivered my daughter. I’ll be back.” He lowered his voice, as if being overheard. “You know, for my heat. I was hoping…”

The receptionist chuckled in a friendly manner. She spoke in an easy tone to settle his worry. “Don’t worry. Name?”

“Katsuki Yuuri…my daughter is Katsuki Shizuka. I would like her checked out by Mr. Dr. Ito.”

“No problem. I can book both appointments at the same time.”

“Thank you. I was hoping…mid August?”

He heard keys tapping out the information before the receptionist returned with “I have an August 10 open for both and another August 12.”
“Let’s go with the first. I don’t want to risk running late. I’m not ready for another baby.” He laughed nervously but with the bundle in his arms already keeping him busy, he knew two at this point was too much.

Her voice was warm over the phone, almost in a knowing tone of a young mother herself. “Don’t worry. I have your appointment set for nine in the morning and hers at ten. We can make adjustments as needed should your first run late.”

“Thank you.” He updated her with his contact information and she promised to email him with any prep work he needed ahead of time. Sighing with relief, he entered the appointments into his and Victor’s online calendars.

He smiled when Victor’s text popped up.

Vitya/ You’re supposed to be resting.

Yuu-chan/ I am. I wanted to take care of things while I was off.

Vitya/ I’m on break but Yakov plans to keep me busy until late this afternoon.

Yuuri considered the text. Knowing that he had just inherited the morning and some free time with it.

Yuu-chan/ I’ll make dinner.

Vitya/ Yura is coming home with me. I think he wants to be close to his “niece”

Yuuri smiled as he thought of the boy that had endeared himself to the omega. He was as much a part of the omega’s healing as the older alpha. He then hummed as he went through the refrigerator, pulling out green beans and chicken. Soon he had the rest of the components for the sesame chicken he planned to cook. The calories would be high but he knew both men would be famished after working hard all day at the rink.
Between caring for his daughter and the dogs, tending to dinner, finishing up the laundry Victor started the previous day, and picking up the daily clutter, Yuuri smiled to himself as he realized some days you just had to stay home and take care of matters. By nature he was a nester and doing these little domestic chores settled him. He did take a nap at some point but he wasn’t down long before his daughter demanded his attention.

His mate walked through the door with their blonde... roommate? Houseguest? Yuuri shook off the need to label matters. Yura was family. As predicted, the two alphas were famished and Yuuri chuckled as he set out the meal on the table. “It sounds like you worked hard today,” he greeted.

“Yakov is a drill sergeant,” Victor complained.

“And he took it out on both of us. I wasn’t even gone!” Yura echoed, slumping down at the table with a heavy sigh.

“You’ll be all the better once the season starts,” Yuuri answered unsympathetically. He had poured all of his sympathy into their meal. Serving the rice, green beans, sesame chicken, topped with green onions and sesame seeds, he passed the dishes around. He watched Yura add extra soy with a shake of his head. Saying his thanks, itadakimasu, he began to eat the meal before him. The sounds from the other, various words of thanks and appreciation, vkusno, echoed around the table.

Yuuri stretched out next to his mate as the night overtook them. “Are you okay?”

Victor hummed and nodded, but the tightening of his arms told Yuuri otherwise.

Yuuri looked in the ocean blue eyes, “I don’t believe you. Perhaps you should see the counselor with me.”

“I just want to make sure you’re safe,” Victor murmured against Yuuri’s skin. His mate might have been irritated if he’d been at the rink that day. Victor made sure Yakov and those that shared their apartment complex knew about the events in Detroit. His coach agreed that caution was the best course. They’d make sure Yuuri wasn’t alone if he went out.

The omega settled into the arms of his lover. “I’m safe. I’m home, Vitya...we left it all in Detroit.”
Victor shivered. He wasn’t so sure.

__________

**Detroit, MI**

Olivia Benson walked through the hospital, already familiar with the halls that would take her to her latest victim. As she grew closer to the room she felt the overwhelming sense of dread and sorry start to rise up in her. Stopping she focused her breath. She shoved back her empathy. She could have compassion, she could help them in any means to catch the scumbag that hurt them. She could and would fight for them. But she couldn’t become them. Entering the hospital ward, she identified herself to the nurse on duty at the station. Exchanging a few words, she followed him back to the room containing her victim.

“We did the standard rape kit, but...it was extensive.” The nurse pulled out the chart. Her face wore a mixture of one who’d seen this to often and one still deeply affected by it. “They had to stitch him back together. He didn’t flinch. He just stared straight ahead.”

Olivia nodded taking that in and preparing herself mentally for the interview. “Did you take photos?”

The nurse nodded, handing over the file. “Photos, nail clippings, exam, the works. Those will be in the report. He signed the waiver. He wants to report.”

Receiving the documents, Olivia knew she’d have to wait until she returned to her desk to review the information on the flash drive. She signed the chain of custody receipt and took the evidence in hand, glancing through what information was readily visible.

“Jacob Lyle, I’m Lt. Olivia Benson with the Detroit Special Victims Unit. I’m here to help.”

The man before her barely flicked his eyes her direction. “I survived,” he answered, his voice strained, determined in his words. “That one man, he survived. The skater. I remembered reading about him in the news. He fought them. In court. But there are so many.”
“How do you know that?” Olivia asked, her expression sharp.

He blinked, slowly coming out of his trance, “They had a radio. One was standing lookout. Kept saying *we can’t let this one get away*. The others would cut them off. Leave them behind.”

Olivia made a mental note of that, “How long did they hold you?”

“I’m not sure. It was...Monday? I think...the day they took me. My boyfriend was late. It was dark and I was getting agitated. Then they grabbed me.” He finally looked up at her. “What day is it?”

“Friday,” Olivia answered.

“So...long. I survived.” He looked around the room, his eyes resting on the various instruments. “I am scared that I’m pregnant. I received the morning after pill...but the paper said it wasn’t guaranteed.”

“It’s not,” Olivia agreed quietly.

“I don’t want to be tied to that alpha any longer than I have to be.” He pulled his gown to the side. “He marked me. You can see it, can’t you? They took swabs from the mark.”

Olivia studied the bite. It wasn’t the first. She frowned as the gown fell away revealing the bruising. Her eyes tracked out to his wrists and could see the marks left by his restraints. “How did you get away?”

Jacob laughed bitterly. “It was the other. H-he wanted a turn. The first wouldn’t share. Th-they fought. And one of them cut the rope. I’m sure it wasn’t on purpose. They were still fighting and I took the opportunity. I got my other hand free, dragged my ass out into the open. Someone saw me, got me some help.”

“You were brave to take off like that, not knowing where you were and what they would do.” She watched his face twitch, taking the compliment.
“That other man, the skater. What was his name?”

“Yuuri Katsuki.”

He smiled and nodded to himself. “I’ve never been into figure skating. Maybe I should watch it.”

Olivia smiled at him, he was talking in order to avoid the subject, but it was still healthy. He was working to pull himself into the present. “Do you have someone coming to stay with you?”

“Yes, my boyfriend and my brother. They are going to stay at my apartment for a while.”

She nodded. “That’s a good plan. It might be better if you stay with someone.” Olivia rose, and shook his hand. “I’m going to review this information and if there’s a connection, we might call you to court sooner. If not, we’ll be looking for the one that did this.”

“I want to testify. I want to fight this.”

She saw his eyes blaze and knew he meant it. He had support, he had his own inner strength. She told the omega about counseling resources, how to reach her, but her mind was on the case as she walked out of the hospital feeling confident that the young man was in good hands. Olivia had the rest of the report. Officers were on scene, taking pictures, gathering evidence. She drove to the site and talked to the lead CSI.

“We found the rope that restrained him. There was a lot of biological. They were sloppy.”

“They are scared...running. Something has happened to cause them to devolve.”

“We’ll get this report to you ASAP, Lieutenant.”
Late into the evening, Olivia sat at her desk. She had been diligently going through every shred of evidence once again, reading through every witness statement, looking for patterns, looking for connections. The door opened and she barely glanced up at the alpha that walked through.

Then he spoke.

“My name is Silas...and I need to keep my sister from being traded. I have information on that figure skater that was assaulted. It was...my roommate in college.”

Chapter End Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Descriptions and testimony of rape after the fact in a crime scene scenario.
Yuuri winced as he felt Shizuka’s teeth once more and finally gave a resigned sigh. “Vitya, will you prepare a bottle? I don’t think I can do this.” He carefully pulled his daughter off of his breast and watched her start to pucker. “I hate it, too, sweetie. It’s just...you’re getting too big.”

Victor poked his head in, suggesting, “We do have those sippy cup lids.”

Yuuri looked down at his daughter, considering the options. “I know...and we will get to that. But for now, I think she needs the comfort of sucking.” He looked up to see Victor nod then walk back into the other room. Yuuri settled back into the pillows piled up behind him. He’d noticed that he had started nesting more and more, another sign that his body was already getting ready for a heat cycle. He chewed his lip at the thought. In that aspect, his body had been on hold for more than a year and a half and he wasn’t ready for them to start again. *Just hold off until after the Asian Open.* He needed this to launch his return, and this was an important qualifier for his standing with the JSF. He had his eyes on the world team, and he knew that a good showing at nationals was no longer a guarantee. Thinking of the upcoming competition he ran through the support he would have. His coach would be there with Phichit. With his sister and Minako there as well, he felt he could face the competition with a clear head...or at least clearer. He looked up as Victor entered with the bottle.

“I could feed her,” offered the alpha but he received a whine in reply. He quickly handed over the bottle but then settled in next to Yuuri, cradling him into his side. “You’re going to have as hard a
Yuuri nodded, watching her gulp down the breast milk in the bottle. *She is so noisy.* He smiled at the thought. Soon they’d switch her to a cup. “I guess...I can just pump through the Open and then…” He didn’t look forward to the drying process. At least he would have Dr. Ito nearby in case he had any difficulties. He watched her start to wilt and then the bottle dropped as she fought sleep, her eyes slowly lowering and then opening, sucking with determination until she’d start to slow down again. He leaned in as Victor pressed a kiss to his head. “Can you get her ready while I pump?”

“Of course!” Victor replied with eagerness. Always with eagerness. Yuuri smiled at that. He never received a groan of complaint when he asked for help with Shizuka. His mate loved being a father, playing with her, feeding her, dressing her, bathing her, changing her. He never hesitated when asked to pitch in. Often, Yuuri didn’t have to ask. Victor offered openly the minute he thought Yuuri would need help, and often when he didn’t. The alpha just loved being around his little girl.

Yuuri handed her over to his care while he reached for the pump and assembled it with expert ease. Soon, he felt the relief of the milk pulling off of him. Just a little longer. That thought came with mixed emotions. *It won’t be long before this wasn’t a part of his life. It...will be fine.* Victor seemed to sense his mood and came in, carrying in one arm a now clean and naked baby babbling *dadadadada*. Dipping in to press another kiss into his hair, Viktor reclined against the pillows of the bed. Yuuri leaned into his space and he felt Victor’s free hand sliding up and down his back.

“Are you okay?”

Yuuri hummed as he considered the question. “I’m...okay. I’m not quite ready to give up breastfeeding...but it’s time.” He laughed a little into Victor’s chest. “Her teeth tell me it’s time.”

Victor’s chest rose and fell as he laughed softly. Asking softly he continued, “Are you...not going to anymore?”

“I’m going to pump,” he decided, thinning his lips. “Until we get to Hasetsu. Then...I’ll talk to Dr. Ito about the best way to...dry up.”

“One day, you might decide to have another…” Victor began and then hesitated.
Yuuri’s smile was strained as he looked up at his mate. “One day we will decide to have another...and I’ll go through this once again. I love the closeness...and I love the thought of another child.”

Victor couldn’t help the brightness of his eyes at the possibility of another baby with Yuuri. “I know...I’ve envied that closeness.”

Yuuri looked at their daughter in his mate’s arm, little fingers opening and closing in her sleep. “You do so many other things to cultivate that relationship.”

“I know...but it’s not the same.” Victor remained still but ran a cheek over her baby soft hair. The little girl pressed her forehead back in acceptance of her father’s scenting. “There isn’t something uniquely mine to share with her.”

Yuuri understood and didn’t quite agree. “You have your own way of spending time with her...and that is something that only you can share with her. She loves her Papa...or is it Daddy this time?”

“She seems to like dada more than papa,” Victor sighed. He would prefer to pick his name but she seemed to have her own ideas.

“She’s going to repeat the sounds easiest at first. In Japanese, you might be called touchan or tousan.”

Victor smiled at the words. Looking at Yuuri he smiled, “And you? Are you going to stick to mama?”

“I will teach her okaasan and the shorter versions of kaasan and kaachan, but I think this one will decide on her own.” He reached out and tweaked her nose and watched her giggle and kick in response. “She’ll be exposed to so many languages between us.”

Victor hugged her close and kissed her dark hair. “I don’t care what she calls me as long as she knows she’s mine.” In answer, she snuggled into his neck, her hand fisting against the opposite side. “I guess I’d better get a diaper on this girl before she pees on us both.”

Yuuri grinned as he watched his mate cross the room. They no longer used the changing table. Yuuri had a mat on the floor he preferred. The way they had to wrestle her in and out of her
clothes at times made the idea of putting her on a mat feel safer. Victor often spread her out on a towel or blanket but today used the mat. She had woken completely and was now giggling and kicking while he secured the diaper and then reached for a pair of pants and a pullover shirt. He smiled at them, turning to show Yuuri who watched from the bed. Tiger print. Yuuri rolled his eyes. They must have been a gift from “Uncle Yura” that turned up while they were away.

They were finally able to leave the apartment once the breastpump was cleaned and put away and Yuuri was packed and dressed. “I think we’ll drive today,” Victor determined. “We’re running a little later than usual.”

Yuuri turned, eyes finding Victor who cleverly found something to occupy himself with and avoid Yuuri’s gaze. “We’ve been driving more and more often,” Yuuri observed.

“You’ll appreciate it as the weather turns cold,” was all Victor offered.

*But it’s July.* Yuuri narrowed his eyes and refrained from comment.

Yakov didn’t go easy on Yuuri, much to the Japanese man’s delight. He was first up in competition and while Yuuri was on his ice, the old coach determined that the omega belonged to him. And after the litany of criticism and pointed remarks Yuuri was determined he would work with the elderly man from now on. Celestino was a brilliant artist, but Yuuri could see the kindred spirit of a studied, practiced technician in the elder Russian skater. “I’ll have to see if I can find any of his routines on line tonight. He must have put Curry to shame. He could feel his jumps becoming stronger under the experienced guidance of both coach and mate. Sometimes Victor and Yakov argued over training approaches but Yuuri intelligently chose not to get in the middle of it. *Let them sort it out while I skate.*

Yuuri found himself fitting in better with the Russian skate family, not just as Shizuka’s mother but as a skater in his own right. He was able to work with some of the younger skaters, helping improve their edges. And while most Japanese skaters jump shallow, Yuuri had always made a practice of expanding his take off edge to ensure rotations. Georgi was the first to admit that, under Yuuri’s strict tutelage, he had stopped “flooping”, when a skater takes off from the front of their toe pick, much like a loop, instead of behind as a proper flip. Yakov even had to agree the young man had edges that matched Ulrich Salchow himself.

Lilia had all but fallen in love with the young man. The attention he gave to musicality off the ice was better than any of her students. And the fire he had set in Yura’s feet couldn’t be denied. Yuuri would dedicate himself to stretches, positions at barre, and repetition of moves until he had
achieved perfection. The ageless prima cracked the faintest smile watching him move across the floor of her studio; it was the highest form of praise she was capable of.

Days of grueling practice flew by. Yuuri’s love for Yakov only grew as the man’s focus on him intensified. Finally, it was the day before he’d leave for Thailand. Yakov’s demanding run-throughs had Yuuri glad he was pumping rather than breastfeeding directly. Yakov had picked up the American technique of running through programs without breaks in between and he insisted his newest pupil learn the method...only to be happily surprised that Yuuri had been doing just that for five years. However, Yuuri was impressed that both Short and Free were run back to back...leaving him breathless often. This kept him on the ice longer and he could rely Victor, Yura, Mila, or one of the others to feed his darling while he pushed through his programs. Finally, he received Yakov’s nod of approval. “You are ready,” he pronounced.

He drank deeply from his water bottle while coach and mate talked back and forth in Russian. He didn’t know if it was about his own training or Victor’s but his mate’s expression was grim as he nodded in response to what the old coach said. Yuuri had picked up a little Russian from the rink and he knew the two were using words that had nothing to do with skating. He also watched their body language, had Yakov just been yelling about Victor’s free leg being sloppy his mate would smile and twizzle in boredom at the lecture. This was something entirely different. When Victor turned back to Yuuri, the omega watched the mask slide into place alongside the press smile that didn’t reach his eyes.

Don’t you put that face on for me. What’s going on?

Victor led Yuuri to the locker room after he cooled down, Shizuka left in Yakov’s care as the old man waved them off. “Vitya?”

Again, that smile. Yuuri twitched in response to it and not in a good way. He began to scratch his arms and then his anxiety started kicking up even more when Victor checked the locker room then locked the door. What’s wrong?

Victor took his hands and lead him to a bench they often used while changing and straddled it to face him. “There...has been a break in the case.”

Yuuri felt the breath leave his body. He stiffened with anticipation, “They caught him?”
Victor grimaced, “No...well, maybe...but so far they’ve been working on sorting out DNA samples.” He rubbed Yuuri’s hands feeling them grow cold with worry. “Someone came forward. Someone from inside.”

Yuuri thought over the day, the odd behavior of his mate, certain looks he had gotten from Yakov...and how busy they had kept him. “You...held onto my phone today. You said it would be a distraction.”

Victor sighed and nodded. “I received word from our attorneys this morning. The news has picked up something big.” He quickly added, “It hasn’t been linked to your name yet.”

Yuuri felt his body deflate, “But it will...possibly while I’m competing this weekend.” All this hard work...gone.

Victor thinned his lips. “I wanted to be sure of my information before I told you. I had everything confirmed and talked to Olivia Benson myself.” He was quiet for a moment before adding, “There was another victim. They kept saying that your story encouraged them to continue to fight, to get away. And they did.”

Yuuri nodded, his hands shaking and then felt Victor pull him deeper into his embrace. He fisted into his mate’s shirt and felt his body shaking in those arms. He pulled Victor’s shirt to the side and sought his scent but couldn’t quit shaking. It took him a moment to realize he was crying. It’s over...it’s over...

And then he looked up, wiping away his tears. “So...I’m safe. This is over?”

Victor half shrugged and half shook his head. “I don’t want to say for sure until they confirm DNA and the arrest. There are a number of samples that are being processed. And apparently this went pretty high up. Several of the people involved are members of very wealthy, very powerful families.”

Yuuri’s expression fell. “He...could still get away with it. He could walk free.”

Victor didn’t want to lie, but he knew Yuuri needed reassurance, “The person who turned in the ring...he specifically spoke to your case. He knew who did it. But Olivia hasn’t confirmed his arrest.”
Yuuri drew in a shaky breath and nodded. “I don’t...think I want to go to Detroit until we have that confirmation.”

Victor nodded, wanting the same thing. *I couldn’t handle us going there knowing that monster is walking around the city.* “Our attorneys agree and are working hard to make sure you aren’t recalled for the lawsuit.”

“I-how is that going? The case?” Yuuri was slowly calming down, Victor’s scent soothing his nerves.

Victor huffed, “The university is quickly losing ground considering the break in the criminal case but they are trying to shift the blame on certain individuals.” He ran a hand down Yuuri’s back, smoothing the workout shirt. “Our attorneys are arguing that they *are* culpable; the university as an agency acted in negligence to the omegas on campus. They are still confident that the court will rule in our favor.”

Yuuri nodded. He felt exhausted with all of the information and wasn’t quite sure how to process it. He settled once more in Victor’s arms, his own arms and legs wrapping around him. They remained for some time while Yuuri found his center once more. Finally, he pushed up and murmured, “I need to skate.”

“I believe Yakov sent you off the ice,” Victor warned.

Yuuri shook his head. “No. Not my programs. I just need...to do figures. Nothing alarming. No intensity, just concentration and repetition.”

Victor, never a student of school figures, really didn’t understand, but the look on Yuuri’s face gave him hope that the simple, mundane task would help him to come down from his distress. “Let me clear it with Yakov. Do you need to talk to Abramovich?”

“Maybe...I don’t know. I just...need to skate.” Yuuri knew the answer was yes, but first he wanted to escape to the ice and lose himself in the simplicity of patterns.

Victor thinned his lips but didn’t argue with him. They walked in silence to the rink and Victor talked quietly to Yakov while Yuuri stood by the barrier, hands resting on the rail. Then Victor was back and he said, “Thirty minutes. No jumps or spins.”
Yuuri nodded and then was on the ice. He felt his body sink into old routines. He claimed the unused lutz corner and slid into an easy figure eight, brackets on top. In his peripheral vision, he could see Victor on the phone, and knew he was going to have to talk it out with the psychiatrist before he left. At least everything was packed and in order. They really didn’t have much to do once they arrived home. Walk the dogs, make dinner...and knowing Victor, he’ll order in for the night.

The repetitive routine of the intricate design he carved into the ice, allowed him to slip into a zone deep within where it was just him and the ice. He moved with purpose, every track on the ice carved with intention. He heard the others but felt disconnected from them, from the building itself...from everything except what he was doing. Three turns became precise, rockers were cleaner than ever...voices blurred around him as the ice became the only thing that mattered. Yuuri broke from the intense concentration only when he heard his name called in that familiar lilt, then again, much closer. Looking up he saw the beautiful porcelain face, set with a concerned frown.

Exiting the ice, he received the guards and heard Victor telling him he would drive him to see the psychiatrist. He nodded but he still remained quiet, disconnected. In the locker room, he changed clothes without thought and rejoined his mate and daughter. Following them out of the building, he felt the concerned glances of not only Victor but his rinkmates. *This is why they were all keeping clear of me today.*

Yuuri stared out the window during their quiet drive, watching the ugly forms of the modern structures slide by his vision. Then he was in the office of the old psychiatrist, a cup of tea in his hand. Still, he felt separated everything going on around him and even from his body, as if he were not really a part of himself. He knew on some level that Victor and his daughter were in the waiting room, likely charming the receptionist.

Abramovich waited while Yuuri became settled, watching his patient as he organized paper, seeing him slowly take a sip of his tea then scrunching his nose before setting it aside. “Perhaps some honey,” he suggested.

“I wasn’t expecting an herbal blend,” Yuuri answered quietly but accepted the honey stick. Stirring the honey into his cup, he murmured, “They had someone come forward...but I don’t know if they’ve found the man that...that...r-raped me.”

The doctor watched his patient’s movements, slowly coming back to life with the attention to his tea. “How are you feeling?”

Yuuri set his spoon down carefully into the saucer. He liked the teacups the old doctor carried, more like the ones he encountered in the States. He carefully lifted the china cup and took another sip, humming as he found it more to his satisfaction. He knew the psychiatrist was waiting. He
also didn’t know how to answer it. “I guess...I’m still processing. I know I’m scared and relieved at the same time. So it’s confusing. I feel like I do when I become overwhelmed, like...a sensory overload. So I know I’m...keeping people away?”

“Becoming self-enclosed.”

Yuuri nodded. “It’s not that I don’t want them...I just can’t process their concerns and my needs. I just need...quiet. And I know that’s not possible. I’m leaving soon for a competition. Hours spent on a plane...with my daughter. Then hours at a crowded rink. Hours with press and other skaters and all their questions. I’m...dreading it but I want to compete. I get it when Kerrigan said ‘I just want to skate’.” He smiled thinking of the strength that omega had shown through her own ordeal. “Every emotion in me is in conflict...and if I give way to it, I know...that I’ll fall apart.”

“So you are shoring up your walls.” Abramovich offered, but it sounded like a warning, a criticism. Building walls never kept danger out, just made it harder to get help in.

Yuuri frowned at that expression giving himself a chance to process it before nodding. “I’ll...be fine. I know I have too much support not to be fine. But I feel...weirdly calm.”

“Disconnected?”

Yuuri nodded. “At least a little...I don’t feel as if I’m dissociating, but definitely there is a distance.”

Abramovich tilted his head, interested in the younger man’s self created techniques. “How do you ground yourself at these times?”

Yuuri shrugged, “I skate...and I did figures. Simple, repetitive movements. They can be really difficult, but when I relax into them they become second nature and it’s like I turn off to everything else. And if I can’t skate, I dance, working through the warm ups instilled in me since I was five.”

The doctor nodded slowly, understanding the methods behind the movements. “So you choose something routine to keep your mind from thinking of what’s bothering you. Does that ground you or does that let you slip deeper into an...episode?”

Yuuri blinked, because he realized what the doctor was saying and he’d never considered it.
“It’s...not good, is it?”

Abramovich tilted his head and inhaled, “If you were expressing yourself, I’d say yes. If it calmed your anxiety, I’d say yes.” He spread his hands in front of him to indicate that this method was not doing either of those things for Yuuri when employed in his way. “However, if it holds you in a...shall-we-say near dissociative state? That could be...suspending the moment. It’s avoidance at best, dissociation at worst.”

Yuuri hummed, tapping his knee as he considered the words. “So...I’m putting off dealing with it.”

The psychiatrist nodded. “Which...sometimes that is necessary. You want to be in a safe place, in privacy if possible when you deal with these struggles and creating a method that will allow you to find a way to deflect it until you find that safety is good. But...sometimes it is an avoidant behavior.”

Yuuri considered the doctor’s words before speaking slowly. “I think...at first I skated to find and hold onto my calm...but then I just kept skating...because I could feel myself turning off, and that felt better than actually having to deal with it.”

“So it became an avoidant behavior.”

Yuuri nodded. He took a deep breath. *I’ve fought so hard...I’ll not be defeated by my own fears.* He stuck his chin out, in determined Katsuki fashion. “So...what do I do now?”

Abramovich struggled to keep his smile settled on his lips. The young man had impressed him with his fortitude. *Remind me never to step in your way.* “That’s the key. You do. Make a move forward so you aren’t suspended in place.”

Yuuri sighed, glancing towards the door. “I suppose...I need to see to my family. We travel tomorrow.”

Abramovich hummed somewhere between approval and reproach, “Which is good...but at some point, give yourself permission to feel. Sometimes we can use activity and our obligations to others as an avoidant.”
Victor held a fussy Shizuka, walking her back and forth and bouncing her, but no matter what her father did she was inconsolable. Too long without her mama was affecting her and as soon as she spotted Yuuri coming out of the office she reached pudgy little hands towards him.

“What’s wrong?” Yuuri greeted, taking her from Victor’s arms and hugging her close. She snuggled into Yuuri’s neck and for the first time since the news broke, he found his smile. It was small but felt real. “Did you miss me?”

“How are you?” Victor asked, his motions cautious until Yuuri leaned into him. He sighed into his mate, wrapping Yuuri into his embrace. “I think...I missed you, too.”

“I’m sorry,” Yuuri whispered. “I just...got stuck.”

Victor pressed a cheek into his hair, murmuring, “You don’t have to apologize. I just...wanted you to get help. And if we need to withdraw…”

Yuuri drew up with a stubborn set to his chin. “I’m not withdrawing. I lost too much time because of that fucking asshole.”

Victor’s eyes widened and remembered Yura commenting on Yuuri’s language. Oh. He wanted to reach over and cover baby’s ears but he didn’t dare move into that space. “Okay, we’ll go home and get ready for the trip.

The evening went as Yuuri had predicted. Yura had moved back in, which amused both older men. He’d only been gone a week. Why he didn’t just stay was beyond them, but they were both happy he’d found his way back to their home. They ordered delivery, took the dogs out, snuggled and watched TV. It was an early night and then they were up at four in the morning heading out to catch a flight.

Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy, Bangkok, Thailand (August 1-5, 2018)
They arrived in Bangkok on the last day of July and greeted both Celestino and Phichit at the airport. Even though it was late and everyone was tired, Phichit still focused in on his niece. He tickled the little girl under her chin, winning a gurgled smile. “How are you? Did you miss your Uncle Phichit?”

“This little girl has a whole lot of uncles,” Celestino stated with amusement.

“It should make my job easier when she starts to date,” Victor pointed out.

Both Yuuri and Phichit looked at him in horror. “She’s still a baby...and will be little for a long, long time!” Phichit argued.

“Forever,” Yuuri concurred.

Victor sighed knowing he couldn’t fight two omegas at once. He looked over his mate’s shoulder at his daughter and could understand the desire to keep her little forever. The world was an ugly place and he’d love to protect her from it. At least she had a “whole lot of uncles”, each armed with knife shoes.

The crowd parted and separated. However, Yuuri couldn’t help the shiver that ran up his spine. He glanced around the crowd, faces, none of whom stood out, and none directing their glances at him. But he couldn’t fight the urge to slide his hand over the back of his neck almost as if he needed to protect himself. The skin under his hand was cold and the bite had long faded, the scar left behind healed beautifully. To a mildly observant eye, and even a keen one, the skin of his neck was smoothly unblemished. But to Yuuri’s fingers he swore he felt a ridge, a dip where teeth had planted. He glanced over his shoulder again but only saw random groups of people milling about and forced himself to shake off the fear before it spread to Shizu. I’m just on edge because of the news.

Inside the comfortable, plush setting of a first class lounge for passengers, Jaimie sat in the thick leather armchair with a glass of scotch, watching Yuuri cuddle their daughter closer. He smiled as he watched the hand rub at the bite he had given the omega almost two years ago. You know I’m here, don’t you? They say the bond never fully fades away. Don’t worry, love. Our family will be together soon. You won’t need that stand-in alpha for long. Looking up at his brother, he asked, “Are you ready?”
“Yes,” the younger Donovan agreed, his eyes dancing with eagerness. “This does make for good hunting grounds.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh, shit!
Yuuri found his sister and ballet coach already settled into their rooms. Each woman took her turn to hug him tightly before he relinquished his daughter to the care of Minako. Mari hung back, examining the worried look on her brother’s face. She was a student of her brother’s facial expressions and body language, when her parents couldn’t get a beat on the reclusive young man, his sister was able to read him like a book.

The omega saw his sister’s gaze and waved her off, “You are welcome to watch her while I grab a shower.” Mari let the comment slide but she knew her brother too well, he was hiding something. However, she also knew that pulling information from him was a surefire way to make him shut down. Instead she focused her attention on her niece, knowing that he would open up and share when he was ready. Until then she would stay alert. If something scared him, then she would hunt it down.

Yuuri located his bag from those brought up to their room and then his softest sleep pants and shirt then disappeared into the bathroom.

Victor stowed the milk pumped in flight in the refrigerator, all except for one tube. He began preparing a bottle.

“How did you get those on the plane?” Mari asked with surprise.
Victor glanced up, his eyes smiling as he patiently explained, “Well, Yuuri had his portable pump and the attendants took him to a private part of the plane to take care of it.”

“So he’s not breastfeeding?” Minako asked. Her tone spoke of the incredulity she felt and she shared a look with Mari, who to her credit knew that while that upset him, it wasn’t what had him on edge.

“Shizulya has teeth,” Victor shrugged, avoiding their gaze. “I don’t think he’s happy about it but it was time. He plans to pump until he talks to Dr. Ito.”

“So you are returning with us,” Mari confirmed. Inwardly she breathed a sigh of relief knowing she could do a better job as big sister while he was under their roof.

“It’s what Yuuri wants. He will be less stressed if family is taking care of our daughter.” Victor took the bottle from the microwave, the quick warming doing the trick, and shook it before testing it on his wrist.

Minako hummed as she considered the walls at the onsen. “You might...want to book something more...private.”

“Yes, please,” Mari added, not wanting to think about let alone listen to her brother in heat.

Victor grinned and shrugged. “Yuuko gave us some suggestions. Yuuri hasn’t agreed to it yet.” He walked to the bed to see his daughter wiggling her feet at the two aunts playing with her. “I think sometimes he thinks if he ignores it, the whole heat issue will go away.”

Both Mari and Minako snorted at that. Both women knew that Yuuri believed very firmly in the misconception of ‘out of sight, out of mind’. They also saw how it never seemed to work for him, but that never dissuaded him from practicing it like an art form. Aunt Mari accepted the bottle from Victor, cuddling her niece into her arms and slowly guiding the rubber nipple to the mouth. She smiled down at the little blue eyes sparkling up at her. Mari may have eschewed parenthood but aunthood was another matter.

Yuuri came out of the bathroom, and although it helped with the stress of too many odors, Victor could tell his mate was exhausted and soon had him in bed. “I’ll wake you up when our meal has arrived.”
“We’re going out if you don’t need us,” Minako supplied quietly. “I think we’re joining Celestino for drinks down in the lounge.”

Victor hid a smile at that slip. Minako and Yuuri’s coach had evidently hit it off quite well... *Mari just be there for cover*. “We’ll be fine. I suspect Yuuri is going to be sleeping all evening.” Then a thought hit him, “Will Phichit be alone?”

“Parents have picked him up and are insisting he stay with them,” the dancer provided. “Celestino is on his own. He knew you’d have Yuuri taken care of.”

“Then, have fun and be careful.” He watched the two women leave laughing at thoughts of their night out. Victor reminisced for a moment about that part of his life, parties with Chris, late nights with his rinkmate. He looked back into the room, his mate soundly asleep in bed, his daughter quickly following. *I’m officially the old man...God, don’t let Yura hear that thought.*

Sighing, he took out his phone and began catching up on the news, specifically that involving Yuuri and the case in Detroit. He frowned as he read the police statement that some of the perpetrators were still at large. He stepped out into the hallway and made the call to Detroit.

“Lt. Olivia Benson, Detroit SVU.”

The alpha admired the power in her voice, “Olivia, this is Victor Nikiforov. Yuuri and I are in Thailand and I’m a little nervous about what I’m reading in the news. Any word on the one that was accused of Yuuri’s…” He paused glancing up and down the hall before settling on the more generic term of “attack?”

Down the line and a half a world away Olivia sighed, she had wanted to tell them they had him in custody but he had fled quickly. “Unfortunately, it appears as if he’s left the country. We have a warrant out for his arrest once he hits U.S. soil and are working to expand it internationally. However, it would smart to be aware of your surroundings and anyone showing any interest beyond that of a normal fan. I cannot say when it will be picked up by international agencies like Interpol.”

Victor felt his stomach fall. *Left the country...he could be here. No, that’s so stupid...but when has that ever stopped anyone? People break the law because they think they are above it, they can get away with it.* “I...was afraid of that. Thank you.” As he disconnected, he looked around before reentering the room he shared with his mate. *I don’t want to alarm him further but...if he*
doesn’t know, he might not be as careful.

Yuuri shifted in his sleep and a whine slipped out from under his breath. Shizuka’s eyes fluttered open and she started to cry, sensing her mother’s distress. Yuuri woke up immediately and murmured apologies, hugging her close and pressing kisses into her hair. His eyes lifted to Victor and the alpha could see the questions.

Victor rubbed at the back of his neck. *Exactly what I didn’t want to do to you.* But he knew that he couldn’t keep Yuuri in the dark and keep him safe. “I spoke with Olivia. The, ah, suspect? He has left the country.”

Yuuri thinned his lips, a grim demeanor in his expression. He thought back to the worry he felt back at the airport. “We should have left Shizu-chan with Lilia.”

Victor was quick to calm his mate, “She’ll be with Mari and Minako. They won’t let anyone near her.”

Yuuri drew a shaky breath and shifted nervously to a seated position, pulling his baby close to his heart. Shizuka quickly grew calm listening to the first music she had heard, the beat of her mother’s heart, steadying her. Resting his cheek in her hair, he closed his eyes and breathed in her scent.

Victor knew Yuuri was thinking, thoughts flying through his mind at lightspeed. But as he watched his daughter grow restless in his arms, having calmed, she became hungry. The alpha began preparing a bottle. After a moment, Yuuri asked him, “Will you hand me the breast pump? I probably need to put some back and...I feel heavy.”

*Something to do.* That’s all it was but Yuuri went through the motions, putting the apparatus in order and peeling off his shirt. He was glad that Victor handed her the bottle rather than taking her from him. He needed to keep her close. Finally, he decided on a course of action.

“Call coach and see if he can get Mari and Minako passes as assistants so they can be with us and not with the general crowd. I think...I want to keep her nearby.”

Victor swallowed and went to do as he was told, explaining the situation to the coach. Celestino replied, “I already anticipated Yuuri’s need to keep her close and requested the passes. We will be able to pick them up when we check in tomorrow.”
Victor exhaled in relief. Celestino had just confirmed himself as a Yuuri Whisperer. “Has Phichit returned? He shouldn’t be alone.”

“He went out with his parents but I’ll text that he needs an escort to his room when and if he returns. I think his parents wanted to keep him with them as much as possible so we might not see him until practice.”

Victor could hear the coach’s disapproval of the omega’s plans, but he knew the boy was safe with his parents. “He can text me if needed.”

“I should be down here for a while yet but I’ll let him know of a plan B,” the coach agreed. He also kept up with the news and wanted to be available for his skaters. Having the company of the ladies didn’t hurt, though. Especially not warriors like Minako and Mari.

Looking up, Victor met the pensive gaze of his mate. “He’ll be fine. He’s with his parents.”

Yuuri shrugged, trying to believe it. “I know...and yet, Phichit is in his home country. I worry...he’ll get lax.”

Victor rubbed hands down Yuuri’s arms, “Celestino is making him aware of the situation and he’s downstairs should he decide to return tonight.”

Yuuri reluctantly nodded. As he started to disentangle himself from the apparatus, Victor scooped up his daughter and settled her into the playpen with some toys. Then, as he stood up, he felt arms wrap around him from behind. Turning, he gathered Yuuri in his arms.

“I know you are unsettled with all of this but we’ll get through this.”

“I’m just...afraid,” the omega admitted.

Victor wanted to reassure him, to tell him everything would be alright. He knew that lie wouldn’t work, however. He wouldn’t be able to put any conviction into it. “I know. I love you and our daughter. We will work this as a team to keep you, Shizuka, and Phichit safe.”
Yuuri nodded. “Buddy system.”

“Exactly.”

Yuuri stood at the barrier watching Phichit skate and thinking about the job he had before him. So far, there hadn’t been anything alarming during their trip except for the sense of foreboding. Yuuri had to admit the panic he felt at the airport hadn’t re-occurred and he was able to excuse it as his lifelong inability to travel well. However, Victor stayed close to him as if he had felt it as well. His sister and Minako kept his daughter between them and were often surrounded by other skaters... *because she’s the cutest of babies*. Yuuri looked over to see the bevy of skaters entertained by her antics. He could hear Victor’s phone pinging nonstop as a number of #skatebaby IG’s went up. *I can’t wait to see those pictures.*

Then it was Yuuri’s skate. His warm up flight left the ice, allowing him the minute warm up solo. He circled the ice, occasionally glancing into the audience. Signs supporting him were all around the arena. People cheered as he passed by and he could feel there was more going on than people loving him for skating, his strength, his fight, gave them something they needed. It lit him up to know that they were looking at him to fight and win...but it was also that possibility of failure that ate at him as he slowed to a stop at the barrier. As he faced Victor before his short program, he pressed their foreheads together. “What if...I mess up?”

Victor chuckled softly, “You’re too stubborn to mess up, too stubborn to let him have this. I know you will reclaim your place.”

“I’m not...seductive.” Yuuri looked up, blushing.

*If you only knew how seductive you are right now, just as you are...* “You are beautiful. You seduced me from the beginning. Let the world know you’ve reclaimed your sexuality. It is a part of you.”

Yuuri took a shaky breath and nodded. “Watch me?”

“Always.”
Yuuri backed off of the barrier and moved into position. The black costume with its mesh inset and half skirt hugged his curves. He’d worked hard to regain his figure, to regain his skate. He turned to his mate. *I already seduced you...but lately, I feel like I’ve just leaned on you. I haven’t...teased you. I haven’t flirted with you. We just...are. I want...to be more. I want to be the one person you chase. Always. I don’t want to be a burden, but an equal in this relationship.*

Closing his eyes, he felt his body settle into position, then opening his eyes, he focused on Victor thankful for the contacts. *Think sexy. Think...seductive. Think...flirty. What would Victor do? Then he felt the smile within him settle into a smirk as he focused on Victor and then, with a wink, he was moving to the music.*

*Soon, I’ll be sharing my heat with you. I’m both nervous and excited. We will become bonded, married in every sense of the word. I will call you my husband. I don’t want you to regret that choice. I want you...to still be attracted to me. How long has it been since we made love? Too long. Tonight, you will want me. At this moment, you will desire me. Yuuri had hips, afterall, for a reason. And everyone commented on his ass even if Yuuri would argue that Victor had the better ass. He focused on teasing Victor and drawing out that desire. I love you, Vitya...and I want you to want me, to need me. Chase after me. Love me.*

Jaimie Donovan glanced over at his little brother. Flynn’s eyes were searching the skaters for signs of the Thai man but he seemed to have disappeared after the program. *No worries. We know where he’s staying, what he’s doing. We know his entire schedule... possibly better than he does.*

He spotted their first target beside a pair of women. The older Donovan smiled at the thought of his own child. If she is an alpha, perhaps Father will forgive the legacy passing into her hands.

Other families had female alpha leads but there was the reason the club existed. A male alpha was still considered more powerful. But even if he couldn’t pass it on to her, she would still be valuable, a pretty little half breed like her would fetch a good price. He could breed more children out of the little omega. One had to be an alpha male. Females were much rarer in a maleXmale paring... *and we’ll just keep trying until we get one, won’t we, Yuuri?*

Donovan moved in closer, his VIP status giving him greater access than the average attendee. He knew this wasn’t the right moment. He would bide his time and wait for an opportunity. However, the Japanese woman was right there, his daughter...he knew immediately she was his...was right there staring back at him with her eyes wide with curiosity. *You aren’t afraid of me, angel. You know, don’t you?*

She shook her rattle and then threw it. He automatically bent down and picked it up. “Did you lose this, angel?” he cooed softly before lifting his eyes toward the woman. She shifted back uncomfortably.
“Thank you, but please excuse us,” and then she gathered the little girl up in her arms leaving her companion to carry the diaper bag and blanket.

Her companion, an alpha, shot him a glare as she stepped between them. *Alpha bitch thinks she can keep me from my own kid! We shall see about that.*

Yuuri gathered his daughter to him as he sat in the Kiss and Cry waiting for his score. She bounced on his knee, waving at the camera and the tossie girls still collecting the mass of plushies and flowers that had rained down after he exited the ice. *Can’t wait to see what Johnny and Tara make of her.* Minako and Mari stood near Celestino but Victor sat next to him, his hand moving up and down Yuuri’s back.

“You were beautiful,” Victor reassured him.

Yuuri smiled, *I was skating it for you.* “Do you think they liked it?”

He nodded as the score came up and watched Yuuri’s eyes widen. Even after a year off, he had a personal best. Victor leaned in and murmured, “With a skate like that, how could they not like it? I find you...enthralling. I couldn’t take my eyes off of you.”

Yuuri blushed in response, his chin dropping, his lids lowering. Victor loved him like this. Even surrounded by a stadium full of skate fans, he knew this was just for him.

Yuuri’s program easily slid him into first and Yuuri felt his nerves start to drum under his skin. They left the kiss and cry, rejoining the group. Yuuri accepted their congratulations, but was still stuck in his thoughts. *First. How am I going to do this? Everyone will expect me to win. What if I fail?*

“What if you don’t?”

He looked up, suddenly realizing he must have spoken those last words aloud. Phichit was next to him, snaking an arm around him to hug him.
“Honestly Yuuri, think about it. What if you don’t fail?” The glow from his friend’s face assured him that Phichit was rooting just as hard for him as he was for himself. They would share the podium.

They were headed back to the press room and he could feel Victor nearby. He refused to relinquish his daughter needing her nearby. Both Victor and Celestino just shrugged. Why not? Yuuri went into the press gauntlet with daughter on his hip, her presence anchoring him. The reporters raised an eyebrow, smiled and remembered Steph Curry. Yuuri was an athlete and a parent equally.

And of course, he received a number of questions about balancing the demands of skating and parenting. Yuuri smiled, thinking that Steph Curry wasn’t asked a single question about balancing the demands of being an elite athlete and a parent. He shot Victor a look, watching the Russian man smirk. Don’t laugh, they won’t ask you that either.

“I have an amazing skate family and we all take turns caring for her. And both Victor and I often trade off parenting and practice. It’s challenging but she is well cared for.”

And then some questions came regarding the court case.

Yuuri’s expression faltered but then he pushed a calm demeanor in place. “What happened...it was unimaginable. The fact that it was not treated with due care, unspeakable. However, I am finally in a good place with the support of friends, family, and excellent coaches. I have a good team of attorneys and hope for a positive resolution that will change the way the university handles assault cases in the future.”

And finally, some questions about skating. How do you feel about ending in first place today?

“I am overwhelmed...I never imagined I’d return in such good position.” Overwhelmed is a good word for it. He kept his anxiety masked and feeling Victor’s hand on his back rubbing circles helped.

Then they were finished, heading back to their rooms. Yuuri was worn and wanted a long shower. Victor wanted to get his omega alone and see to his family.

“Do you need us tonight?” Mari asked as they returned to their rooms.
“No,” Yuuri answered, a weary smile on his face. “We’re staying in. But I’ll probably need you the night of the banquet.”

“We won’t be out late,” Minako added. “If anything changes, just text.”

“Thank you.” And then his sister and mentor were gone.

Yuuri leaned in and smiled up at his mate, their foreheads touching. He needed Victor. Needed to feel him all over him. Needed his scent. Needed to drown in him. “We should shower...then after she’s asleep…” He trailed off as he went up on his toes to brush his lips over Victor’s, brushing his thumb over the point of contact as a blush rose up on the alpha’s cheeks, before disappearing into the bathroom.

Yuuri showered as Victor gave Shizuka a bath in the sink. The stadium carried too many odors and it seemed a priority to wash them all off. As Yuuri stepped out of the shower, Victor traded places and stepped in. He washed off quickly and joined his mate in the room where Yuuri was dressing their daughter and giving her a chance to stretch and play on the bed.

“How are you?” Victor asked, having noted the tension in his lover during the press conference.

“Tired…but needing to stay close to my family,” he admitted.

Victor tread lightly, “The press conference…”

“I expected as much,” Yuuri cut him off not wanting to rehash it. “And I don’t do well with press. So...it just is. Why don’t you prepare her dinner while I pump? Then we can put Shizu-chan to bed.” He shifted the tone in his voice to suggest he wanted more but Victor began busying himself with other things bringing forth a sigh of frustration.

“Let me order our meal in first,” Victor bargained.

Yuuri sat against the headboard, his daughter rolling around between his legs playing with her feet. Yuuri began working with the breast pump while taking one hand to play with his daughter, tickling her exposed belly as she tugged at her shirt and listening to her giggles. He found a little
bit of his smile peeking out when Victor scooped her up to feed her. Yuuri barely repressed the huff slipping from his lips. He missed feeding her and their own special intimacy...and apparently Victor wasn’t taking a hint tonight. He focused on the one thing he could pick a fight about.

“Peas, Victor?”

“No, I’m not giving up feeding her what I eat. I’m working on making her like my flavors.”

“Just because you hate peas doesn’t mean she has to grow up hating them,” he argued, punctuating with a grin and a wink.

Yuuri hated that grin and wink at the moment and huffed, “They are an abomination.” He scowled as his mate snickered at his response.

Yuuri finished with the pump and rinsed it out before repacking it. “I think...I won’t miss pumping. It’s...not as rewarding as breastfeeding.”

Victor’s expression softened as he cleaned the pureed peas off their daughter’s face. “I’m sorry you had to give up that intimacy, Yuuri.”

“She wouldn’t make such a mess with carrots,” Yuuri pointed out, not ready to give up the fight. “They aren’t as disgusting.”

Victor grinned. “Says you.”

Yuuri gave a long suffering sigh before turning to clean some more. He scratched at his neck. Too many scents still invaded their room and Yuuri began gathering things into scent proof bags. I really am showing signs of preparing for heat. Glancing at his mate, he smiled wanly. I need your scent. You’ve faded from my skin.

He reached for his daughter’s bag and frowned. Everyone’s scents are clinging to everything. He ran a sink full of soapy water and prepared to wash out and dry everything. He started with her clothes, washing and then rinsing them in the second sink. He had them hung on the portable clothes line before turning to deal with her toys. He grabbed them and dropped them one at a time into the water. Reaching for the rattle, he stilled and lowered it to the counter. Something was off. He shook his head. Too many scents in the air today. But as he lifted the rattle once again, this time drawing it closer, he froze. “Victor!” He could hear the alarm in his own voice, could feel himself fighting to breathe.

His mate was in the bathroom quickly, their daughter hugged up to his chest. “Yuuri!”
Victor’s voice came through a tunnel and Yuuri felt the room darkening as he started to lose ground. He lowered himself to the floor, his head between his knees.

“Yuuri, you’re safe, love. Breathe with me.” Victor knelt down beside him letting their daughter crawl around on the floor. He began to focus on Yuuri’s breathing and the omega tried to follow him. “In...one...two...”

Yuuri’s eyes rested on his daughter, and with heavy limbs, he reached for her, not to take her...he didn’t trust himself to hold her at the moment...but to touch her, to make sure she was safe. Then, he began focusing on his breathing, his eyes on her the entire time. Finally, he was able to say the words. “Her rattle. It...smells like him.”

Victor’s eyes widened. “Are you sure?”

Yuuri nodded. “I...can never forget that scent.”

Victor stood up, recovered the rattle and disappeared into the other room. Yuuri sat in the floor with his daughter now crawling into his lap and then she began pulling up on him and leaned into his scent.

“I’m not sure I’m very comforting.” Yuuri murmured but hugged her close. She made a face turning her head back and forth and then settled into him. Her closeness calmed him and he couldn’t help but wonder if she was trying to comfort him. He could hear her blow bubbles, feel the tug of her hand on the string of his hoodie. “I love you, Shizu-chan...so very much.” He prayed, begging whatever deities watched over children that she’d be kept safe, protected from that monster.

In the bedroom, Victor bagged up the rattle and called Mari.

“She was with us the whole time.”

Then in the background, he heard Minako’s voice speaking over the phone. “There was that man that handed her toy back to her.”
Mari’s tinny voice started slowly as she recalled more details. “Oh, yes, the American. He spoke to her but we quickly moved away from him. I didn’t think…”

Victor was quick to cut her off, “Was that toy her rattle?”

There was a pause and then a soft, “yes...yes it was.”

“That was him.” Victor sat down on the edge of the bed, the mattress groaning under the weight of his slight frame. “He...is the one that attacked Yuuri. I’ve bagged up the rattle and I’m going to call the police to see what we should do. Can you come back to the room?”

“No problem,” Mari answered and then breathed a sorrowful, “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be upset with yourself.” Victor knew the aunt loved her niece and would feel horrible about that monster getting a hair’s breadth from her. “That’s why we wanted you here. We knew you’d keep her safe. As you said, you quickly moved away from him.”

He was calling the police when Yuuri emerged from the bathroom, their daughter in his arms. He watched his mate crawl into bed and curl around Shizuka who played and snuggled into her mother, cooing and slowly pulling Yuuri’s smile to the surface. She has a magic of her own, thought Victor.

A knock sounded and Yuuri pulled further back into himself, tightening his hold on his daughter. Muting the phone, Victor approached the door and checked the peephole before opening it to their meal. He quickly handed a tip to room service and thanked them before wheeling it into their room. “Yuuri, you need to eat something.”

“Not yet,” the omega responded, holding his daughter close until she started to fight him. He loosened his hold and let her crawl out of his embrace. She snuggled under the blanket and then lifted her head before hiding once more. It took a moment before Yuuri realized she was playing peek-a-boo. He smiled and fell into the game. “Where’s Shizu-chan? There she is!” The game started to calm him.

Then his sister and Minako arrived. Both came over and were checking Yuuri and the baby over, making sure they were both okay.
“I’m so sorry,” Mari apologized, and Yuuri could tell she blamed herself.

Shaking his head, he responded, “I think...no one is to blame. But maybe...we need to plan better for tomorrow.” He could hear the weariness in his voice and knew the panic attack had slowed him down but he knew he had to keep a clear head to deal with matters at hand.

“I’m talking with security right now,” Victor told them. He’d been talking with various people trying to determine the best course of action. He finally disconnected and rejoined his family, once more asking Yuuri, “Do you think you could eat?”

Reluctantly, Yuuri nodded but gathered his daughter in his arms wanting to keep her close. He settled her into his lap, both seated at the table and opened a package of breadsticks. Handing one to Shizuka to chew on, Yuuri pushed around the baked chicken and salad, taking an occasional bite. Victor watched, wanting to say something, prod Yuuri to eat more but he knew pushing would result in the opposite.

Someone knocked on the door once more and Victor went to tend to it while Minako tried to distract Yuuri enough to get him to eat. Then the room filled up with Phichit and Celestino who brought with him the security lead. “This is Charong Suttirat, head of security at the Asian Open. He wanted to ask the ladies a few questions so that he and his team can provide the best protection possible.”

He talked with each of the ladies regarding what they saw, narrowed down the timeframe, where they were located using a map, and gathered their phone numbers. “I may be calling to see if you can make an identification. Let me see if I can find some good camera angles. Otherwise, take extra care with your safety.” Turning to Yuuri, he added, “We take this threat seriously but we want to make sure you also use caution. The police has been notified but we want to ensure your safety in the venue.”

“Thank you,” Yuuri answered, tightening his hold on his daughter until he heard her fuss.

After the officer left, Yuuri focused on the others. “So about tomorrow…” They agreed to close the ranks and Celestino suggested the ladies remain with the skaters and not in the stands. They would be surrounded by familiar faces, only. Finally, everyone dispersed to their own rooms.

Yuuri could feel his exhaustion and checked on his sleeping daughter once more before seeking his mate’s arms. “I need you,” he whispered. “I don’t think I have the energy for something more intimate. I wanted it earlier but now…”
“What is it that you need the most?” Victor asked softly.

“I need...to smell you, to wipe out all of the scents that have invaded my senses all day.” Yuuri was beginning to pull at the fabric of Victor’s shirt.

Victor started by pulling his shirt over his head and then urged Yuuri into his embrace. Yuuri curled into his lap and breathed in his mate’s scent. He remained still for several minutes and Victor thought he’d fallen asleep when Yuuri whispered “more”.

Sitting up, he allowed Victor to tug off his shirt. Back in Victor’s lap, Yuuri leaned into Victor’s shoulder and felt his wrist slide over his skin. His mate then laid him back into the sheets, continuing to run his wrist over Yuuri’s body.

“I wanted...for us to make love tonight,” Yuuri whined.

Victor smiled indulgently. “I think you need your rest.”

Yuuri’s voice showed his frustration, “I know...it’s just been so long.”

Victor leaned in and brushed his lips over Yuuri’s forehead, then nose, before dipping in and tasting his lips. “I know...I hope you don’t feel neglected.”

Yuuri huffed, a small smile settling into his lips. “Never with you. I worry...that you feel neglected.”

“Love is shown in so many ways, traded back and forth between us.” Victor continued to release his scent, rubbing his wrists over Yuuri’s back, stopping at the scent glands at the base of the neck for extra attention. “I don’t feel neglected. I love that we speak love in everything we do. And I’m glad you will ask for what you need.”

“I think...my body is preparing for heat,” Yuuri whispered.
“I suspected so as well.”

“I’m just...jittery. Scents bother me...not just... his. I’m scared but everything, even my fear, feels heightened.”

“I’m here. I don’t mind if you seek out my scent, even in public.”

A soft whimper slipped from his lips as he buried himself into Victor. His eyes closed in slow blinks and he was unaware of the scent and pheromones his mate was releasing to settle him. Finally, he slept, Victor’s fingers carding through his hair, gentle kisses brushing through the locks.

Victor reached over to turn off the lamp. Even that shift pulled a cry of protest from Yuuri and he soon had his lover enveloped into his embrace once more. I’ve got you, my Yuuri. I’ve got you.

NOTE:

Jaimie Donovan is very privileged as a white alpha male. Although he sees Yuuri as what he desires, he still holds his own racist views as evidenced by his thoughts of his daughter being a “half-breed”. Not only is Yuuri seen in less standing as an omega in his views, he is also fetishized and considered less being Asian.

Chapter End Notes

I promise you, Shizu is okay. I wouldn't hurt that little angle. I don't think I could.
Yuuri enjoys some private time with his mate before entering the day of competition. Victor and Yuuri make time for family, seeking balance with their competition schedule (and it helps that Phichit is a great uncle). As the day continues, Donovan's shadow stretches over them.

Yuuri curled into his mate’s arms. The alpha’s scent was strongest in the morning and went far to reassure him, leaving him content. Well...not entirely content. He stretched his arm up and pulled a sleepy Victor into a good morning kiss. A motion of his body had Victor’s eyes fluttering open to catch the sultry, heavy lidded look of a lover. “Want you,” he whispered.

Victor tightened his arms around Yuuri, deepening the kiss. Yuuri was fast to move his lips across the jawline and begin pecking at the scent gland on the neck. Victor bit his lip to stifle a groan and shot a quick glance over to the travel crib. Finding Shizuka still sound asleep he surrendered to his mate’s call. The sun hadn’t risen yet and they claimed those shadowy moments as their own. He slid his hand down Yuuri’s back, reinforcing the scenting and feeling Yuuri reciprocate the action. Kisses melted one into the other as they sought intimacy in the wee hours of the day. Yuuri spoke his need with his hips, arousal rising off of his scent.

Victor knew with the day before them they couldn’t do too much but, perhaps, he could give Yuuri something. He carefully slid Yuuri’s pajamas down past his hips and did the same with his own, losing himself in the delicious, muffled sounds of the omega writhing in need beneath him. Reaching over, he found the lube he’d stashed on the table next to the bed...out of the sight of guests but within easy reach. He squirted some in his hand and handed it to Yuuri who did the same.

They seemed to be of one mind as they each reached for the other’s length smoothing the slick fluid as they went. Victor moved in, snaking his free arm around his mate, drawing them closely together, and listened to the needy moan created by his touch. Yuuri was treated to an equally demanding groan. Meeting one another’s eyes, Victor read the intensity of Yuuri’s gaze as he drew
them closer together, joining their lengths in his hand. Yuuri’s hand moved into position over his and they continued to draw out one another’s pleasure in unspoken mutual need as their bodies moved in unison.

Yuuri felt himself go limp and laid back lazily as the evidence of their release pooled into the valleys of his body. He needed more and wanted Victor to mark him well. The alpha understood the need and dipping his fingers into the remnants of their early morning excursion spread his scent into Yuuri’s glands. As his thumb ran over Yuuri’s wrists, he watched as the omega wordlessly praised his alpha, knowing how badly his mate needed his scent to protect him. Something stirred in Victor, a primal arousal grew, knowing how well he pleased the omega and he continued, spreading it with two fingers into the glands of his neck. In response Yuuri purred, moving to give him access and encourage the marking, the claiming, until Yuuri was marked in every place, practically drowning in his scent. Yuuri’s cinnamon hued eyes opened, the sultry look returned, as he reached down to the remains, sliding his fingers through it and onto Victor’s glands in his neck. The alpha couldn’t help the low growl rumbling deep in his chest as he gladly accepted the ministrations.

The two managed to get a shower together before their angel woke up and Victor diligently slid his wrist over her skin as he dressed her that morning. There was no doubt as they tumbled into the world that this was a family. Anyone with a nose would be able to tell they belonged together.

Practice went smoothly that morning but with a much more important event looming the skaters agreed to call it quits early. The small group of friends and family agreed to meet in a private space for lunch to celebrate a someone’s first birthday. Yuuri knew that Yura would fly to Japan when they would celebrate again with the rest of his friends and family, however he was still sorry the little blonde wasn’t there. He wished he could celebrate his daughter’s birthday with all of his friends and family in one place but they were scattered and with their schedules it would be nearly impossible. He was certain Yakov and Lilia had plans to spoil her upon their return.

The location was arranged by Phichit, through his parents, and Yuuri walked in, smiling at the room set up for an English tea. Yuuri appreciated the Chulanot’s decision to choose a place where only those he knew and trusted would be present and he could let down his guard. A blanket of soft pink fuzzy goodness was spread out over the carpet in the center of the room providing plenty of play space for the star of the day. She turned over the pretty wrapped packages and bags with curiosity but she was more interested in the people gathering around, large bright eyes taking in all the faces.

They did manage to get a picture of her with her birthday cake, decorated with hamsters leaving no one in the dark as to who organized the event. Yuuri turned to smirk at his friend when the next, even better photo op came up as Shizuka kicked a foot into the cake. She squirmed with joy, then
Yuuri leaned into his mate and whispered, “I needed this.”

“I know. That’s why I made sure Phichit didn’t cancel it.” Victor’s hand wrapped around him, his thumb moving up and down his arm in affection.


However, that peace was only a temporary reprieve. Yuuri returned to the venue tied into knots, looking over his shoulder or closing his eyes to see if he could smell the alpha’s scent. Victor remained close, occasionally reminding Yuuri why they were there. Celestino focused on Phichit, both equally on edge, but the older man able to compartmentalize his emotions to help his skater prepare for the job to be done. Security had stepped up and every time either skater looked up, they could see a uniformed figure. Victor was happy to see that not only had they put more uniformed guards on duty, but he caught the telltale signs of plain clothes guards circulating around. Mari and Minako were in the trenches with the skaters, in eyesight of one of the other four at all times. Surprisingly, as word traveled among skaters, the others drew in ranks as well determined to protect the #skatebaby. Yuuri was surprised to see skaters he hadn’t really had a chance to speak to suddenly standing close to him and scanning anyone who didn’t look familiar. He’d seen Phichit talk to them quietly at the party and wondered if he told them then. He knew Phichit wouldn’t air this on social media.

The security footage didn’t reveal a clear angle on the face of the man that approached Mari but they could tell he had a badge, something they had already deduced given where he was located. The clothing he wore wasn’t that of a reporter or photographer. He certainly wasn’t a coach as they ran in a small circle at senior level, but this man was someone who had greater access than the average fan. He could intermingle among them and that put Yuuri further on edge. He was so stressed about the sense of impending danger, that he had no time to worry about his skate. He stretched and prepared out of routine, his eyes scanning those around him and his daughter for someone that didn’t belong. However, the coaches seemed to barricade the waiting area for skaters, the normal hangers-on and family members were respectfully seated in a special audience box made for them. Mari and Minako were the only exception because they had Shizuka.
Too soon it was Yuuri’s turn to skate, the last group, the last skater. He shook the weariness out of his muscles, circling the ice for his warm up. He heard the crowd roar as he passed them again, but the worry of letting them down had disappeared into the larger concern for his safety, for his daughter’s. Skating to the barrier, he smiled watching as Victor stepped up to take his hand, their daughter in a carrier strapped to his chest. “I was going to demand you keep an eye on her.”

Victor smiled as the girl squealed watching her mother swizzle on the ice, “I figured this was the only way to get you to focus. And now your sister and Minako can watch you skate.”

Yuuri’s smiled faltered. It was touching, but still...“I hate this.”

Victor sighed, taking Yuuri’s hand in his and holding the man until he stilled, “You’re almost finished. Another four and a half minutes.”

Yuuri pursed his lips and nodded. He brought Victor’s hand to his lips, kissing the long fingers. Releasing it he sought the blue eyes, “Four and a half minutes.”

Victor saw the fierce determination in those brown eyes, almost glowing with fire. “You’ve got this, love. Skate for her, skate for me. Let us see your beauty on the ice.”

Yuuri nodded, kissing his daughter before backing off the barrier, waving to the cheering crowd before settling into his start position...facing his daughter and mate. He heard the first notes of his music and knew this song, knew this program...it was his life, written in the language of music over an emotional landscape. He remembered his life before Victor and how he worked; so hard to reach him and just before his moment it all fell apart. He channeled his sorrow into the Ina Bauer, bending and arching his back as he sailed across the ice. He close his eyes, letting the air take him, listening to the audience stunned silent by the tragic beauty. His world continued to tumble apart and he completely crashed, pregnant, alone, abandoned. Stepping out of the Bauer he raised a hand only to bring it in as he sunk in on himself, lowering his torso into a backward spiral as his hands slowly covered his face. But then Victor came into his world, showing him an unconditional love. He found acceptance and healing. He learned how to love again and to fall in love with his daughter. And then he found his feet. His body showed steel as he spun into a series of butterflies, hurling himself into a flying camel, turning his face up into a layover. He brought his hand to his heart, slowly pulling himself up, tucking under and changing feet into a backscratch. As the rotation pulled him he grasped his hands in front and shot them above his head, eyes following to watch. Slowing he pulled out, kicked his free toe into the ice stopping himself, both hands clasped above his head, his hands sprung free floating down in the perfection of a prima, one hand going to his heart while the other, palm up, reached out to the two sets of eyes at the barrier. The only set of eyes that mattered. He found his fight, his purpose, his reason for living in that small wiggling baby. In the poison laid the cure...and that was his Shizuka.
He heard the cheers. Blinking he became aware of the audience. He had been so focused on his story, that the skate unfolded and although there were flaws, nothing major happened to pull down his score. He skated to the break, to Victor and his daughter. “I did great?”

Victor scooped Yuuri off the ice with one arm and hugged him close. “You were perfect!” he murmured, before leaning in to kiss him. Yuuri was smiling, hugging both mate and daughter. He knew his skate wasn’t perfect but he also knew it didn’t have any major mistakes. As Victor set him down, he fished his skate guards out of Victor’s coat pocket. He looked up as Celestino draped his coat around his shoulder only to realized he was shivering. Whether it was from the chill of the rink or excitement, he didn’t know. As he moved to Kiss and Cry, he received hugs from Phichit, Minako, and Mari. Then he was sitting down, holding his daughter in his lap, squinting towards the scoreboard. Even with contacts, his eyes sometimes struggled to focus. He blinked a few times and then the score was announced as it appeared on the board. His 188.92 edged Phichit out of first but they both would meet on the podium.

“I won?”

Victor chuckled at his surprise. “Yes, you won, my Yuuri...my beautiful Yuuri.”

Yuuri shifted uncomfortably in his suit. He always hated banquets, having to make nice to sponsors and officials was so painful for him he’d often left it to Celestino. Still, he played the role. Victor, a practiced hand at schmoozing, was nearby. At least his daughter was safely in their room with his sister and ballet coach. In truth he would gladly trade places with the two women, letting them have fun at the party while he cuddled with his girl, tucked far away from the crowd. He sighed in envy, thinking of their night. They would order in and play with their niece until Yuuri returned. He always felt safe with them and knew they would protect his daughter. He was surrounded by so many that looked out for him. As his eyes rested on his coach talking to another sponsor on their behalf, he knew if his coach had been with him that night, no one would have touched him.

He set his champagne glass down, feeling its effects on his kidneys and leaned in to tell one of the nearby skaters he’d be in the bathroom if Victor started looking for him.

The halls were deserted and he shifted uncomfortably before moving into the bathroom, closing the stall door and locking it. He sighed, thinking about the weekend and feeling eager to return home. *I won but it was tainted by the knowledge that that alpha is here.*
He had just cleaned up, flushing the toilet and putting his clothes back in order when he heard the door to the bathroom open and close. He didn’t think anything of it at first but then he heard a lock engage to the outer door and before the room filled with that familiar but oppressive scent.

“Yuuu-uurrriii,” the voice called.

His heart dropped as the skater remembered that voice, that tone. Suddenly, he remembered that night. The lonely jog back to his dorm. A dark street, hearing his name. He’d turned that night because the man had called his name, slowed his steps, in that... tone.

Fuck! He fumbled in his pockets for his phone and managed to get it out and type one word help. He didn’t even know who he sent it to before his shaking hands lost its grip and it fumbled to the floor. A foot reached under and snatched it away. Thinking quickly Yuuri perching on the toilet pushing both of his feet against the door. One part of his mind knew the other knew he was there but another part instinctively told him to hide...and he was trapped.

Yuuri could feel his breathing betraying him, his body sliding into panic. He hoped the scent of his distress would go beyond those walls. He needed someone to find him, to realize he was gone and come after him.

On the other side of the door he heard the light tapping of the alpha’s fingertips against the metal. “Yuuu-uuriiii...my beautiful omega. I’d hoped to meet you with our beautiful daughter.” The voice lowered, almost growling. “No worries. Once I have you securely in hand, you’ll be able to send for her and bring her home.”

Yuuri pushed out his protests around his panicked breathing. “G-go away. I’m n-not leaving with you. Help is coming, so leave now.”

The man shuffled and set his weight against the door, his fingers running up the door to peek over the top, wiggling at Yuuri. “Oh, I beg to differ. You and I both know you already belong to me. Why else hadn’t that alpha bonded with you? He knows, on an instinctive level, that you’ve already been claimed.”

Yuuri slapped at the back of his neck, clawing at the old scars. Remembered pain exploded over the no longer visible bite mark. “N-no! H-he loves me. H-he gives me the choice.”
An ugly laugh echoed through the enclosed space. “Oh Yuuri. So he says... an easy excuse. Call it choice and use the omega as he sees fit. Trust me. I know alphas and their behavior. If they don’t put teeth to it, there is no claim.” The hand closed over the top of the door, giving it a little shake. “Come out, my little Yuuri.”

Inside Yuuri covered his mouth to hold in the scream. He pushed his feet against the door, knowing it could only open by swinging in. He reached out, placing his hands against the walls. “I’m no longer yours... I never was. There is no bond,” Yuuri whispered. The door to the stall rattled harder, and outside it the alpha swore. Yuuri felt the whine slipping out against his bidding.

The voice cooed in mock tenderness, “Of course there’s a bond. The bite might fade, but I see you kept my little present. What did you name her?” He chuckled, “Be obedient and come out right now. Your omega already longs for my protection.”

Deep within Yuuri rage flared, “The only thing I need protection from is you. Now get the fuck out of here!” Yuuri hissed and kicked against the door.

He jumped as someone banged on the outer door and then he heard his name. “Yuuri? Are you in there?”

The alpha cursed under his breath but Yuuri strained, calling out “I’m here! Help!”

He saw the fingers, this time both hands, a flashy ring settled on one of the fingers, tighten over the door. The alpha let out a frustrated sigh, “Everyone always tries to interfere.”

“Let me go, please,” Yuuri whispered, the adrenaline leaving him, and taking the courage with it. “I just want to go home.”

He received no answer but watched the fingers wave a sick goodbye. Then there were a number of noises on both sides of the bathroom. Victor burst through the door. “Yuuri!” the cry was desperate and full of fear.

“I’m here! I’m here!” Yuuri answered, bolting up and unlocking the stall. He opened the door and then was wrapped in Victor’s arms the two men falling to their knees on the floor in exhausted relief. Yuuri looked over Victor’s shoulder and he saw the window had been opened. “He got away,” he murmured. The security guards were checking over the room for other signs.
“I was so scared he took you with him.” Victor’s voice was breaking with a sob.

“N-no.” Yuuri pulled back, cupping the sides of Victor’s face in his hands and locking their eyes together. “I wouldn’t come out and I think he realized he couldn’t get me out of here without calling attention to himself.”

Victor lunged back into a hug, holding onto him while security buzzed around them, talking back and forth on their radios. Celestino hovered nearby with Phichit, keeping on hand on the younger man’s shoulder, afraid that if he were to let go for even a second the omega might disappear.

“We have him on camera,” one of the security guards informed them. “He was caught on tape crawling out the window.”

“Is anyone chasing him?” Yuuri asked hopefully.

There was a conversation back and forth over the radio before the guard answered, “He got away from the dogs but we are putting his picture out at all of our venues including the hotel. The police are on their way.”

Over the next few hours Yuuri was questioned by the authorities. Phichit stayed close to clarify any language difficulties. “No, I don’t know his name.” “He had every intention to take me with him against my will. Is that clear enough?” “Yes, he’s threatened me before, became physical. Raped me and held me hostage even. That’s why I’m fucking terrified.” “He approached my daughter. You know this. That’s why security was stepped up.” “Call Detroit PD. Let me get you a number. The case is open and active.” Then, leaning into Victor, Yuuri said in exhaustion, “Take me home. This is pointless. He’s...gone.”

Victor frowned, knowing they couldn’t leave this behind right away. “I can offer you our room for now, solnushko. We’ll fly home to Hasetsu soon and put this nightmare behind us.”

Yuuri sighed, looking at his mate, “I wish...it was so easy.”

Victor held Yuuri, for the same reasons Celestino was terrified to release Phichit from his grasp, but also because he needed the omega’s resoluteness at the moment. “Would you like us to rescue our daughter from her aunts?”
Yuuri nodded. He needed to feel her close. Victor had a clear idea of what threats had been made from the interviews and Yuuri was too tired to talk it over one more time. So the alpha explained to Yuuri’s sister and ballet coach. The younger man used Victor’s diversion as a chance to shower. Emerging after washing himself free of the upset he came out to find the room empty with only his mate holding his daughter. Yuuri quickly wrapped himself around his daughter, not caring that she had teeth when she pulled at his shirt. They both sought comfort in the shared action, his daughter suckling until they both fell asleep. He barely registered the shift of his mattress as Victor joined him but snuggled into the warmth of his embrace.

Yuuri woke up to Victor’s phone ringing and rubbed his hand over his face but then he gasped in realization. Sitting up, he tugged on Victor’s arm to wake him and get his attention. The alpha propped up on his elbow. “What’s wrong?”

“He’s got my phone.” Yuuri handed Victor the device.

Victor considered that information and then nodded sharply, glancing at the missed call before calling the officer they talked to the previous night and then Olivia. Yuuri quickly agreed to sign the papers allowing the phone company to trace his phone.

When Phichit joined them in their room for breakfast, he asked the Thai skater, “Do you think they can locate him with my phone?”

“Well, I am always able to find you because you keep your locator on.” He considered how much to tell Yuuri before he continued. “That’s how we found you...the first time. Your phone was found in the alley and we knew you were probably nearby. Ciao Ciao began tearing into every possible location nearby until he found you.”

Yuuri frowned. It seemed like a lifetime ago. “I...wondered how he possibly found me. I never thought about my phone.”

“If the bastard hadn’t knocked it out of your hand, we might have pinpointed your exact location.”

Yuuri pursed his lips, thinking of turning the tables on his rapist. “So...do you think he’ll know how to turn it off or that he’ll dump the phone?”
Phichit shrugged, “I doubt he’ll know on the first but the second, we can only wait and see.”

Victor listened to the conversation but held back his comments. Alphas like the one that attacked Yuuri think they are above the law, think they can operate without recourse. They don’t worry about consequences because they’ve never been held to any. Not. Until. Now. Victor turned on the locator and began watching for movement of a phone much like Harry Potter and the Marauder’s Map.

Yuuri stood at the gate waiting for his flight but he felt the exhaustion of the time in Thailand. His coach and Phichit chatted with Victor but Yuuri’s focus narrowed, holding his daughter in his arms and waiting in line to board. His attention was called by his coach and he looked over with a forced smile. “Did you arrange for practice at your local rink?”

*He’s trying to get out me out of my head.* Yuuri nodded. “Ice Castle and yes, they’re expecting us. I’m friends with the owners.”

The dark pony tail bobbed as the coach nodded. “Good. I know you’ll lose some time with your heat but I want to make use of this time together before Phichit and I have to return to the States.”

Yuuri blushed at the mention of his heat, regardless that three out of the four members of the conversation were omegas. “Thank you for joining us in Japan. I’m sorry for the inconvenience.”


Yuuri had the window seat in flight, Victor sat next to him. Phichit and his coach had the seats in front of them. He heard Victor’s grumbles about economy but it was a short flight and Yuuri just shook his head. He had no energy to accommodate Victor’s complaints. He felt himself settle into a restless sleep knowing his daughter would move back and forth between Victor, Phichit, and Celestino.
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Home in Hasetsu for awhile...

Chapter Notes

Busy at work and burning through backlogged chapters. I hope to get things going soon with my other stories...and this may be my last backlogged Truth chapter. I still have more Songs, though!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Victor rented a car for their stay in Japan and Yuuri, having no patience for people, was glad of it. He knew he was short with everyone and hated it, but he desperately needed time to recharge. Celestino and Phichit seemed to realize it and didn’t push into his space. Yuuri saved the remainder of his energy for his parents.

They pulled up before the onsen and Yuuri eased out of the car, seeing his parents waiting to greet them. Soon, he was enveloped in his mother’s embrace and his father’s searching eyes. “You need to rest,” he pronounced. They were relieved of his daughter as his mother carried her into the kitchen, the little girl nuzzling into the familiar scent. Yuuri smiled, watching her happily babble to his mother. Separated for months, the little girl knew her grandmother. Phichit would be staying in Yuuri’s old room and Celestino had already arranged to stay with Minako. Yuuri just wanted his bed and his feet led him automatically to what was left of their room in Hasetsu. He smiled as he entered the familiar space, realizing his mother had set it to order and made a space nearby for his daughter. He ran his fingers over the childlike fabric on the smaller futon. She had somehow found fabric printed in poodles and skates and ballet slippers. He laughed at the warmth it gave him.

He’d been chilled since he learned how close the man had got to his daughter, and horrified knowing how close the alpha got to him. Hugging himself, Yuuri let his tears shake through him. He didn’t know how long he cried, just knew at one point, he curled up holding one of his daughter’s blankets to his chest, her bunny wrapped up in it. He knew Victor would check on him soon. He allowed his exhaustion to overcome him.

A gentle shake of his body brought him out of it. He turned as his eyes fluttered open and smiled up to his mate. “I’m glad to be home.”
“And yet you’ve been crying,” came the concerned observation, a long finger tracing the trail of tears down his cheek.

“It’s...been a long week,” Yuuri answered, pulling Victor in for a kiss, moving across the surface of his lips before opening and inviting him deeper. He tasted the answering groan feeling Victor shift his body to stretch out beside him. “I need you.”

“It’s...been awhile.”

“We’ve been so busy...but I need you. I need to feel you, taste you, smell you…” He sought kisses with every period, with every comma, fingers winding into Victor’s hair, following Victor as he rolled on his back. Yuuri’s legs straddled him, lips moving along his chin, down his neck. “Fuck me, Vitya...I want you in me.”

Victor’s hands tightened around Yuuri, “Yuuyuuri...”

He nipped at Victor’s jawline, delighting the light stubble he could feel on his lips. His hands found Victor’s biceps, fingers dancing lightly over the alpha’s nipples, rejoicing as he heard his mate’s breath hitch, knowing he had won the argument. The omega pulled back a beguiling smirk on his lips, “Mom’s got Shizu-chan.”

“And I don’t think she’ll be relinquishing her for a while,” he agreed, willing to follow Yuuri to hell if necessary.

Yuuri smiled down at him, moving in to kiss him once more and he felt fingers toying with the hem of his shirt. “Make me yours,” he breathed, sitting up to pull the shirt over his head and grinding into Victor’s lap.

The alpha leaned up, propping himself on one elbow, “Your heat...”

Yuuri shook his head. “Fuck my heat...I’m tired of waiting. Make. Me. Yours.” He pushed the alpha into the mattress, “or maybe I’ll just make you mine.”

There were times when the best laid plans are pushed to the side to answer a deeper need and
Victor could see that deeper need in his lover’s eyes. He rolled Yuuri onto his back and dipped down with a growl. “Mine!”

Yuuri gasped, a soft whine released as he pulled Victor into him, wrapping his legs around him. “I love you,” he whispered. “More than anything...I love you.”

“I love you,” Victor breathed, dipping down to kiss Yuuri, moving down to suck into his scent gland. His fingers slid down Yuuri’s side and he felt the omega arch into him. He could smell his arousal, he could taste his desire.

“Vitya,” Yuuri whispered, his hand guiding Victor down further.

The alpha’s voice grew rich and dark, “Mmmm...I see what you’re wanting.”

Yuuri tugged at his hair. Victor looked up and winked. The omega smirked in response. “I want you...I don’t think there is anything unclear about that.”

Victor chuckled. “I suppose not.” He then ducked down and began working Yuuri’s pants down his legs, Yuuri lifting up to help him out. As Victor slid back up his body, his hand went up Yuuri’s inner thigh, kisses following, stopping to linger on his scent gland, his tongue teasing Yuuri until he was gasping. Victor chuckled and moved further up, sucking at Yuuri’s balls before licking up his length.

“Please,” Yuuri begged softly.

Victor’s fingers began teasing Yuuri’s legs further apart, sliding down to tease that ring of muscle already dripping with slick. “You’re already so wet for me.”

“I know,” Yuuri groaned even as he ground down into Victor’s touch. “In. Me. Now.”

Victor grinned up at his mate. “So demanding,” he teased. He pressed in experimentally and felt Yuuri give easily. “So ready for me.”

“I’ve wanted you for days,” Yuuri confessed and Victor knew. He’d watched Yuuri tease him with his short program and taking away the interruptions and the frightening aspects of their trip, he had to admit it was the longest foreplay. And now Yuuri was waiting for him, begging for him,
surrendered to his need.

Victor now had his second finger in Yuuri, watching how well Yuuri stretched for him. “I love the way you take me in.”

“I want your dick,” Yuuri clarified even as he pressed into Victor’s back with his feet.

Victor grinned as he added a third finger. “Just a little bit more. You’re doing so good for me, my vulgar tongued angel.”

He looked up just in time to see Yuuri stick that tongue out at him and Victor grinned in response. “I love you,” he whispered as he pulled his fingers out. He climbed up Yuuri and found his lips once more, drinking in the hungry kiss of his mate.

Yuuri’s legs wrapped around Victor once more as the alpha breached him, pressing into him, opening him up with his length. He watched the beautiful expression on his lover’s face as he received Victor, mouth opening with the stretch, eyes blinking rapidly at the release of pleasure. Victor stared in amazement at the beautiful surrender of his love. As Victor finally seated into him, he wrapped Yuuri in his arms and held him close, waiting for Yuuri’s signal to move.

That signal came quick, a squirm of the smaller body, a squeeze of those powerful thighs. Demanding and wanton, Yuuri ground his hips, needing more, wanting more...and Victor began rocking into the omega. He watched as Yuuri tugged at his own hair as a whispered “f-f-fuck” stuttered from his lips.

Victor leaned in to kiss those lips. “Such a filthy mouth.”

“You love my mouth,” Yuuri argued even as he squirmed and shifted, his head falling back as Victor found just the right spot. “God, Vitya!”

“There you are,” Victor grinned, continuing to rock slowly, prolonging the torturous pleasure. It had been too long not to take their time and Victor wanted it to be well worth the wait. He leaned in and kissed his mate deeply.

Yuuri’s head twisted into the pillow, his breath becoming shallow. “I. Need.”
“What do you need, my Yuuri?” Victor teased even as he slid his hand down his lover’s body. He could feel the dampness from Yuuri’s dripping head between them. Sliding his fingers over the length, he waited for Yuuri’s response.

Yuuri shifted once more and his breath hitched. “Need you...faster…”

Victor leaned in and kissed him, before asking, “What if I say no?”

Yuuri groaned even as he squirmed more. Finally, Victor had mercy on him, moving faster and deeper within Yuuri, listening to the beautiful noises coming from his sweet omega. Then he heard Yuuri’s breath catch, a soft whine with the hitch of his breath, a tremble sliding down his body with his release and then a sweet, euphoric expression settling into Yuuri’s smile. *So beautiful*, Victor thought as he pumped a few more times before releasing into his lover. *So very beautiful.*

Victor reached over for a tissue to clean up the mess on Yuuri’s stomach and the little bit on his own. Yuuri watched him, his eyes drooping prettily, an expression of contentment as his alpha tended to him, cleaning him. A second tissue saw to his needs as Victor withdrew from his body. Tossing them into the wastebasket, Victor stretched out along his body, pulling Yuuri into his embrace, tucking his head under his chin.

Yuuri remained still for all of five minutes before tapping impatiently. “Vitya! We’re not finished.”

Victor heard the pout in that voice. He eased Yuuri over onto his side. “You know I have to come from behind.”

“I think...if it’s you…” Yuuri eased his leg forward and reached down for him, pulling him up. “You hold me and I’m not afraid. Not anymore.”

Victor froze, terrified at the aspect of ruining their bond, “I just...I don’t want our bonding to...hold fear.”

“Vitya!” Yuuri craned his head around and his lip trembled. “Everything holds fear for me at first. But with you…” He turned to hold Victor’s face between his hands and rest his forehead against the alpha’s. “With you...I know everything is with love. With you, I know I can trust you.
with my body and my heart.”

Victor could hold back no longer. He tightened his arms around Yuuri, lips crashing into his. “My beautiful Yuuri…”

The younger man peeked up through his lashes beguilingly before turning back around in his arms. “I believe you have a job to finish, sir!”

Victor laughed all the way into his belly as he rested his forehead against the back of Yuuri’s neck. “I may be a little nervous,” he admitted. He knew he needed to soften the skin. He started kissing the gland, blinking back tears as he spotted some of the remnants of before. They were barely noticeable but he knew the pain those marks represented. “I-I don’t want to hurt you.” His hand slid around Yuuri’s waist.

“You heal me, Vitya,” Yuuri answered softly, reaching down to cover Victor’s hand. “I need to be a part of you, love…” He closed his eyes as he squeezed his hand. “Do it now!”

Victor trembled even as he sank his teeth into Yuuri’s flesh, the smaller man curling into a ball in the process. He sniffed back tears as he started licking the wound, whispering over and over “I’m sorry.”

Yuuri closed his eyes and remained still as he felt more of Victor than ever before, his affection, his amazing love, the tender care, protectiveness…the emotions overwhelmed him and he worked to breathe through them. Finally, he whispered, “Vitya…” His mate…his bond mate…sniffed in response continuing to lick at the wound. “Vitya,” he said once more, his voice stronger.

From behind him Yuuri heard Victor’s voice choke out his name in response. “Y-yuuri?”

“I’m okay,” he murmured.

“You’re okay?”

Yuuri felt the relief Victor was experiencing wash over him, “Yes, love…I’m okay. Hold me, please.”
Victor’s arms tightened around him as he continued the healing process. Soft licks until the wound closed and clotted.

Yuuri then turned in his arms and looked up at the beautiful mess before him. He reached up and wiped away Victor’s tears. “You are so wonderfully ridiculous,” Yuuri admonished affectionately.

Victor hiccuped through the last of his tears, horror surrendering to relief, “I just...love you so much. It hurts me to hurt you.”

“I know.” Yuuri kissed his cheeks and continued to soothe the man in his arms. Once Victor finally settled, Yuuri’s fingers petting through his hair, he tucked himself under Yuuri’s chin. They still had to complete the bond but Yuuri gave him a little longer to recover, cooing soft words of love in the process. Then Victor looked up, peering through damp silver lashes towards Yuuri. Smoothing his hair once more, Yuuri asked softly, “Are you ready?”

Victor nodded but Yuuri was careful to maintain physical contact as his mate turned in his arms. As Victor relaxed in his embrace, Yuuri began with nuzzling the bonding gland. He felt Victor’s hand tighten over his then patting it gently. Soft kitten licks followed and he heard a giggle from the older man that tugged a smile from Yuuri. His sweet, adorable...and very ticklish Vitya. Yuuri tickled a little into his tummy and the body in his arms wiggled. Soft kisses fluttered over the bonding gland and Victor stilled, breathing measured breaths. “Are you okay, Vitya?”

Again Victor nodded but this was too important for nonverbal. A small pinch of warning into Victor’s hand and he received an answer. “Y-yes. Please continue,” he whispered. Yuuri licked long licks over the gland and heard a gasp, his hand tightening once more. There was a sweet tension in the body he held, so much anticipation.

Yuuri tested his teeth against Victor’s skin at first and could feel them sinking into the flesh easily. He bit down, feeling Victor’s hand tightening on his and sucked lightly on the gland. Releasing the bite, he continued to lick, kiss, and suck as Victor curled in on himself. He knew Victor was overwhelmed by the new information, his own experience too recent, and he gave him time to find his equilibrium. Finally, the body relaxed in his arms.

“It hurt...but it didn’t,” Victor whispered.

Yuuri hummed, understanding how his mate felt. “I know, love...are you okay?”
Victor nodded. “I...don’t think I knew how much...” He turned, needing to face Yuuri as he reached up to smooth his hair. “It’s not...what I was expecting. I feel...your emotions but your thoughts are still...private.” He smiled as he watched Yuuri. “I’m glad...I like there to be some mystery between us.”

“In time, we will be able to mask our emotions. It takes practice,” Yuuri promised him softly.

Victor blinked curiously, “How do you know?”

*I had to learn to block him out and I had to do it fast.* Yuuri laughed softly. “I asked Mom, of course. I think it wasn’t long after I presented.”

Victor considered that and slowly frowned. “Y-you had to learn how to mask your emotions from him.”

Yuuri shook his head. “He never had mine...I only had his and they weren’t the same. He...didn’t care about my emotions. If he did, he wouldn’t have continued, he couldn’t have continued to hurt me.”

Victor ran his hands down Yuuri’s back, thinking of the horror of being controlled on such a level. Then his mind moved to the immediate, “Do we...need to do something to them now?”

“Basic wound care but we need to wait a bit longer. We should really stay put for a while, let the bond settle before we’re around others.” They remained wrapped into one another for some time, Yuuri’s eyes closed as he held onto Victor. The older man stared up at the ceiling and simply felt the myriad of emotions that was Yuuri.

Yuuri ached as he slowly followed Victor out of bed. It had been too long since he had been that intimate with Victor, and his body let him know. Pulling on the yukata, he followed Victor across the hall to shower. He let his mate tend to him, feeling the cloth rest over the bite, feeling fingers in him cleaning him out, feeling the worry from Victor pouring through the bond. Then he turned Victor to face him. The Russian’s face was studying him, eyes full of concern.

Yuuri smiled, his hands reaching up to pull him into a kiss. As the kiss broke, their foreheads
rested against one another as they felt the intimacy wrap around each of them. “Husband,” Yuuri whispered. “Yours,” he released those words, finally letting them settle into his thoughts, dipping in to taste his lips.


Yuuri wondered why he waited so long. Everything at that moment felt right. He belonged to Victor and Victor to him. Turning Victor around, he studied the mark he left in answer. “Mine,” he whispered before kissing the center of the bite, remembering the feeling as his teeth broke into Victor’s skin, the taste of the salt and iron of his blood, and closing his eyes to the biochemical process of the bond connecting the two of them together. He licked the marks where he broke skin and smiled as he nuzzled into the surface, hearing his husband’s sigh in his embrace.

“I’ve belonged to you I think from the moment I laid eyes on you.” Victor felt Yuuri’s hands rubbing his back. He continued, “Now...it’s real.”

Victor’s fingers tangled into Yuuri’s, holding him close as if they were dancing. It was time to get out, to dry off, to face the world but this was their moment and he clung to it as hard as Yuuri. He had to admit he had been afraid of bonding during Yuuri’s heat and his rut. He didn’t want their connection to be clouded with fear. Now...they could just enjoy being them and celebrate with close friends and family. Yura was missing but would arrive for the affirmation ceremony and Shizuka’s birthday party with family. He knew Yuuri was nervous about the young alpha traveling alone but Victor knew he’d be fine, the boy had done it so often in the past.

Finally, they broke apart. Yuuri felt heavy and needed to pump. *One last time.* Victor wondered how many more times he’d say those words before he put away the device. They had doctor’s appointments tomorrow, Yuuri’s doctor giving Victor a good referral to a urologist to attend to his needs.

Finally, dressed and ready to face the world, Victor led his mate down the stairs, holding hands with fingers entwined. He could tell the restaurant had just closed and the family were finishing tasks for clearing the inn. Victor’s eyes scanned the room then spotted their daughter surrounded by three little girls. Their mother Yuuko was talking animatedly to Phichit.

“There you are!”

The couple turned to Hiroko’s greeting and then he felt Yuuri’s blush before he saw it, before Yuuri hid into his neck.
A warm chuckle surrounded them as Hiroko’s hand slid up and down her son’s back in the space above Victor’s arm. “Will you look at that? A blushing, freshly bonded omega.”

That brought the others’ attention and soon they were surrounded by family and friends. Amidst congratulations, they heard Mari muttering, “It took you long enough,” and Phichit’s warning, “The blond kitten is going to be pissed!”

They went in to dinner for celebrations and Yuuri had more than earned his share of katsudon. Conversation turned to the upcoming ceremony where they would make everything official and legal, registering their relationship and finalizing Shizuka’s adoption. It had all come together perfectly. They would spend the morning taking care of the legal paperwork and then celebrate in the evening with affirmations and vows. Victor wanted this...a moment to declare his love to the world, a moment where he claimed his family and made them his own. Yuuri would have been fine with the quiet legalities but indulged Victor in this.

“I thought you were going to wait until after the ceremony,” Yuuko stated quietly.

Yuuri lifted his eyes to meet Victor’s and shrugged. “I think...we just knew it was the right moment for us.”

Chapter End Notes

Well?
Yuuri sat fidgeting in Dr. Ito’s office as she finished her exam. He glanced over to watch his baby as she played with the busy beads table in the corner. Her manner was completely content, happily occupied with the toy and unaware of the turmoil in her mother. *I hope you stay that way forever, never learning of any of this. How long can I keep it from you?* A clearing of a throat brought his eyes back to the doctor who crossed to stand in front of him. “Am I...ready? Okay?”

She chuckled warmly. “Ready for what? Your heat?” She flashed a friendly but concerned smile. “You tell me.”

Yuuri swallowed as he considered the last year and a half. *We’ve come so far...but I’m still scared to lose control...* “I’m...terrified.”

She sighed as she took his pulse once more. “I know.” She paused, counting out the rhythm of his heart. “Physically, you are ready. Emotionally...that’s for you to decide.”

Yuuri laughed bitterly. “If it were a mere decision...”

“I know...let’s talk about your fears and see if we can quash them.” She wheeled up a chair to sit across from him.

Yuuri focused his thoughts. *It’s not Victor, I could never fear him.* With that determined he began thinking of what would upset him. “Okay...I think the obvious one is that I freak out when I
smell the rut scent.”

She nodded slowly, then shrugged. “Not all rutting alphas smell the same. In fact, it’s likely your mate’s scent wouldn’t change that greatly. A hunter has a predatory scent. A mate’s scent makes you feel safe and protected.”

Yuuri considered the idea of Victor’s heightened scent comforting him, like fresh sheets blown clean by the breeze off the ocean. “I...like that. The way Victor makes me feel safe. I think...I always felt safe with him.”

“He was your mate long before you acknowledged it. Sometimes we feel it here,” she touched her heart, “before we feel it here,” she touched her head. “And the physical comes somewhere along the way. You were not ready to accept your mate but your heart, your inner omega, was very aware of him.”

Yuuri thought of what she had said, and how it perfectly summed up what he had felt...does feel now. “So...I can do this.”

“You are already headed that way. Now...about breastfeeding...”

Yuuri sighed, hugging himself. “I’m almost strictly pumping and each time I tell myself it’s the last time. I don’t want her to do without.”

The doctor laughed warmly. “You are not denying your daughter by following nature’s course. It is time...and she is ready to adapt. Your daughter has teeth coming through. You’ve told me she is eating well and really, the breast had become more about comfort. She just has to find other ways to comfort herself.”

Yuuri blushed and asked, “Do you have any suggestions?”

The doctor glanced over at the babbling child, thinking of how well adjusted the little girl was, obviously the product to two excellent and caring parents. “As she’s a year old, I’d suggest switching to the sippy cup. Then redirect her comfort to a favorite blanket or a toy. I suggest you and perhaps her father scent the object well.”

“She needs to suck for comfort,” Yuuri argued.
Dr. Ito brought her hands up indicating yes and no. “It feels that way but she really just needs support and the assurance you are there for her. She still seeks the breast?”

“Sometimes...but it’s been impossible. She’s...got teeth. I just...can’t.” Yuuri chewed his lip, worrying about not being enough for his daughter.

However, Dr. Ito offered a reassuring smile. “I think you’ll find that my husband will agree with me when I said she’s doing fine. She’s happy, healthy, and active. Don’t fret and let her get to know her world better.”

Yuuri let out a relieved breath he hadn’t been aware he was holding. “So...I’ve given her a bottle but you think I should switch to the cup?”

“At this point, she’s ready. She’s transitioning into a toddler.”

Something in Yuuri clenched, the fear of his baby not being a baby suddenly grabbed him. “She’s not walking yet, though.”

“She crawls and is active and alert. Some walk later in life. You have dogs?”

“Yes, two of them.”

“And she plays with them? Chases them around?”

Yuuri laughed at this point and nodded. “Very much so. She loves to chase Makkachin and Vicchan...and they are good with her.”

“A happy baby is a good indication of a healthy baby. You are doing fine as a parent, Yuuri.”

Yuuri blushed at the praise, but felt warm knowing he wanted to hear it from a professional. Then he blushed deeper remembering the biology of what he would go through. “So...how do I...ummm...dry up?”
“Gradually decrease the amount you pump. This can continue to be given to your daughter as you transition her to other liquids. Juice but only at meal times...too sugary. Water. And eventually move to market milk.”

“Okay...I can do this.” He then thought of the deadline looming ahead. “What about when my heat comes?”

“Just like how certain other systems shut down, lactation will also cease during the heat process. This may or may not restart after the fact but if you start feeling...full...and can’t release, come see me. Otherwise, motrin, cold compresses, or my mother swears by cold cabbage leaves in her bra.”

Yuuri’s eyebrows shot up. “Your mother wears a bra still?”

Ito smiled, chuckling slightly, “It’s more like a bralette but gives a little extra support when needed. Usually for working out or more physical activity. If you do fine without it, I wouldn’t recommend you to continue using it once you finish weaning your daughter. However, you may want to wear breast pads to soak up any leakage. And if you do feel full, only express enough to feel comfortable.”

She handed him a pamphlet explaining these steps and Yuuri looked them over before putting them in his pocket. Satisfied, he asked his final question. “Now...about birth control during my heat...”

“What are you using now?”

“We use a barrier method.” He then made a face and admitted, “We may not be as consistent with it as we should.”

She shook a finger at him but smiled. Humming thoughtfully she began rummaging through her cabinet. “I would suggest the shot with or without suppressants if you weren’t still breastfeeding. Perhaps we’ll discuss that post-heat. For now, I suggest a spermicide to go along with your barrier method.” She handed him the spray and walked him through the method. As she finished, she added, “On the bright side, you currently aren’t pregnant.”

Yuuri shifted his eyes her direction as he processed her words. “Meaning...we’ve been lucky so far.”
She grinned and nodded. “Pretty much. The key to using external birth control methods is consistency. Internal, you just have to be aware of what interrupts them...alcohol, antibiotics, certain antidepressants, antifungals, anxiety meds, and...well, let me get you a pamphlet that spells it out.” She smiled reassuringly as she took in his wide eyes. “There are a lot of things that can interfere with your birth control. It’s a good thing to be smart about it.” She handed him the folded piece of paper.

Yuuri opened it up and studied the contents. “I...need to compare this to the meds I’m currently taking.”

“It would be wise. We’d do a complete work up before giving you your birth control medication. But...I know you mentioned your anxiety and depression struggle.”

Yuuri nodded in agreement. She left and soon the mister of the Dr. Ito’s entered. “I’m so pleased you brought this little darling back to see us,” he greeted.

Yuuri looked up and smiled. “I wish I could take you both with us to Russia.”

“That would be a costly endeavor,” the older man teased with a wink. “Let’s look at how well she’s developing. So tell me...how is she sleeping?”

“Most of the night. Occasionally she wakes up but it’s usually when her routine has been upset. She takes a nap in the daytime...sometimes two...but most of the time she’s active and exploring.”

“And is she eating more foods?”

“Yes...she’s developed this nasty love of peas, though.” Yuuri made a face to the doctor’s amusement.

“Well, peas do have their place in the world.” He played with her and checked her responses to stimuli and seemed quite pleased. “Is she still breastfeeding?”

“I’m working on weaning her and she does take the bottle during the day, although your wife suggested I switch her to a cup.”
“Not a bad choice. Is she still on the breast some?”

Yuuri nodded. “Not near as much as I’d like...late evening, though...and I pump most of the day.”

“You should be tapering off your pumping soon. However, the late night feeding is usually the last to go.” He examined her teeth with thought. “If she’s biting, pull her off the breast with a gentle admonishment to ‘not bite mommy’.” He wiggled a naughty finger which the little girl promptly grabbed at giggling furiously as the doctor pretended to be unable to free himself from her clutches. He smiled at the mother, “She seems to be cutting teeth a little later.”

“Is that bad?” Yuuri asked, now growing concerned.

Dr. Ito cast him a friendly smile, “Those mothering books with all their lovely benchmarks do more harm than good. No, late teeth often means less dental issues later on. But if she’s using your breast as a teething ring, replace with an actual teething ring.”

“I thought...it took weaning her to bring on my heat.”

Dr. Ito chuckled thoughtfully. “I’ve heard that rumor more than you know. Most breastfeeding parents seem to time stopping about the time of their heat but usually your hormones bring it on about a year after childbirth. You can get pregnant before then but your body knows you really need that year to heal. So heat holds off until then.” Relinquishing her to her mother, he added. “She’s developing fine. You do have my number and email if you have further concerns with her development but I’d love to see her for her eighteen month physical.”

“Of course, Dr. Ito. That shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Excellent! Call us for an appointment as time draws near. Now...how are you doing, Mama?”

Yuuri sighed and shrugged. “For the most part, fine. Her...ummm...the man who...raped me?” He watched as the doctor leaned forward in interest as he continued. “He...approached her at a competition. I didn’t see him but I noticed his scent on her things. I don’t know if that upset her or if it was my own stress.”
“It was likely your own stress but with good reason. She will notice who makes you feel uncomfortable and react accordingly.”

“I want to make sure she is safe...he tried to…” Yuuri closed his eyes and drew a deep breath. Dr. Ito was just as easy to talk to as his wife and Yuuri took advantage of being able to tumble out his words. “He tried to grab me once more. I was in a bathroom, he cornered me. I was able to lock myself in the stall and held him off. Help arrived, but he took off before he could be apprehended.”

Dr. Ito stilled, taking in the terrifying account of the younger man. “I see that you are freshly bonded...was this approach before or after?”

“Ummm…” Yuuri ran his hand over the back of his neck before whispering, “Before...do you think that he’ll leave me alone now?”

The doctor frowned not wanting to give false hope and have Yuuri drop his guard. “I’d...like to say yes. However, it depends on his motive. This...person seems predatory, a bond to another alpha wouldn’t dissuade him.”

“I think...he’d planned to make me his mate.” Yuuri shivered. Mated to that monster...what would my life have been. He felt a shift in his arms and looked at Shizu pulling herself to nuzzle his neck. What would yours had been? Oh god, would you even exist? “Thankfully, that it was interrupted.”

Ito looked down at the little girl happily inhaling her mother’s scent. “Then...I wouldn’t underestimate him. I’d keep you and your child safe. Share every suspicion you have with your mate and do not ignore your gut. Not for an instant.”

Yuuri nodded at those wise words.

Yuuri met his mate in the car. “How did it go?”

“He gave me a better grade of condom...and a rut pack, which contains more. I wasn’t sure if you’d have birth control and wanted to be sure you were safe.”
Yuuri hugged himself and glanced out the window in embarrassment. “Dr. Ito said we were lucky we didn’t get pregnant. We’re...going to have to be more consistent with birth control.”

Victor pulled into traffic. “No...shot?”

The omega to his side shook his head, watching the cars pass by. “Not until she’s fully weaned. The hormones could adversely affect her.”

Victor thinned his lips and nodded. “I want you both to be as healthy as possible. I will be more responsible.”

Yuuri smiled and put a hand on his arm. You would put this all on yourself. “We need to keep it with the lube. Handy and ready to go. She also gave me a spermicide to use. She said it improves the chances of the condom working.”

“It won’t react with the latex?”

Yuuri shook his head. “We can read over the documents when we’re alone in our room tonight.”

Victor nodded, steering down another lane. “So...I wanted us to check out this place for your heat and my rut.”

“A heat hotel?” Yuuri visibly jumped at the idea. The onsen wouldn’t work at all, he knew that. But… “It won’t smell like us,” Yuuri whined.

“I think...your parents would appreciate not hearing us.”

Yuuri pouted but inside he had to admit...fair.

Victor was very familiar with Yuuri’s bevy of pouts and this was his pout of acquiescence. The alpha moved in for the victory in the argument. “Mari practically begged us to go elsewhere...and Phichit, he’d share a wall with us.”
Yuuri huffed but nodded. They drove out of town and for another hour before they pulled up to a remote inn. The hotel was small, tastefully isolated from the road. The beautiful wood seemed to be set off by the surrounding forest. It was entirely peaceful. Yuuri’s eyes blinked. “It looks...traditional.”

“Like home.” Victor pulled the car into park and turned to his mate. “That’s what Yuuko said. She thought you’d feel more comfortable.”

Yuuri felt his reservations falling away, “Will it...be safe?”

“Yes. Shall we go tour the facilities and offerings?”

Yuuri turned his large brown eyes and nodded. He had to make a decision. He knew this. But he didn’t know what was holding him back. He looked up as Victor opened the door and handed him out of the car, his arm resting on his waist. Yuuri turned into those arms and buried his nose into Victor’s scent.

Baby balanced on his hip, he held Victor’s hand with his free hand and followed him inside.

Inside the hotel was just as graceful as the outside. The polished wood floor and open space design created a comfortable atmosphere. A sitting lounge was to his left, a few couples were seated talking quietly. Yuuri inhaled deeply. *No scent.* He relaxed a little. Yuuri noted the professional front counter and staff as they met the manager. “Welcome! Come in. Mr. and Mr. Fujimoto, right? You booked a tour, I’ll be happy to take you about.”

Yuuri’s eyes widened as he turned to Victor in surprise. His mate leaned in and murmured, “I thought a little anonymity would be good.”

*Right, you absolutely look like a Fujimoto...* Yuuri took a deep breath and let it out. Nodding shakily, he realized why he was fighting this. He was terrified by the idea of being separated from his daughter, unable to fight off his rapist if that man tried to take her. These two fears weighed heavily in his thoughts. Apparently Victor had thought of this as well.

They were shown a heat room with a separate room for entrances that allowed their meals to be delivered without directly interacting with the two guests. The manager explained that they would be able to place their orders ahead of time and arrange the timing of the delivery. There was a light
that showed if someone was in the outer vestibule.

“However, that shouldn’t occur. Our staff quickly set up the food and leave immediately. Privacy for our guests is of the utmost importance.” The host smiled at the family, and gestured for them to move further into the suite.

Deeper within, Yuuri’s eyes widened at the private room with its own onsen bath and shower. He knelt down and ran his fingers through the water of the onsen, breathing in deeply to smell the quality of the minerals. He closed his eyes in appreciation. *My father would approve and that man has higher standards than the emperor.* Turning back to their guide he smiled, “This is beautiful. Private. And has been properly unscented. I can see why it’s highly recommended.”

Victor smiled down at the happy omega. However he was a skilled identifier of Yuuri qualms and heard one last argument yet unvoiced. “But…” Victor prompted quietly.

Yuuri blushed at being caught, “It’s so far away. What if there were an emergency?”

Victor smiled to the host, who thoughtfully moved out of earshot. The alpha walked over to Yuuri, still seated at the edge of the naturally heated pool. “Locally, we’re looking at a hotel. And I can’t guarantee anonymity.”

Yuuri knew the importance of privacy to both of them. “I need...to think about it.”

The Donovan brothers stepped into the cold St. Petersburg air. “This is where they live?” the younger brother asked, pulling the collar of his jacket up to cut the wind and unexpected chill.

“For now,” the older responded. “They aren’t here yet. We managed to beat them here, and now we can lay low until they arrive. I can work on getting things set into motion to finish this little job. My boy is ripe with heat and he’ll soon have that whelp off of his breast. Then he will be mine. A bite to erase that weak alpha from his mind, another forced heat and he’ll be begging to be bedded.”

Flynn made a face. “They really are disgusting when breeding.”
“Better them than us.” Jaimie smirked as he thought of his omega fat with another baby.  *Nope. This one is for show, I’ll keep him trim as a pencil.* “Now to find him.”

“And after...we go back to America and track down my boy?” Flynn was impatient and began rubbing his hands together. The Donovans would make the same mistake as Napoleon, invading Russia in winter. The country protects its people through weather.

The older man waved at his brother’s concerns.  “Yes, yes...Father said to avoid Detroit for now anyway. The entire club is under investigation. It seems someone ratted us out. He’s working on ferreting out the wagging tongue.” They entered a cafe, immediately relaxing in the heat.

Flynn opened his coat as they sat at a table.  “Any idea who it is?”

The older brother ordered two coffees and waited for the server to leave.  “Wouldn’t surprise me if it wasn’t that pussy McElroy. He was left on the tit too long. Made him soft like an omega. He always squirmed when anyone talked about his sister. Probably just mad he can’t get a piece of her himself.”

Flynn laughed at the thought. McElroy’s sister had been the talk of many at that club. Each man asking how much they were charging for her.  “Mum is tucked away at our summer home still? You know...out of reach of the law?” Flynn thought about the lakeside residence on Tahoe. Far from Detroit. The omega may give the semblance of loyalty but the boys new better. They’d walked in more than once to hear him spew venom regarding their father.

“Yeah.  He preferred it...calls it retirement.  Father is fine with it...no longer able to breed.  He has the new one to break in.” Jaimie smiled, “What a hardship.”

Flynn snickered and winked. Then returned to thoughts of his mother and keeping his mouth shut.  “Just as well, he won’t be able to speak out,” Flynn shrugged it off.

“Agreed. Giving an omega a voice is a dangerous thing.”

“Same with education...they start getting ideas.” They both thought of the new one, purchased from some foreign country. Ron? Rohan? They really couldn’t be bothered with names.
NOTES:

Guide to Weaning Your Baby From Breastfeeding
Your Age-by-Age Guide to Weaning
When Your Toddler is a Late Walker
Lactation Suppression
How Long Does It Take for Breast Milk to Dry Up?
Medication Interaction That Can Cause the Pill to Fail
1-Year-Old Developmental Milestones
4 Reasons Why Babies Bite During Breastfeeding

Chapter End Notes

Oh, dear...so they found where they live...
Yuuri rolled over in bed and smiled at his daughter as she crawled around the futon. Victor must have left her with several toys after cleaning her up and feeding her that morning before leaving. Yuuri had protested the early run and his mate gave in to him, leaving him to lie in longer. The buzz of his phone told him that others in his small world were starting to wake up. He reached for the phone and read the last text.

Peach/ Ciao Ciao keeps glancing towards the door. You coming to practice?

Yuuri sat up as he looked at the time. Groaning in response he turned to Shizu who blew raspberries at her mother. I feel the same way.

Yuu-chan/ Is Victor there yet?

Peach/ Yes and is already warming up on the ice. I think he’s getting used to being teacher’s pet at the rink. He is making excuses to Ciao Ciao about staying late with you if needed.

Yuuri grunted, rising from the futon.
Within the hour, Yuuri was jogging behind the stroller while his daughter blew bubbles in the enclosed seat. The wind whipped at Yuuri’s face as he continued down the familiar path. He glanced down in envy towards his daughter’s enclosure. The day was warm but the wind had a bite to it.

Finally, he arrived at the rink. He changed quickly into his practice clothes while Yuuko fussed over his daughter. On the ice, he ducked under Celestino’s glower.

“Good morning, sleepy head,” Victor teased as he skated by.

“Why did you let me sleep in?” Yuuri accused.

Victor laughed and shrugged. “I tried for half an hour. I figured you must need the rest.”

Yuuri groaned. He knew the culprit. “My body forcing me to hold back and store energy for my heat.” He moved into a figure eight pattern, getting his blades under him. “I hate this.”

Victor moved out of the pattern’s path, admiring his mate’s love of figures. “It will be fine, Yuuri. I’m willing to stay late if you need the extra time on ice.”

Yuuri performed a three turn, tucking his freeleg with precision; his words were just as precisely shaped. “I need you to get my ass out of bed.”

Victor bit back the joke about wanting to keep Yuuri’s ass in bed, knowing he was already risking an angry Yuuri. Blue eyes sparkled as he readily agreed. “Of course!” He then skated off as Yuuri was called over to his coach for his orders.
Yuuri leaned back in the heat of the onsen. The cramps began that afternoon just as soon as they got off the ice. He sought any relief he could find, while the water was amazing it only lessened the pain but didn’t remove it. Phichit joined him. Yuuri was happy to see his friend but disappointed it wasn’t Victor. Of course, his mate was seeing to their daughter, giving Yuuri this time to relax.

“I’m thinking about a heat partner for my next round,” Phichit mentioned casually.

Yuuri raised an eyebrow, “Mmmm? Anyone in mind?”

“I thought maybe...Seung-gil. We’ve been talking quite a bit and I think I’d be comfortable with him.” Phichit did his best to pass off his interest as only fleeting but Yuuri knew his friend too well. His PhichitBS detector went off immediately, however he played along.

Yuuri had known for a while about Phichit’s interest in the Korean and wanted to encourage his friend without coming across too obviously. “He’s a solid alpha...but that’s a long distance partner. Are you sure?”

Phichit nodded as he spread the warm cloth across his head leaning back next to his friend. “I am sure...Well, sure that I want to talk to him about being more than just a heat partner. I mean...if I had a mate, maybe that guy...that hunter...maybe he’d back off.”

Yuuri winced at his friend’s words. “Phichit, you can’t make a lifelong decision based on fear. You shouldn’t let him control your life like that.”

Phichit sighed, taking the cloth from his head and twisting it in his hands. “He’s already caused me to move to a different training sight. My parents...they were talking about me training in Thailand. My mom has never been controlling, but she honestly mentioned a matchmaker last week when we talked. A matchmaker?” He looked over, trying to make it a joke, but Yuuri refused to smile. Phichit took the hint and turned serious again. “Celestino and I’ve been talking about Coach Satsuki traveling with me and training me from afar.”

Yuuri sighed, so many had to give up so much. “I feel...like Ciao Ciao has lost so much from all of this.”

Phichit shrugged as he let his eyes study the steam rising from the surface. “He might want to stay in Japan,” he suggested.
“With Minako?”

The Thai omega nodded. “He’s...not been the same since...it happened.”

“Since I was raped,” Yuuri corrected. “I need to quit hiding from those words.”

Phichit nodded, hugging himself. “I think...it might be good for him to take some time off.”

Yuuri considered the implications. While he did want his coach to take time to himself, and he loved the idea of Celestino and Minako finally making an honest try, he didn’t want it out of fear and desperation. “How many other skaters does he still have under him?”

“Three but one of the other assistants can take over easily enough.” Phichit filled in. “I’m...worried about him. I think Minako is as well.”

Yuuri noticed how she kept almost as close an eye on his coach as she did on Yuuri. “Just talk to him. I hate for us all to abandon him.”

“I will...I think he feels it, too. A year off. He knows you are taken care of. As for the others…”

“There aren’t very many.” Yuuri sighed. That bastard had taken so much...from both of them. He hated it and he knew his coach was suffering from his own PTSD with the situation. The sharp eye, the diligence with his skaters...just a little more protective than necessary. Minako was a good alpha. She’d keep an eye on him. Perhaps then he could relax, allow himself to explore his emotions and find help.

Yuuri sat across from his mother in the kitchen nursing a cup of tea while his daughter played in the nearby playpen. “I feel so different this heat.”

She smiled over her cup. “That’s because this one matters. It will solidify your bond with your
mate.”

Yuuri shivered as he felt the weight of it. “So...the bond…”

“Deepens as time goes on. Every time you both come together, you share a little more of yourselves.” Her eyes became reminiscent. “It’s important to hold onto your individuality but surrendering to your love is a good thing.” Focusing on her son, she added, “You don’t have to worry about your Victor. He’s a good alpha.”

Yuuri blushed at the sincerity in her tone. “I know.”

Yuuri curled up with his daughter, the aches of preheat moving up into his back. He would be glad when Victor returned. A backrub sounded amazing. His mother had checked on him since retiring upstairs and brought him both a hot water bottle and some tea. *I’m glad to be home. I know St. Petersburg is my home, but I’m glad to be near my mom right now.*

Yuuri stretched out his body and heard his daughter’s protests. “Shizu, it’s okay.” She squirmed up and pulled at Yuuri’s shirt but her mama redirected her, handing her the cup. She pulled it up and sucked at the spout until Yuuri redirected her movements, showing her how to use it. The milk came too fast and she started to sputter, Yuuri quickly jerking it away. “Sorry, baby...I guess I’m figuring this out, too.” Soothing her cough, he snuggled her close, fighting a sob. He sucked his hand against his mouth as he tried to swallow it down. *Hormones*, he decided. He hated this.

Victor stood on the bridge, leaning against the rail as he talked with Georgi back home. “You saw him? Damnit.”

“He and another were nosing around the rink. Security asked them their business and they made up some story about sponsors wanting to speak with their skaters. Security saw through that immediately, since sponsors only talk through agents, and sent the picture to Lyosha.”

*Lyosha, Yakov’s assistant Alexei.* The old man would have made sure his staff was apprised. “Thanks for letting me know. Keep an eye out and make sure Yura doesn’t know but is safe.”
Down the line Georgi snorted at the impossible mission he had been handed. Both men knew that the angry teen would undoubtedly try to take on Yuuri’s attacker...regardless of the fact that he weighed less than Mila’s old hockey equipment. “Dmitry and Ivan have already taken charge of that situation, putting the little alpha back in the dorms for the time being. And besides...he’s flying out soon to meet you both in Japan. Don’t worry.”

“Thanks, Gosha. Don’t let Yura fool you. He already suspects something if he’s been sent back to the dorms.”

“I think Yakov said something about a stricter training schedule or some such business. We’re all on high alert. One of us will escort him to the airport.” He paused, and Victor could hear the man moving around on the other end, finding a private area. “But...if they have the right contacts, they could figure out where you are.”

Victor instinctively flinched and looked around, then chided himself for the panic. “Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that...but I’m aware. Thank you.”

“By the way...congrats on your bonding. It’s about time.” Georgi’s voice was warm, ever the romantic he lived for mated couples.

Victor smiled thinking of the dopey grin on his friend’s face. “Thanks, my friend. I think so as well. And speaking of which...I have an omega to return to.”

“I wish I could be there for your affirmation...but I understand Yuuri wanting to be with family.”

Victor looked around again, seeing nothing but familiar faces. “And right now it seems it’s good that we’re not in Russia.”

As they disconnected, Victor frowned at the new information. He knew Lyosha and/or Yakov would have reported the sighting of Donovan. It was on the trip home that he received a call from Lyosha confirming the report.

“He hasn’t been back but investigators are watching the apartment just to be sure.”
Victor shoved his hand through his hair in frustration. He wanted this danger gone. With Yuuri headed into heat, he worried about leaving their daughter unprotected. This town was close knit, small enough that everyone knew everyone. And best of all a stranger would be spotted immediately. But beyond that there wasn’t really much protection. This sleepy seaside village was practically a retirement community. He meant no disrespect, and he knew both Toshiya and Hiroko would fight to the death for their granddaughter...but up against a villain like this how much fight could they put up? And then he worried about the distress this news would cause Yuuri right before his heat.

Arriving back at Yuutopia, Victor immediately occupied himself in the busyness of the inn. Little tasks helped him in the same way Yuuri’s figures helped his mate. But the distraction only lasted so long. Eventually he looked around at the multiple entrances, the thin walls. *Could he get in before we realized it?* He then spotted Mari talking with a customer. Waving her over, she came to him and asked, “What’s wrong?”

“That obvious?” he asked wryly.

She nodded. “If you don’t want Yuu-chan to know, you’d better get your thoughts in order.”

Victor thinned his lips, “The man that tried to get to Yuuri, the one that...that raped him...he’s been spotted in Russia.”

“*Unko!*” She spat, then collected herself and pulled him into a more private corner.

Victor followed along, “Indeed...and I’m worried about him getting to Yuuri here...or to Shizuka. It’s only a matter of time before he figures out we’re in Japan.” He looked around at the open lobby and the guests who wondered in and out. Many were faces he recognized, while some were new. “This was supposed to be the safe option.”

She frowned as she took in the information before placing a hand on his forearm reassuringly. “It still is. I’ve contacted a friend with the local police and he’s gotten the picture you have to his colleagues. Anyone who is not Japanese will be checked. And that asshole has a whole lot of family and friends to get through to get to Shizu-chan.”

Victor loved his sister all the more for her strength of will. But he loathed the idea of endangering
her and her parents. “I know...but he’s not alone. He was spotted with someone.”

She shrugged, “We still outnumber him. Book your stay at the heat ryokan under another name. It’s not uncommon. We...are a very private culture.”

Victor hummed, *I noticed, and it’s worked out for us.* “I’ve already thought about that. But...Shizuka?”

“Family meeting tonight,” Mari suggested. “Let’s make sure everyone is aware. And don’t underestimate Mom and Dad. They can be quiet and soft-spoken...but if someone were to threaten their family…”

Victor knew how they would fight. But he also knew that an American could smuggle a gun into an unarmed country with ease, tilting the balance of that fight unfairly. He knew he didn’t want them hurt, or worse. But he knew Mari was sincere with the meeting.

*Now to talk to Yuuri...*

Yuuri groaned as Victor’s hands worked his aches away. “This is what I needed.”

“The cold compresses...have they helped?”

“It’s not just...drying up. And tapering off like the doctor suggested seems to be helping that.” Yuuri moved into the heat of Victor’s touch, enjoying the way he relaxed the sore muscles. “I’m just...crampy. This heat is coming fast. Is everything ready?”

“Shizuka’s birthday party is set for tomorrow evening and our ceremony the following on the beach. The people in town have gone to a lot of trouble to make this happen.” Victor smiled at the love the people of the village showed to them so openly.

“I can’t believe it. I mean...I grew up here but I’ve been gone for so long.”
“To them, you are still a local hero. Let them love you.”

Yuuri rolled his eyes. “I’m just Yuuri…”

“That’s what they love most. Your humility.” He squeezed the bit of flesh beneath his hands. “Best not let Phichit hear you say that, now. How are you feeling?”

“Much better.” Yuuri turned in his hands, draping his hands over Victor’s shoulders. “I hate preheat… the body feels like it’s totally reorganizing itself.”

Victor laid down next to Yuuri, stretching his legs out and twining them with his mate’s. “In my sex-ed class, they said they used to think that was the case. Before they got a good look at the inside of the body, of course.”

Yuuri laughed softly. “We still get caught up in misinformation. If I had known that my heat was just a matter of time and not associated with weaning her, I might have started tapering off sooner.”

“Would you have?” Victor asked softly. He watched Yuuri indulging in their late evening feedings. Snuggling and enjoying one another, Yuuri seemed content to hold onto that moment as long as possible.

“I don’t know… maybe?” Yuuri shrugged, a weak smile in place.

“It doesn’t matter. You’re both happy and that’s what is important. Now… how are you feeling?”

“Much better.” Yuuri sat up and Victor followed. The omega let the alpha put him to rights with his clothes. Studying his mate, finally looking at him, he could see the tension on the edge of his movements. “You’re… already getting the hang of shielding me from your emotions. I’m not sure I like it. What’s going on?”

Victor looked up, catching those brown eyes before sighing in defeat. “That guy… the one that…”
“The one that raped me?” Yuuri supplied.

Victor nodded. “Yes...that one...he was spotted with one other, someone that looked a lot like him, in Russia.”

Yuuri paused, taking in the information. “Near our home?”

Victor hesitated for a moment, then nodded. “Georgi and Lyosha both called me this evening.” He watched his mate and could see the wheels turning in his thoughts. “I’ve talked to Mari already. She suggested a family meeting.”

Yuuri hugged himself, nodding. “What if he figures out I’m here? It’s not exactly hard to do. My family runs a business.”

Victor listened to his mate’s voice, there was worry, concern, but there was strength and logic there too. “Mari has already considered that and told a friend of hers at the police department.”

Yuuri chewed his lips before saying, “Akio...he’s her best friend from when she was a teen. I sometimes think there might be more but...I’m never really sure.”

“But he’ll protect someone important to her.”

Yuuri nodded. “He would. He has...I remember him dealing with a bully when I was a kid while Mari stood between me and them.”

Victor smiled, thinking it good that Yuuri had so many wanting to protect him. Victor was left with just one concern, *how to protect the protectors.* “Good. So...let’s go talk to the family.”

“I think we should rotate her from house to house while you are gone. Nothing predictable but she can stay with Yuuko and me one night, Minako on another night, and of course here...” Takeshi looked from one person to the next before adding, “It’s what I might suggest with the girls.”
“It’s a good suggestion,” Mari’s friend Akio agreed. “By making her whereabouts unpredictable, it will force him out in the open if he should show up here. However, moving her frequently gives him a better chance of getting close to her. She’ll be vulnerable when being moved.”

“If we only knew who we were looking for...I mean we have a picture,” Minako began as she considered the options. “Fortunately a white person this far south will stick out. We have a population of two. One with silver hair and the other is so Italian most of the village doesn’t know what to make of him.”

Akio nodded as he considered his information. “I’ve been in touch with this investigator in Detroit, this Olivia Benson. She has given me his name and I have him listed as a person of interest should he travel under his own passport.”

“You know...his name?” Yuuri asked, blinking in surprise.

Akio looked down at his notes. “Yes, do you...not?”

“I never asked,” Yuuri responded, blinking and suddenly fighting for breath. “Vitya...”

His mate was there, however, already running his hand up and down Yuuri’s back. “I’ve got you. Breathe for me, love. Breathe.”

Yuuri slowly worked his panic under control, hugging his knees to his chest. His daughter watched him with concern from his mother’s lap and he reached towards her and gave her a reassuring smile. “Mommy is fine, sweetie.” Finding his center, he lifted his eyes to Akio. “What is his name?”

“Jaimeson Donovan. He’s from a wealthy family in Detroit and has a brother...named Flynn. They are both wanted in the States and there is reason to believe they are the ones that were in Thailand.”

Yuuri nodded. A name. Turning to Victor, he stated quietly, decision made, “We need to book that place anonymously. I want our daughter to go home with Chris and Laurie.”
Victor sucked in a breath, “Yuuri…”

Yuuri was quick to shut down the argument. “No, Vitya…she would be safest far away from me for now. Chris would be least suspected. She can play with Gabriel. They would never expect it. All of what we’ve been talking about? All our plans, they would suspect them. But this, moving her so far? They would never see it coming.”

Victor nodded as he hugged his mate closely. “I’ll let them know when they arrive.”

“Thank you,” Yuuri whispered. Turning back to his family, he added, “I don’t want you all to endanger yourselves but it might help if there were signs that indicate she is still here.”

“You’re still breastfeeding,” his mother pointed out quietly.

Yuuri laughed almost hysterically. “I guess I’d best taper off more quickly.”

The entire gathering watched Yuuri as he gathered his daughter in his arms. Not one day ago, he fought against being in another town than his daughter. Now he was contemplating sending her overseas, half a world away. It was both the most selfish and most selfless decision he ever made. But she would be safe.

Jaimie studied the entrance to the complex, adjusting the wig and his suit. He looked like money but not like himself. The doorman talked to those entering and leaving the building. He would have a thumb on the goings on in the building. Walking in like he belonged, he looked annoyed when he was stopped. “I have a meeting with a client. Yuuri Katsuki.”

The doorman narrowed his eyes in suspicion. “The Japanese omega? He belongs to Mr. Nikiforov.”

*Like hell!* “When are they expected to return?”

“We don’t give out that information.” The doorman clearly wasn’t buying the excuse. He moved
to block Jaimie’s path into the building. “You should contact Mr. Nikiforov or Mr. Yuuri directly.”

“What do you need with Vitya and Yuuri?”

Donovan turned at that question and met with steel gray eyes of a protective alpha and his mate. *Not really my type. Drop the aggression, alpha.* Forcing a smile, he answered, “We were supposed to meet with regard to his legal case.”

The alpha studied him, his jaw firm as he took in the story. Although the man looked the part, something was off in his story. “His attorneys are Russian. You need to meet with them directly.” Looking past him to the doorman, he added, “We can have security show you out if you need assistance.”

Jaimie huffed. “No, I don’t need any assistance.” Walking away, he heard more than saw his brother fall into step. “It’s been too long and that omega is too close to heat. Do you think they’ve gone somewhere else?”

“I have a friend who’s a hacker,” suggested Flynn. “I’ve used him before. He’s not one for scruples, just money. Could run a search.”

Jaimie kept walking, “Set him on it.”

**Chapter End Notes**

Never underestimate a mama protecting their child.
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

As the threat draws nearer, Yuuri makes arrangements for the safety of his daughter.

Chapter Notes

It's prom night! And I'm going to need all of your lovely comments to keep me awake. So let me know you're still reading and loving this story. I have an estimate on the length at this point. 35 chapters. Once I wrap it up, I'll update the numbers but we're drawing closer to the end. :) Enjoy and have a fuzzy blanket nearby because things are starting to happen.

Jaimie studied the report once more from Flynn’s hacker friend. “Japan. I should have known he ran home to mommy.”

Flynn was sitting on the couch in their hotel room, arm casually stretched along the back, booted feet up on the coffee table. “So what do you plan to do?”

Phone in hand, blue eyes flicked up to his brother impatient with his questions. “What do you think I’m going to do? I’m already booking our flight.”

Flynn frowned at his brother’s words. “Our? Really...do you expect me to tag along on your little errand. They’ll be watching for you. We’ll stand out even more in Japan.”

Jaimie threw the report at his brother, “What do you suggest?”

The younger man flicked the pages to the ground and leveled an annoyed glare on his older brother. “We hire someone to do the job. If he can get the kid, the bitch will soon follow,” the younger brother pressed.
If Jaimie had a fatherly bone in his body, he might have been horrified at the suggestion that his daughter be kidnapped by a stranger. He already discarded her importance, however, when he saw that she was female. It was the dam he wanted. “Do you have a contact that can blend in in Japan?”

Flynn’s smile said that he did. He pulled up his connection on the phone, facetimeing with the man and entering into a contract.

Over the screen they could see the young man, tattoos crawling up his neck and showing on his knuckles. “I’ll make my way to Hasetsu and start tracking their movements. When do you want me to make a move?”

“Keep us informed. We’ll be on the move within the hour. This is a burn-phone so watch the throwaway email we set up in case we need to contact you.” Flynn disconnected the call and within a few minutes he and his brother were packing to go. “So, what are our new identities?”

“I thought it would be interesting if we traveled under the names of Silas and his boyfriend.”

His brother groaned. “I don’t want to be seen as your mate...that’s just…”

Jaimie patted his brother hard on the back as he laughed. “Silas McElroy and Jacob Ezry. They dated in college but I doubt they are still together. Silas is such a weasley guy.”

Flynn looked over the fake papers his brother produced. Of course, the older alpha had stolen his old roommate’s and the roommate’s boyfriend’s information while they shared a space. He even had credit cards in their names. Prepaid. It wasn’t a matter of money. They just needed a way to move about. Satisfied, they vacated the room. They had a plane to catch.

Chris led Lawrie out of the terminal and smiled when he was greeted by his best friend waving from a waiting car. “I thought we were meeting you there.” He helped his mate secure their son into the carseat before standing up to study his friend. His smile fell as he took in the serious lines of Victor’s expression. “Oh...something...has happened.”

Victor thinned his lips, “It’s...Yuuri. Let’s talk in the car.”
They drove for half an hour without discussing anything in particular. Lawrie urging them all into small talk while he entertained his son in the backseat. “So...is Yuuri excited about the affirmation ceremony?”

Victor smiled, glancing at that rear view mirror’s image of Lawrie happily laughing with his son. “He would say he was doing it more for me than himself but I know a part of him would want this.”

Chris chuckled. “It’s okay for him to agree to something just because he knows it’s important to you. Lawrie and I do that all the time.”

Victor sighed, nodding as they continued to drive. Finally, he brought up the subject on his mind. “You know about...what happened in Thailand,” he began.

“Oui,” Chris agreed softly.

“That man...he’s been seen in Russia. Yuuri and I...we think it’s only a matter of time before he figures out we’re here.” He slammed the heel of his hand into the steering wheel in frustration. Then smiled softly as an apology to his friend, “He’s afraid that...we’ll be unable to protect her...that she’ll be taken while we’re locked away in our combined heat and rut.”

“Surely his family...” Lawrie began from the back seat.

Victor shook his head. “We talked about her moving from house to house with no apparent pattern but...Yuuri thinks she’d be safest if she...goes home with you.”

Chris blinked at the words and then looked back at his mate. Lawrie was thinking it over and running through the various scenarios. He knew his analytical partner. Finally, the omega nodded. “We’ll take her, Victor. Don’t worry,” Lawrie agreed quietly. “In fact, I think it might be time for a little holiday in the country. Sort of a double disappearance.”

“Lawrie...” Victor began.

The omega shook his head before cutting in to say, “I can see this from Yuuri’s perspective and if
he is willing to trust me to care for his daughter, I will do everything to ensure her safety...including going someplace unpredictable. I think...this is the best plan. I just worry...how will Yuuri handle being so far away from her? Won’t he feel separation anxiety?”

“I...don’t know.” Victor knew that the omega was brilliant, and this plan was flawless. But he still felt reservations.

A young man with bad tattoos sat outside the inn, watching as the lunch crowd moved in and out. The family was busy attending to their customers, making this a perfect time to check for little breaks in their notice. He donned a long hooded sweatshirt and a baseball cap.

Sitting at a table, ordering the special was too easy. Avoiding the searching eyes of the omega’s sister was not as easy but thankfully a drunken guest grabbed her attention. He took off for the bathroom and quickly was able to move into the family rooms of the inn. Upstairs he heard the cooing of a baby and knew his mark was close by. Then his nose picked up the aroma.

It was mouth-watering...an omega just entering preheat. The voice started talking to the baby, and he could tell that the omega was on the move. Quickly he retreated downstairs and back to his seat. He paid and left without attracted much attention and was almost out the door when a poster caught his attention.

Shit.

A bump behind him broke his concentration. “Sorry buddy.” He turned and found himself staring right at a cop. Out of uniform, but still a cop. In fact one of the cops that had arrested him for possession years ago. He ducked his head and beat a path to his van.

Fuck! Not only was that fucking cop Akio hanging around the place but the baby was the daughter of Japan’s hero, Yuuri Katsuki. I should have held out for more.

Yura pulled his suitcase behind him as he left the train. He purposefully didn’t give the old man his flight information but Yakov seemed to have overridden him on the matter. He spotted Yuuko
waiting patiently to pick him up. “Where’s Vitya?”

“He’s not returned from picking up some other friends. He would have picked you up as well, except you’d already left.”

Yura shrugged. “It’s fine. I take care of myself well enough.”

Yuuko smiled at the defiant attitude that slight teen gave off. She smiled, seeing right through it. “So you do. Come on.”

They drove quietly towards the inn. It wasn’t until they were halfway there when Yura asked, “Does he know?”

“About the guy in Russia? Yes...I’m sure he’ll be relieved to know you are here.”

Yura squirmed in his seat a little. “They didn’t want me to know but the security guard told me about it when I asked him. I thought I could help more from here.”

Yuuko pulled the car up to the service entrance of the inn. She looked over at him, the small face begging for verification. “Perhaps. Let’s get you inside so Yuuri can fuss over you.”

True to Yuuko’s prediction, Yuuri had him in a tight hug before looking him over and making sure he was fine. “You’re staying with us. We have that room off of...”

Yura felt warm, knowing the omega valued his presence. With that confidence, he was able to resume his usual Yura-act. “Hold on! You aren’t being gross, are you? I don’t want to be around for your preheat shit.”

Yuuri blazed red and his eyes shot to Yuuko and back to Yura before stammering, “W-we can control ourselves!”

The teen shrugged, muttering, “You say that now. It’s one thing to be all hard-boiled in the daytime, it’s quite another at night...” He looked around the room before demanding, “Where is my niece?”
“In the kitchen with Mom, and don’t you quote Hemingway to me ever again!” Yuuri directed, turning the boy towards the double doors leading into the heart of the home. I’ll get that boy hooked on Marukami if it’s the last thing I do.

Yura talked Phichit into sharing his room and they planned a gaming session while setting up for the party. Chris and his mate were holed up with Yuuri and Victor planning something or another. The little green eyes followed the group with suspicion, never letting them get too far from his eyes or ears. He tried to get Phichit to clue him in but the Thai man was never one to be easily nailed down.

“So...what’s going on?”

“I think Yuuri’s worried about his heat. Lawrie is a trained therapist and an omega,” Phichit dodged.

“I know,” Yura groaned. “If it was that kind of talk…” However the green eyes narrowed slowly and turned on the Thai man. “Don’t you think they’d be alone? Why have their alphas there for a sex talk?”

Phichit’s eyes glued to the screen, focusing intently on killing as many reanimated ghouls as he could. “Maybe? Then again, it might be just a general talk about how to handle the separation anxiety while seeing to their heat. I mean...Chris and Lawrie are a month ahead.” He took an intentional shot earning a swear and insult from the teen whose attention was given back to the game.

And Phichit wasn’t too far from the truth. Once they’d arranged for Shizu’s travel, Yuuri and Lawrie broke off from the other two man and began asking the more personal questions. “I’m scared I’m going to freak out.”

“Contrary to popular belief, an alpha will seek to take care of his omega in every way before tending to his own needs. A good alpha, that is…”
Yuuri looked over to Victor chatting amicably with Chris, then turned back to Lawrie. “So he’ll take care of me if I freak out…”

“Exactly.” Lawrie patted Yuuri’s hand. “I’m surprised Victor has suppressed so long. We had a midway rut with Chris to take off the edge.”

Yuuri shrugged, his eyes distant. “I think he worries about me. He’s so afraid of scaring me.”

Lawrie raised his eyebrows and smiled, “I can guarantee it. That’s the nature of a mate.” He considered the other omega in front of him. “What are you worried about?”

Yuuri laughed and could hear the hysteria edging his words as he began to plow through the list. “What am I not worried over these days? That somehow my baby won’t be safe...that somehow Donovan will get to me...we have a name now, you know...that Victor will get hurt trying to protect me...that Shizu will get hurt...that my family will get hurt...that all of this will be my fault...and that Victor’s going to regret being with me.”

Lawrie smiled indulgently. “First of all, I can guarantee Victor will never regret being with you. Secondly, none of this is your fault. You are doing what’s best to protect your family...and we’re all here to help you with that. Everyone here wants to help as much as they can and there’s nothing you can ask that we won’t give readily. I know you chose this place because it felt safe...now you are adjusting the plan based on new information. Your primary concern is the safety of your child. That’s where we come in. Chris and I are going to take an extended holiday in the country after we leave here. I deserve a nice stay in the country, and this is the perfect excuse. Victor knows the place...and you both can join us once your heat is complete. Then we’ll plan your next move from there.”

Yuuri wished he could feel as confident as Lawrie did. “And if he comes here?” The question came out as a whisper.

“No one outside of this room knows where we are going.” Lawrie watched Yuuri visibly start to calm, relaxing under his words. “I’ll protect that babe like she’s my own. And as I’m traveling with my own baby, it will draw no attention to us. Trust me.”

“I do,” Yuuri said softly.
Tanaka had been busy that day. He got a call from an old college buddy asking for a tail on an omega his older brother was hunting. And since they were paying in prepaid cards...and those payments came through, he was going to do his job as long as it pleased him.

He smiled at his own reflection in the car’s side mirror. This had been an easy assignment. That smug jackass Flynn had called him asking if he was still in the yack-ooze-yah. It took everything in him not to laugh his ass off. Then he remembered, back in university he used that as his cover. The white kids had no understanding of organized crime in Japan; it was all ‘anyone with a tattoo must be in!’ Nevermind the fact that the Yakuza actually did more for earthquake victims than their own government did. He couldn’t hope to join.

But in the States, it was all tattoos and drugs. He used their cultural ignorance to run a nice scheme selling dope and cocaine to the wealthy, entitled racists he attended uni with. But once he got caught, the cops weren’t the slightest bit interested in getting the spoiled kids he sold to. He was arrested, his visa stripped, and he found himself on the next flight back to Japan.

Unfortunately, the tattoos he had got from all those cheap parlours in the States really hurt his chance of getting a good job in Japan. Japan didn’t mind when tourists had ink, but not on one of their own.

The best he could get was selling weed to tourists out of his uncle’s pet store. If the man ever found out, he’d kill him or worse, he’d tell Tank’s mom.

But then Flynn called with what had to be the dumbest job ever. Snatch a baby so the omega would submit himself to Flynn’s older brother. Once again, racism was on his side. Flynn would never know that kidnapping was a big No-No for the Yakuza. This would be easy, wait for the family to settle down or get distracted, pick the kid up and walk out. Flynn would have someone to take the kid the rest of the way and all Tank had to do was make sure he got paid.

Sitting at the train station, he watched the little girl from the ice rink pick up a blonde boy. He smirked at the sudden influx of white people into the south. *Five, we’re practically being invaded.* The inn was filled with people. The omega was Yuuri Katsuki, which meant nothing to the Donovans but seriously complicated matters. Katsuki was Japan’s Ace, and locally a hero. The posters around the train station answered to that. And that alpha of his was attached to his hip.

Tank shifted the car into drive, following at a distance the familiar route to inn. He smiled seeing the inn with a small group of local customers walking in and out, the restaurant still serving lunch. The woman led the boy into the inn through the service entrance. There were a few delivery trucks
in the small parking lot.

Turning the corner, he parked his car in the spaces in front of one of the abandoned store in the desolate strip mall and walked back. Brushing off his pants and straightening his shirt, he quickly covered his arms with a hoodie and tucked a cap over his head. Walking into the parking lot he saw a few boxes lined up outside next to the trucks. He plucked a clipboard off the top of a box and walked into the inn, following the line of a few delivery guys. He walked past the few men dropping off supplies and into the restaurant area. The layout of the inn wasn’t too hard to understand. He walked through the dining room and spotted the showering area that would lead into the onsen.

“Excuse me, young man. Are you looking for something?”

Tank turned quickly, an older man with a soccer team scarf approached him.

“Oh, sorry. I just thought it would be cool to see an onsen. Was thinking of taking a dip…”

“You know that’s impossible.” Toshiya’s voice dropped in pitch and became very stern. “I’m sorry, I’ll have to ask you to leave the showering area.”

He nodded and quickly walked back out to the vans which were slowly leaving. He put the clipboard down and walked in front of a van, checking to ensure that the older man had stopped following him. Once he was sure he wasn’t being watched he moved on.

The restaurant and onsen closed early leaving just family and close friends and one watchful police officer attending the celebration. Yuuri walked up to Akio and murmured, “Thank you for joining us. I hope you will make yourself at home.”

“I want to stay alert.”

“Then I’d avoid the sake,” Yuuri grinned.
He laughed warmly, scruffing the boy’s hair. “Still that same mouthy kid brother.”

“Still that brute of a...boyfriend?” Yuuri’s eyes searched the police officer’s face for confirmation.

But the stalwart man simply shrugged, his eyes straying to Mari. “When she wants me to be. And I want to be. But you know how she hates to depend on someone, and that’s the backbone of a relationship, being able to depend on someone.”

Yuuri thought of the other man’s interpretation of a relationship. He thought, with a little tweaking that definition could work for someone like Mari. “I’ve learned...it’s not dependence, it’s a partnership.”

Akio smiled, milling over the words. “I like that...now to convince her.”

Victor lifted his daughter up over his head and she squealed as he supermanned her across the room. Yuuri shook his head and smiled indulgently towards his mate. There would be no limits on their daughter’s world. She could be a superhero, a dancer, a skater, a doctor, and anything else she wanted to be.

And if Yura had anything to say about it, a lion-tamer.

He watched the gifts piling up. For their plan to work, most of those would be left strewn about the house with his mother or sister changing it up as the days passed. Yuuko even planned to take some with her to the rink. Minako had already stashed a few things at the studio. The illusion of a very indulged baby living in the inn, visiting the studio, and being babysat at the ice rink would be entirely believable. And during all this she would be completely out of the country.

Thinking of the separation Yuuri touched his breast, feeling a sharp pain in the nipple. It was more than just the thought of no longer breastfeeding her. He only had two more nights with her...but she’d be safe. At least I didn’t leave her with Yakov and Lilia. It wasn’t that he didn’t think the unofficial Russian grandparents couldn’t be loving, he knew Yakov would babyltalk her as he walked her around the rink, endlessly bragging of her beauty. He knew that she’d be safe with them as well. Lilia’s sharp eyes left every hawk jealous. But he would have come unglued if he heard that monster was in the same country as his daughter and he was a world away.

That monster thought Yuuri would send for his daughter if he got his hands on the omega. Little did he know that it was written into Victor’s guardianship papers and the adoption papers he would
sign that were Yuuri ever taken, Victor was to get their daughter someplace safe and under no circumstances, would she be handed over.

Maybe that someplace safe was with Chris and Lawrie. Looking over at their skating friends Yuuri realized they had bonded as a newly made family. He smiled as he watched Gabe and Shizu playing together, the little boy reaching out to hug her. And of course, Phichit snapped those pictures for him.

*My baby girl...I love you more than myself...and I’ll do anything to keep you safe. To this, we both agree.* He rested his eyes on Victor and saw the unspoken agreement in those blue eyes.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

The formal union of our beloved skaters overshadowed by pending departure.

Chapter Notes

I'm slipping this in here but the next part can't be released until Blu gets her fingers on it. Enjoy! and if you're me, bite a few fingernails along the way. But grab hold of those moments of joy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Yuuri sat up suddenly, his breath lost in the nightmare. Victor was at his side in a moment, arms wrapping around him but Yuuri was leaning forward out of his arms and gathering his daughter to his chest. One more feeding, one more time. He pulled his shirt away and his little girl looked up with bleary eyes, confused but not willing to turn away the nipple when offered. She nuzzled in and began to suckle. That connection lent realness to the world around him and pulled Yuuri the rest of the way out of the dream...the nightmare.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Victor asked softly.

Yuuri shook his head, sniffing back the sob. He didn’t want to put that nightmare into words. Some superstition told him to keep them behind his teeth. He just needed to know Shizuka was safe in his arms. Victor seemed to understand, wrapping him in his arms and releasing the soothing reassurance in his scent.

He began to breathe easier as he relaxed into his mate, his daughter already asleep on his chest. “I’m sorry,” he whispered.

“I don’t mind holding you through your bad dreams,” Victor murmured, pressing a kiss into his omega’s hair. Yuuri snuggled closer, not letting go of their daughter. Sleep found him once more.
The bath was a tradition in their family, part of running the onsen. Yuuri felt the warmth of the water as his mother tended him, squeezing the sponge, adding the light complementary scent. Yuuri felt his mother’s hands on his shoulder. “You will be beautiful, my son,” she murmured softly.

“I don’t deserve him, Okaasan,” he whispered.

She smiled indulgently, smoothing his hair. “Nonsense. He knows your value. Therefore, he deserves you.”

He nodded even as she led him out of the water and pulled on the robes that would go beneath his kimono. The thin fabric clung to his damp skin. He blinked away his tears even as his father stepped forward to straighten the fabric and smooth his hair. The older man pressed his forehead to Yuuri’s. “You make us proud every day.”

“Thank you, Otousan.” He could feel the tears breaking through. At least these were happier tears than those from the previous night.

“Bah... so formal!” his father teased.

Yuuri laughed softly. “I’m trying to hold myself together.”

The old man’s expression gentled as he murmured, “This is your day, Yuu-chan...let yourself be held.”

Yuuri smiled at his father’s guiding words. He knew this day would be full of emotions. The omega had cried no less than ten times already, including twice as they signed the legal papers.

Victor walked back and forth in Lawrie and Chris’ room. He missed his omega, felt his absence keenly. They’d separated after the legal work was completed. Yet he could feel Yuuri through the
bond and knew there were tears. More tears. He felt them, every drop, sliding down his own heart. Some were happy, some were scared, some were anxious and lost. He knew his Yuuri...knew he would put on a brave face behind the tears. But there would be tears.

And now his best friend and his best friend’s mate saw to preparing him for the evening ceremony. The clothes laid out on the bed, smoothed and organized, the summer fabric of the formal kimono spread out. He had practiced putting them on over and over so he wouldn’t disgrace his mate. He smiled at that thought. Yuuri would indulgently set him to rights, a soft smile on his lips.

Another shudder went through his chest and his hand went up automatically over his heart. “I’m worried about Yuuri...he’s struggling,” he murmured.

Chris’ eyes rested on his son. He couldn’t imagine what Lawrie would do if he had to leave the boy at such a young age. “Yuuri...he has so much strength. Knowing he’ll have to let go of his daughter...”

“I know...trust me, I know,” Victor admitted. “This...today...it’s supposed to be one of unfailing happiness. And yet...there is this shadow over it.”

Lawrie placed a hand on Victor’s shoulder. “It’s not the big things you remember. Focus on the small joys and carry them in your heart.”

Yuuri stood before the mirror, nervously rubbing his hands together. Phichit and Yuuko were both helping him get ready but he couldn’t help the wringing motion. Why am I so nervous? This is just a formality. We’re already bonded. His hand went up to rub the back of his neck.

Finally, he turned to his best friends. The white kimono lined in blue peeking out at the bottom and in the sleeves gave him the bridal appearance he sought. He’d gone back and forth between wearing a more masculine or feminine kimono and finally his mother had asked him what he wanted. The choice was a kimono that celebrated his status as an omega entering into a love match with his mate.
Victor chose to wear a masculine *kimono* and met him on the sand wearing black with a subdued silver pattern on the hakama. Yuuri’s umbrella twirled as he took in his mate’s loving expression. They had spent the morning together tending to legalities...signing documents that not only declared Yuuri as the Russian skating royalty’s mate but also that Shizuka was his legal daughter. There was a moment where Yuuri had to collect himself before assigning heat guardianship to their friends so that she’d be able to travel with them overseas. Everything was now legal...and now it was just festivities.

Yuuko, Takeshi and the triplets were all filming the ceremony, catching Yuuri’s blush as Victor stole a kiss and Yuuri’s shy dip of the umbrella as he stole one as well. The priest blessed them and they returned to Yuutopia for the wedding feast.

Also full of fun and levity, they laughed at the sight of the cake, the Russian nesting dolls depicting Yuuri and Victor on the top tier and spiraling down were dolls representing Yura, Shizu, Makka, and Vicchan. The omega was glad they included Yura in the group. Yuuri’s eyes misted as he lifted the one of his daughter.

“I want this to go with us when we leave for our heat,” he murmured to his mate.

Victor pressed a kiss into his husband’s hair. “Of course...whatever you need.”

Yuuri tried not to think about the next morning, about saying goodbye to his daughter at the airport. Yura was determined to stay in Japan and assist in the operation to create decoy scenes of the baby’s presence. Yuuri wanted to think it was unnecessary...but circumstances seemed to say otherwise.

Finally, as the party began to wind down and many were in the cups, Yuuri bid the company good night, gathering his daughter and offering a come hither look towards his mate. Victor, not one to turn down an invitation such as that from Yuuri, waved good night. He smirked as he heard Yura say, “Can I go home with you guys?” to Yuuko. Phichit had an early flight and was already packed, his things stowed away at Minako’s.

The upstairs held just the three of them. Victor slowly reached around his mate and untied the obi, letting the rich fabrics fall open even as he pressed a kiss into their bondmark. He knew Yuuri would want to feed his daughter one last time. He could feel the bittersweetness as Yuuri slipped out of the robe and snuggled her close.

“She’ll be safe,” Victor reassured him.
Yuuri nodded, not trusting his voice at first. “I know. I don’t doubt my decision...I just hate to let her go.” He curled up in the chair, cradling his daughter to his chest. She found his nipple with expert ease and suckled. He didn’t know when they started but all of the sudden he was all tears and snot, Victor at his side pulling him close. “I’m sorry. I know this doesn’t make it easier.”

“Hush now...you do what you need to do to make this work. Okay?” Victor held onto his mate until he settled. Finally he leaned back, wiping his tears with his thumb. “I want her to be safe, too. I hope you know that.”

Yuuri nodded, sniffing back. “Chris and Lawrie...they take good care of Gabriel. They will do the same for Shizu.”

“Indeed they will.”

Yuuri shifted in his sleep, a soft cry slipping from his lips. Victor watched over his mate with worried eyes. Their wedding night spent in worry, neither could muster the energy or desire for sex. He slipped from Yuuri’s side and went around to check his daughter. She cooed softly at his touch. Scooping her up, he returned to their bed.

Yuuri’s brown eyes fluttered open and smiled up at his mate. “You always anticipate my needs,” he murmured as he pulled her to his chest. She snuggled into him sighing happily. “I’m going to need you to help me through this.”

“Always, my Yuuri.” Reaching down, Victor pulled the sheet over his two loves. “Always.”

Yuuri hummed a soft lullaby as he began to strip her down to her diaper. Sliding his wrist over her soft skin, Victor followed after, leaving her well scented. She gurgled softly before snuggling into her mother’s scent and slipping off to sleep once more. Victor continued sliding his wrist over his husband, his mate, his partner until he felt some of the tension leave the omega’s form. Soft breathing suggested sleep and the alpha settled into bed, wrapping his body around both daughter and omega.
Yuuri packed her bag with care. As he picked up her cup, he realized that this would be it for the breast milk. She couldn’t travel with it. “What’s she going to do?”

“We’ve been slipping her some store bought milk here and there and she’s done fine. Lawrie assures me that he’ll be able to see to her needs.”

Yuuri nodded, knowing in his head that it was true. His heart was a different matter. It was breaking with every admission that she was going away. He could feel Victor’s hand on his back reassuring him. “You scented her again this morning?”

“Yes...we spent half an hour scented after her bath. How are you?”

Yuuri laughed, the sound hitting high notes in hysteria. “I’m great! Can’t you tell?”

Victor pulled him into his chest and pressed a kiss into the smaller man’s forehead. “You’re not great...but that’s okay. You don’t have to be great. Especially about this. We just have to get through it.”

Yuuri nodded nuzzling into his alpha’s scent and releasing a sob. Victor held onto him, his wrist moving up and down Yuuri’s back as he held the shaking body in his arms. His own expression was grim. Finally, Yuuri stood up straight and wiped away his tears. “I’m okay now. We have a show to do.”

Victor reached out and straightened his hair. “In here...you cry as you need to...you are safe with me.”

Yuuri nodded, sighing shakily. “I can do this.”

Downstairs, he found his daughter in the kitchen with his mother. The older woman smiled and in her expression, he found his own strength. His mother would do the same for him. For Mari. And even their daughter. They were a united front. He leaned in and hugged her and felt her comforting scent surround him. “You are my brave little omega. I’ve never been more proud of you,” she murmured softly in his ear.
“I don’t feel brave,” he admitted.

She smoothed his hair back behind his ears. “We never do.”

Gathering his daughter up, he smiled through his tears as she reached up to touch his cheek. He turned to kiss her tiny palm. “I love you...more than anything, know that I love you.”

“She said ‘Mamamamama…’” she babbled before snuggling into Yuuri’s neck. Yuuri reached up and wiped away the remnants of his tears before straightening up. He knew they weren’t the last of his tears but for now, he would do what he must.

They met Chris and Lawrie at the car. Chris chose to ride up front with Victor, letting the omegas have room with their children in the back. Yuuri held her in his lap, never mind the legalities of a carseat. He knew she needed to be close to his heart and also that Victor would drive extra carefully to their destination.

“Yuuri,” Lawrie began softly.

“It’s okay...really. I know this is the right thing to do.”

Discerning eyes studied his fellow omega. “But how are you feeling?”

Yuuri laughed bitterly and admitted, “Like shit. This is all his fault. He can’t stay out of my life and continues to take bit by bit away from me.”

“He’s going to fuck up, Yuuri. And then he will be put away. They already know his name. There’s a warrant for his arrest. It’s only a matter of time.” He reached over and squeezed Yuuri’s hand.

“And we just have to keep her safe until then.” Yuuri smiled wanly.

“Keep both of you safe. Chris and I will see to Shizu...trust Victor to watch out for you.” It was a pact among friends, between omegas, both pairs of eyes gleaming with resolve.
“You don’t know how much this means to me.”

Lawrie reached over his son and squeezed Yuuri’s hand. “If anyone knows, it’s me.”

Yuuri handed his baby girl over to Chris, running his wrist over her once more. They had several items thoroughly scented in her baggage. She would need the comfort items during their separation. She watched him as they walked away. “Mamamama…”

Yuuri sniffed but held strong as she reached for him. He broke and turned into Victor’s arms when he saw her pucker and start to cry, not understanding. “Take me away from here before I yank her back,” he hissed.

Victor firmly rested his arm around Yuuri’s shoulder as he guided his mate out, the now empty carrier in his arm to complete the ruse. He didn’t see Chris turn back before he passed through airport security. The Swiss alpha watched the two leave with worry in his eyes, the baby fussing in his arms but finally settling down as Chris pulled a bunny out of her bag scented by her mother and father.

In the car, Yuuri reached into his pocket and pulled out the small wooden figure of his daughter. He prayed to whatever gods that existed on this earth that she’d be safe. Kissing the figure, he placed it back in his pocket. “She…will be safe.”

Lawrie turned to Chris after his mate cleared security at the airport. “Do you think he’ll be okay?”

Chris turned warm hazel eyes towards his mate. “Our friend is amazingly strong…even when terrified, he finds a way to pull through. Although he had gone through this horrific event, he skated. And now, he will put his family first. So…yes, I think he’ll be okay. Yuuri is a survivor.”

Their conversation in French fell unnoticed by those pooling around them coming and going. Two
Americans were having an argument of their own and almost plowed into the couple. Chris jerked back the little girl in his charge, hiding her face into his chest. “Pardon!” he shouted disapprovingly.

The taller alpha of the two sneered at him. “No problem.”

Chris huffed. “Americans!”

Lawrie stood frozen next to his mate before patting Chris’ shoulder. “Do you think that was them?”

Chris looked back but the hair wasn’t quite right. “The other man was a brunette. He’s a blond.”

“Hair can be colored.”

“I think we are feeling some of Yuuri’s worry. Let’s move to our gate.”

At the other end of the airport, a pair of eyes studied the couple moving away thoughtfully. He could have sworn he caught a whiff of a certain omega. But this couple was very white and a little curly headed blond head stared at him over the alpha’s shoulder.

“What is it, Jaimie?”

The older brother punched him on the shoulder. “Jacob, you idiot.”

The younger sighed. “You hate McElroy...and of course, you make me take his name.”

“That’s right, Silas.” He turned back and the couple was gone, headed to catch a flight to Tokyo, and then a connection that would land them in Zurich.

Chapter End Notes
And now a certain little girl is safely out of the country (that was close, though...whew!) we can focus on how to handle some villains.
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

Yuuri deals with his daughter being gone and slowly comes to the realization that her small life touched a number of people.

Chapter Notes

I know! There is no consistency in my posting! What can I say? It happens when it happens. I hope you enjoy them when they do go up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yuuri nested. He listened to his mate book a room at the heat hotel and still he nested. The nest wasn’t traditional, it held sadness and loneliness. Winding around his nest’s edges were his baby’s clothes, soft toys, blankets, all things that he found after she left. A small whine crept from his lips as he tucked a stuffed bunny into a crack at his left. He felt his husband’s worried glances but that didn’t stop him. He couldn’t. The compulsion was too strong.

In his mind, he was at peace with his decision...well, as at peace as he ever could be. Intellectually he knew that this was the best way to keep her safe. Intellectually he knew that he came to this decision with logic. But his heart kept crying out for his baby...he needed to hold her, to make sure she was safe. She’s safe far away from me, he reminded himself. She’s safe with friends that I trust with everything...with my very life.

Victor dragged him out to practice and the repetitive movements calmed him for the moment. As his skates stilled, though, his thoughts began cycling again. What if she feels abandoned? What if she gets hurt? What if I can’t get back to her? Over and over again, he fought his fears.

They left practice and returned home, Victor working in the kitchen until he came to their room with his phone. Lawrie called and Yuuri practically lunged into sight of the screen. “We wanted to connect with you and let you know we landed. The flight was uneventful and she slept through most of it.” The lively hazel eyes seemed to reach out to Yuuri with understanding.

“Did her ears bother her?” Yuuri fretted.
Lawrie smiled widely at the question, “The flight attendant provided us with two bottles of milk. Once she took the bottle, her ears popped.”

“And no one gave you issues with the taking her?” Yuuri chewed his bottom lip. They had gotten through customs, and it was clear that no one had stopped them, but it was more than that worrying him.

Chris nodded, understanding at once it wasn’t the government officials worrying Yuuri, but the idea of attracting attention during travel...it could attract the wrong attention. “The temporary papers you provided for us took care of all their questions. We are her heat caregivers. They read that and accepted it. Now...how are you?”

“Oh, you know...freaking out inside. I think Victor is a little too calm.” He cut his eyes to his mate who raised an eyebrow in response.

Lawrie chuckled. “I’m sure he’s freaking out inside, too. He just has to keep calm on the outside to help you. Feel free to call anytime you need to reach out.”

“We only have Victor’s phone…”

“I know and that’s smart,” Chris reminded them. “Be careful.”

“We will.”

Then, his daughter was on the phone and as soon as she heard his voice, it was babbles of “mamamamama”. Yuuri was a mess of “I love you” and “I miss you” with a sporadic “be good for Chris and Lawrie.” When he handed the phone to Victor, he saw the shell crack. Although his mate’s voice held steady, he watched the tear escape. He reached up and brushed it away, the touch becoming a caress as Victor leaned into the omega’s palm. Then Victor disconnected the call.

“I’m sorry,” Yuuri whispered the moment Victor’s attention was on him. He could see how Victor’s strong facade was ready to crumble under the pressure of keeping it altogether, and he felt guilty. “I shouldn’t have said that.”
Victor closed his eyes, breathing slowly. Then he turned and flashed a soft smile at his mate. “I understand, Yuuri...and I know I’m your safe place. It’s hard to maintain this facade but you know my expressions.”

There was truth in those words. Victor had his press face up and Yuuri knew this...he just felt inadequate in his own. He was certain he was giving everything away. “What if they can tell something is wrong?”

“They will probably chalk it up to your heat,” Victor pointed out. Yuuri tried to focus on that. If the alpha hunters knew anything about omegas, they might be more dangerous. They only knew how to take and control.

---

Tank had sat outside the onesen for the better part of the morning wishing he had asked for more money. The sleepy town came alive as slowly as the summer took to leave. He had watched the old woman fuss about in the side yard, pulling at something then collecting it and bringing them in. The old man worked about the place, leaving to go a local hardware store and return. He saw the omega leave, again with that alpha in tow.

He clucked his tongue watching the omega’s feet move almost mechanically. I wonder.

As soon as they had rounded a corner he pulled up from behind the building, meaning to follow them but then the sounds of crying came from the upstairs of the inn. Looking through the windows he could make out the form of the omega’s sister picking up the baby and rocking it in her arms. As the crying continued he could hear the mother and sister talking back and forth over what to do.

Okay, so they leave the baby with family. Tank made wrote down the time in his notebook, writing in details when they left. He followed to the rink, knowing they would be already inside by the time he got there. Waiting outside for them to leave was hard. The town was so small that he was beginning to worry about being recognized. It was hard enough being in the town with no excuse, but with the amount of really cheap, exposed tattoos helped him to stick out.

The two skaters exited the rink, quickly returning home. The alpha was talking on the phone, answering questions to one of the omega’s family. It was broken but he could make out parts of dialogue.
“Yes, we can pick that up...No, I don’t think she’s allergic to nuts...I mean, it’s possible…” He looked at the omega who shrugged.

Tank thanked his stars he didn’t have any kids... *well, that I know of.* It looked awful. *Why that dick is trying so hard to get this baby and that omega back is beyond me.* He had to admit the omega was pretty but so lifeless. *What’s the point of hunting something that would probably embrace the death blow?*

The playacting was the hardest. Setting up scenes that looked like a toddler had only recently vacated it around the house only reminded Yuuri of her absence. Recordings of his daughter’s voice (something Yura rigged up with the help of three matching pairs of hands) only jerked at his heartstrings. The stroller that now held a doll reminded Yuuri of jogging with his daughter in the morning air.

It all unnerved Yuuri, leaving him unsettled and out of sorts. He found himself snapping at his mate, tugging out anxious habits he thought he’d moved past. His nails were wrecked, chewed into the quick. His hair was worried from being tugged, his hairline red from scratching. His lips were chapped irreparably from chewing. And the scratching on his arms...thankfully he had chewed his nails off.

Victor was patient but even he was feeling frazzled. He, too, worried and missed their daughter. He found himself going up to check on her only to remember she wasn’t there. He folded and refolded her clothes and blankets. When he slept on the side next to her little futon, he woke up with his hand on the coverings. Every squeal of laughter from a baby brought his attention, blue eyes searching out the child.

Yura constantly planned out elaborate scenes. He took this task seriously and they become more detailed each time, a rattle placed with care, a binky on the floor as if she dropped it, a stray sock in the hall. But in the privacy of his room (the one vacated by Phichit), he curled up on his side and cried into his pillow. One night, he realized he was too loud when the bed shifted and he looked up to find the omega wrapping himself around him. Yura buried into his chest and whispered, “I’m sorry. It’s not fair that I put this on you.”

“Cry...for me, Yura. I think I’m out of tears,” the omega responded softly, and gently stroked the blond hair. “I think...I’m very glad you are here. I don’t know that I could do the scenes...and they are so amazingly real.” He sniffed back and pressed a kiss into the blond’s head. “You are very good at what you do.”
The blonde smiled through his tears. “I saved some pictures. After I learned about your plan, the
girls and I made a backlog. Different outfits. Different locations. We’ve been releasing them
slowly on social media.”

“I can’t believe you thought so far ahead. I guess...I was so busy. Why did I have to have an
affirmation ceremony? I should have spent the day with my daughter.”

The teen looked up, shaking his head. “You couldn’t cancel it...that might have given it away.
Besides...you looked very happy.”

“I was...am...I...don’t know. Right now I’m just mixed up. Hormones, pheromones, separation
anxiety, regular anxiety, fear...I’m a mess.”

They heard a light knock on the door before it opened and Mari entered with Hiroko not far behind.

“We heard talking and figured you were both upset.”

Yuuri groaned. “Is it already time to start the day?”

Hiroko placed a tray with tea on the desk and began pouring cups. “Maybe a little early.”

“I just came in from a date,” Mari confessed.

Yuuri’s eyes widened before asking, “Akio?”

“None of your business,” she chastised, her cheeks blooming.

“I think she protests too much,” Yura giggled.

“Indeed,” grinned Hiroko as she passed over the first cup of tea. “So tell me, boys, what do you
have planned for the day?”
Yuuri hugged himself before accepting the second cup. “I think...I need to sort through my things and decide what I need to take for my nest. I’ve never stayed at a heat hotel and the idea of nothing smelling like us sounds unnerving.”

“You should strip your sheets every day before leaving and drop them in a bag,” his mother suggested.

“Are you taking any baby things?” Mari asked.

Yura looked horrified. “Why would he...”

Yuuri sighed, looking at him patiently. “To help me to relax with the idea that she is close. Except...I’ll know otherwise, wouldn’t I?” His eyes turned to his mother who shrugged.

She sat down next to him, taking his hand in hers. “You might know in your head but on an instinctual level, the scent would be reassuring.”

“I hadn’t thought about it. I guess...as I tear apart the bed, I should pack those things as well.” He huffed. “It all seems so backwards...breaking down a nest before heat.”

Mari glanced towards Yuuri’s and Victor’s door before mentioning, “I think he’d have trouble getting settled if you weren’t someplace safe and anonymous.”

Yuuri stared at that door through the opening, his expression growing pensive. “He wouldn’t get settled. I guess...this is the best solution.”

“Trust your mate,” his mother added softly and Yuuri smiled at those words.

“I do trust him...with my whole heart and body.” Yuuri felt a small sting of guilt, wondering if he recently hadn’t shown just how much he did trust Victor.

Yura huffed, setting his cup down on the nightstand before throwing himself back into his bed. “Now it’s getting all gross. I’m going to sleep.” The others laughed but one by one, they left the room.
Yuuri watched the other two descend the stairs as he paused by the door. Finally, he opened it.

Curled up in bed, his mate slept, a stuffed bunny hugged to his chest. In his sleep, the mask Victor forced into place slipped and Yuuri could see his vulnerability. He crawled up the bed, slipped the bunny from Victor’s arms and took its place. Victor hummed, his lips pressing into Yuuri’s hair.

“Good morning,” the omega whispered. “I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“You didn’t...well, sort of...I felt you leave earlier.”

Yuuri heard the sorrow in Victor’s voice, it was clear he had been awake but unable to leave the bed. “I’m sorry,” Yuuri murmured, snuggling into Victor’s scent.

“Don’t be...how is he?”

“As bad as the rest of us.” Yuuri pulled back to search out the blue eyes. “He loves Shizuka like family.”

Victor hummed understanding the little blonde all the better, “I get that...he doesn’t have much family.”

Yuuri sighed, thinking about the boy in the next room. “It was easier...to take care of him than myself.”

Victor pressed a kiss into his hair. “That’s okay...I can take care of you. How are you?”

Yuuri’s fingers slid up his chest and around his neck. “I’ll...be okay. So many people love our daughter.”

“They do...they also love you.”
“It’s your love I want,” Yuuri beathed, as he pulled Victor closer.

The wave of arousal caught Victor by surprise even as he surrendered into Yuuri’s soft seduction. Lips sliding over Yuuri’s, searching, tasting, nipping. As they parted, Yuuri tucked himself into his mate’s neck, a smile pressed against the alpha’s pulse. “I love you.”

“Thank you,” the alpha whispered, his fingers tangling in Yuuri’s dark hair. “I want to make love to you...I need you close to me.”

“Mmmm,” Yuuri hummed in answer. “Please...”

Victor’s fingers slipped beneath the hem of the omega’s tee and began teasing the indents created by his hipbones. “You’ve thinned out so much over the months.”

Yuuri chuckled before drawing in a shaky breath. “Too many months training. Don’t worry...I’ll put on weight quickly enough during our downtime.”

“I’m not...” He paused realizing Yuuri took that as a criticism. “I like all of the states of Yuuri. All soft and squishy...or hard and sculpted...or somewhere in between.”

Yuuri drew him back down into a kiss, shifting onto his back, using his heel to push up in the bed, his hand, to guide Victor’s to his hardening length.

Victor chuckled into the kiss and murmured, “Impatient.”

“For you...” He closed his eyes as he focused on the ministrations of that hand, grinding up into his touch, his lips parting in pleasure. He licked the edge of his lips, gasping softly as Victor shifted his touch, tracing along the vein. A groan slipped from his lips. “Inside me...need more.”

Victor reached down, teasing Yuuri’s balls, gentle hands exploring, squeezing, and rolling them, before moving further back, finding that little pucker of muscles. His lips parted as Yuuri opened up to him, a filthy moan slipping from his lips. Victor hissed, “Yura’s going to kill us.”

Yuuri giggled...he snorted and he giggled. “He is!”
Victor ducked his head into the crook of Yuuri’s neck as he joined him in laughter. They heard the door open next to them and stomping down the stairs which sent them into another round of laughter. “The poor boy is going to be traumatized.”

Yuuri hiccuped and laughed some more. He needed to laugh, needed to release the tightly held tension of the last few days. Finally catching his breath, he pulled Victor back into a kiss. They melted back into one another, Victor’s hands resuming their exploration. Yuuri shifted, his breathing stuttering as Victor’s fingers found their way inside once more.

“Vitya…”

The alpha worked him open quickly, seeing impatience in the omega, the scent of arousal filling the space. Yuuri shifted, seeking his pleasure, showing his frustration. He wanted more and Victor knew it. He slowly withdrew those fingers hearing Yuuri’s cries of protest. “Patience, love.” Lining up, he began to push into Yuuri, hearing his mate’s hiss, feeling the tightening of that body when he moved too fast and the wiggle of impatience when he didn’t move fast enough. He knew how to read this body, the subtle tells to the blatant giveaways. Then Victor was seated within, resting his forehead on Yuuri’s.

Yuuri breathed in through his nose and out through his mouth, deep breaths as he adjusted to the fullness. Then he nodded. “I’m ready.”

Victor set a steady pace, needing release as bad as his mate, kissing Yuuri, nibbling down his jaw, ear, and neck. He could feel it building quick and he pulled back to look at his thoroughly wrecked mate. Then the body beneath him shuddered before he released across his belly. Victor soon followed, leaning in to kiss Yuuri on his release.

Yuuri rested in Victor’s arms in the aftermath, the alpha having cleaned him up with wetwipes left behind in their daughter’s things. “We didn’t make love our wedding night.”

Victor looked at the pout on Yuuri’s face, “You were too sad…”

The brown eyes flicked up to his, “I know...thank you for that...for...giving me time.”
We must always wait with Yuuri. Victor smiled softly, remembering an old man’s advice a year and a half ago, his cheek resting against Yuuri’s head. “You should know by now...I will always give you all the time you need.”

Yuuri curled into him. He knew...all of those months of patient devotion, the struggle as Yuuri learned to love himself, his daughter...learned how to open himself up...learned how to be loved by Victor. He still hurt deep within, so many wounds still ached when the weather turned. The separation from his daughter. The memories of how she came to be. The loneliness from before. But for now, he was loved.

They walked downstairs and spotted the blonde. The teen’s cheeks went scarlet. “You two are gross.” They couldn’t help their laugh as they watched the boy stalk off.

“We should feel guilty,” Yuuri teased, feeling some of the grief let go...at least for now.

Victor snorted and shook his head. “He knew what he was getting into by taking that room. At least he isn’t in the old nursery.”

At the mention of the nursery, both of their expressions fell. Shizuka.

Flynn made a face when they walked back into the abandoned house outside of town. “I’ve made drug deals in better lodgings.” Sitting down the box of supplies, he turned and glared at his brother.

“This will be fine for now. Quit being so squeamish.” He looked around the broken structure with a satisfied air before adding, “It kind of reminds me of my first night with that pretty little omega.”

Flynn raised a doubtful eye. “I hope you are kidding.”
He grinned as he pulled out the phone he had taken from the omega. Turning it on, he smiled at the wallpaper. A selfie of Yuuri holding their baby greeted him.  

“They’re lucky they didn’t make the connection. And turn that phone off before we’re caught!”

The older alpha shrugged, switching the power off. “Maybe they did...father paid well to have that evidence tampered with.”

Flynn rolled his eyes. “If you’d done it right, we wouldn’t be here.”

“But we are.” Jaimie pointed to the burn phone. “Call your guy and see if we have any news.”

Flynn pulled out his phone and connected with Tank.  

“Omega’s are too much trouble. I think I’ll stick to weed.

Douchebag/ Anything?

Tank looked at the text. Flynn hadn’t really been that bad a guy when they knew each other in college, but his brother was a real piece of work. They were both pretty racist...but they also always paid for their weed, and they helped him make some good money selling to the privileged little twats in their frat. Well, until they dropped a dime on him when they got caught.

Tank/ They are sticking pretty close to home. The baby spends most days with the grandmother and aunt.

He saw the dots appear underneath as Flynn wrote his response.

Douchebag/ My brother wants pics.
Tank rolled his eyes, *fucking why?*

**Tank/ Then get an IG account and follow that fucking twink skater they work with. He posts like fucking daily.**

Tank looked over his notes, there was an easy to follow pattern developing. Working out, return to home, go to rink, return to home, stay in. They seldom did anything outside of the house. The grandmother took the baby out with her on shorter errands, but other than that the kid was locked inside.

**Douchebag/ No asshole. Flynn wants pics of the omega!**

Tank snorted, *because there’s only one of those on the whole planet…* He sent a few pictures he had snapped this morning of the omega walking to and from the rink.

What Tank didn’t notice in the picture, what his beta nose didn’t tell him, was that the omega was clearly going into heat. Flynn’s sharp eyes saw the way the alpha clung to the small frame, how the picture caught the head turn of a man walking past them, hungry eyes following the omega in a moment frozen in time.

**Douchebag/ the omega’s going into heat soon. Would they do that in the inn?**

Tank scoffed at that.  *Wow… People from the States just loved to swing into Japan, admire the structures, the flowers, the culture, but never stayed long enough to see that this was a country with paper thin walls and no central air.*

**Tank/ No. They would never have a heat in an inn like that. Too old. That alpha will have him bundled off somewhere to enjoy him without worry of inviting unwelcomed participants.**

**Douchebag/ Find out where. AND if they are taking the brat.**

Chapter End Notes
Wow! Okay...thoughts?
Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

As Yuuri’s heat approaches, everyone strives to keep up the ruse.

Chapter Notes

Hey, all...are you ready for some Truth? Thanks to BluSkates for edits and contributions. I’m busy busy busy this summer but I hope to continue to put up chapters. However, I don’t know how to work out my writing schedule. So if you see a lag, just know...it’s crazy time! :)

Note: Chapter count denotes a finished story. This one is waiting for edits and BluSkates’ additions. Be patient with her. She also keeps a crazy schedule.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yura studied the baby paraphernalia in the basket thoughtfully. What would Shizulya want to play with today? He began with a blanket. Cheetah print with fuzzy plush. He smirked at himself, remembering when the old man had cautiously explained it wasn’t tiger print. Maybe I should take those college courses Yakov’s always droning on about. Spreading it out, he then created some well constructed wrinkles so that it looked like she’d been scooped up and carried into the other room. In fact, he had the doll donated by the triplets for effect.

The scene was too empty and the teen knew he would need a little help pulling it together. Playing on his phone was a video he took of her while in Russia. The little squirming, giggling girl pulled a smile to his lips as he studied her surroundings. Reaching into the basket, he found the tiger with the long arms and legs. A rattle. Her plastic keys. He then stacking rings and the cube for her shape blocks in reach. On the couch, he tossed a plushie...this one a bunny...against the pillow haphazardly. He finally felt satisfied with his scene, placing the doll in it for effect.

He then curled up on one of the pillows in the floor and played his handheld video game. He was really into the Animal Crossings game, having just acquired another cat...Stinky...when movement caught his eye outside the window. Green eyes darted to the window immediately, instinctively he knew it was more than just the wind or incidental motions. He studied it without daring to look out the window and give himself away, then moved to pick up the “infant”, wrapping her up in his jacket and carrying her out of the room.
“Vitya, I don’t think Shizulya is feeling well,” he said as he entered the kitchen.

Victor looked up startled then took in his expression as Yura scowled at him. “Let’s just take a look...she could be teething,” he answered on cue before gathering the “baby” into his arms. He carefully made a show of checking her over before pronouncing, “She should probably go rest with her mama.”

As Victor carried “her” upstairs, Yura texted what he observed.

Yura/ It was like someone was watching me through the window and the plants moved. Not like the wind but like a person fell into it.

It took a few moments before Victor responded back.

Vitya/ I tucked her into the old nursery. Yuuri’s sleeping and I don’t want to disturb him.

Yura/ Do you think that bastard is here?

Vitya/ Yuuri’s been very nervous but it could be just nerves, but it could be something more. I don’t think they’d stay in St. Petersburg long.

Yura/ So keep pretending.

Vitya/ Exactly.

Yuuri whined in his sleep and shoved himself out of the dream. He made a face and tried to shake off the feeling of someone tugging on his attention. It wasn’t Victor and his daughter was too far away. In his sleep it was as if someone had been calling his name from down a long hallway, the voice coming from every direction but far off. Yuuri had tried to ignore it, but like an itch, it was unavoidable. He shivered, climbing out of bed and moving towards the door. His legs were lead, heavy and clumsy, his vision was blurred, and his head felt fuzzy. Then a strong wave of nausea
overtook him and he fell to his knees controlling himself. He could hear breathing but didn’t know if it was his own or someone else’s. It sounded so loud, so close, so...much like the warehouse.

He sat in the door facing, hugging his knees rocking back and forth. *Please don’t be here...please don’t be here...please...go away...* The breathing grew heavier, ghost hands reached out from a memory, but felt much too real. The mark on his neck, healed and forgotten, tingled with a burning sensation. *Get the fuck out!* Yuuri pounded fists into the floor, the shock helping him find a small amount of focus.

Blinking his eyes open, he knew he needed help. Stumbling down the stairs, the dysphoria didn’t go away, leaving him confused. He whined once more seeking out his mate. Victor came through the kitchen door, but stopped when he saw the younger man. He waited cautiously, wanting to make sure that he would only help and assessed Yuuri’s state before crossing the room and enfolding Yuuri in his arms.

“What’s wrong?” the alpha asked as he moved Yuuri into the privacy of the kitchen.

Seated on a kitchen chair, with Victor kneeling before him Yuuri was able to start pulling himself out of the embrace of terror. He focused on the feeling of fingers combing through his hair, Victor flicking his wrist to run the scent along the side of Yuuri’s face. The omega turned a cheek into the touch, releasing another whine.

“What’s wrong?” Victor asked once more, his eyes imploring Yuuri. His instincts had him on alert as he prepared to protect his love.

That whine turned into a moan. “It’s like...someone else is in my head...like right after I had gotten away...it doesn’t make sense. We’re bonded. He can’t...just insert himself.”

Victor’s lips thinned as he considered Yuuri’s suggestion. If there was still a residual bond with his abductor, then would it flare up if the alpha was nearby? He pulled Yuuri into his arms while he schooled his expression. The bond had faded over time and healed over like a scar from the past. Their bond superseded the incomplete bond but...could Yuuri feel him if he were near?

Victor pressed a kiss into his hair then smoothed his hands over Yuuri’s shoulder, squatting down before him once more. “Did you have a dream?” He didn’t doubt his Yuuri. He only wanted to eliminate the obvious.
Yuuri whined and half-nodded. “Do you think…” He wasn’t sure. *It didn’t feel like a dream…but then again, the other seemed...*

“It’s possible. The dream. However, I’d prefer you not to go out on your own.” Victor thinned his lips before whispering, “Our bond won’t settle until we share your heat, my rut.”

Yuuri shrank in on himself and nodded. “At the competition...in Thailand...I thought...I felt him.”

Victor’s eyes rested on Yuuri as he considered those words. “It’s possible...and it’s possible now. He could be here. That’s why we sent our little girl away.”

Yura and Hiroko had watched the entire exchange and finally his mom came forward and slid an arm around his shoulder. “You’re safe, Yuuri. No one can get to you.”

Yuuri nodded, sniffing back before sliding into Victor’s arms, burying himself into his alpha’s embrace. He wished he could believe her, that her words were consolation. But he thought he was safe before, jogging home on a familiar path after practice.

Victor smoothed his wrist up and down Yuuri’s back while Hiroko released her reassuring scent until the smaller body settled into Victor. The alpha could still feel the shivers going up and down the omega’s body but the sourness of his scent started to lift. Victor continued to scent him until the body stilled.

Unseen by the others, Yura slipped out of the room. Another scene was being plotted out. Anything to keep his family safe.

Victor walked through the house once more, checking his phone with a frown. He tried to be casual about it. However, the fact that Victor kept checking his phone didn’t go unnoticed. Finally, Yuuri asked, “What are you looking for?”

Caught, Victor glanced down guiltily. “I thought...maybe...he’d mess up and turn on your phone.”
Yuuri huffed. “He probably tossed it.” Victor hummed noncommittally, checking once more.
Irritated, Yuuri reached for his phone. “Just turn on the alert. It’ll tell you if it’s within 30 miles.”
The alert set, he returned the phone to his mate.

They were eating their dinner when the phone buzzed. Both of them froze mid-bite. Victor reached for it and then breathed a sigh of relief. “Just a text from Yakov.”

Yuuri laughed nervously, his eyes resting on the phone. He hated feeling on edge and the phone just added to it. He lifted his eyes to his mate, watching him furrow his brow in worry.

Yuuri sighed as he considered once more what he’d take to the heat hotel. He had two sacks full of their bedding from the last few nights. A bag held some of Victor’s clothes. Another, Yuuri’s. Tucked away underneath those clothes lay a ziplock holding precious things of his daughter. He pulled it away and opened it, breathing in her scent. Just a little longer, baby girl. Stay safe.

Victor peeked into the room. “Are you still mad?” he asked cautiously.

The omega set the ziplock back into the omega. With a frustrated sigh, he lifted sharp brown eyes to study his mate’s face before answering. “I’m not mad. Not at you. I’m irritated that my life has been and still is being dictated by this Donovan person.” He then sighed, sitting down on the edge of the bed, dropping his head into his hands. “This guy...asshole...ripped me out of my life, forced me into a heat and changed my life forever. If that weren’t enough, now that I’m finally in a place where I can make peace with what happened, and even move on happily, building a family that I love, he’s still inserting himself. And I know it’s for violence. I can feel it.” Yuuri paused for a moment, catching the blue eyes of his mate. “I’m...scared, Vitya. And I hate every moment I’m forced to be separated from Shizuka. I...want this all to be over.” He released a sob with the last of his words and then Victor’s arms were wrapped around him, a kiss pressing into his shoulder.

The task lay forgotten as Victor tugged Yuuri into his lap, the omega sniffing into the turn of Victor’s neck. The alpha continued to rub circles into the younger man’s back as he slowly settled. They remained still longer as Yuuri breathed in and out, Victor’s scent slowly filling the space.
Akio straightened up the apartment and then eyed it critically. This was Mari’s brother coming over and he didn’t want to give a bad impression. Not that Yuuri hadn’t been there before. But he was bringing his mate.

In the corner humming away sat his computer. He’d agreed to this Skype meeting with the Detroit investigator, Olivia Benson, promising to bring Yuuri in so they could compare notes and get up to date.

His doorbell rang and he crossed the room, dusting his pants off and giving the room another glance before opening the door. Outside, he spotted the kid brother of the most stubborn love of his life...really, stubbornness ran in the family...and his mate.

“Yuuri, Victor. Come in.”

Yuuri offered a wan smile as he came into the room followed by Victor. “Are we early?”

“Yes. She hasn’t initiated the call as of yet. Perhaps you both would like some water?” he looked a little embarrassed as he added, “I don’t keep a lot of variety. My life is busy and I don’t eat at home a lot.”

“Water is fine,” Yuuri answered graciously with Victor nodding in agreement.

They were situating themselves in front of the computer when the call rang in. Taking a deep breath, Yuuri connected the call. The Detroit investigator’s face filled the screen. “Olivia! It’s been some time.”

“It has...how are things in Japan?”

Yuuri glanced around before sighing. “Things have been better. My daughter has been sent away for her safety.” He watched her frown with concern.

“We’ve been putting things out to make it look like she is still here,” Victor added.

Sharp grey eyes narrowed, “Good. My sources tell me that he’s traveling under an alias with his
brother...and that they may be in Japan.”

Yuuri shivered, glancing towards his mate as he remembered the feeling when he woke up. “I think he is here,” Yuuri hissed.

“We’ve booked an anonymous stay in a heat hotel soon,” Victor murmured. “I’m hoping our identities aren’t leaked.”

“Well, if it’s any consolation, he doesn’t appear to be the most brilliant of culprits,” Olivia assured him. “He left a trail a mile wide before disappearing and plenty of evidence to convict when he does resurface. But he does have monetary resources, family money that can easily turn to cash and move around in ways that we can’t track. He could also hire someone that might have greater skill.”

“Do you have an eye on his assets?” Akio asked.

“His assets in the States have been frozen, and his family’s state-side assets are watched closely. But he has others off-shore, as does his immediate family, and they aren’t good people. He could easily maneuver resources to take provide himself with funds, hire thugs, and stay hidden,” Olivia pointed out.

Yuuri leaned into Victor’s arms. Victor tightened his arms around Yuuri. “A friend thought maybe someone was spying in the windows earlier.”

Olivia took in a deep breath, and the frown that formed on her face only confirmed that she had suspected this already, “I wouldn’t put it past him...be careful, Yuuri.”

“Did you find anything out on the one that was stalking Phichit?”

“He wasn’t among the ones we initially investigated, which means that this could be much larger organized gang than we believed.”

Yuuri pulled out of Victor’s arms, shaking the alpha off. “Gah! I hate this! Constantly looking over my shoulder, worrying about someone that should have no claim on my life!”
“Be patient, Yuuri...after what he pulled at Thailand, he’s drawn international eyes, Interpol has his identity and is willing to arrest and extradite, as is the Japanese government. He will slip up...and then the biggest fight will be who gets to prosecute him first.”

They exchanged goodbyes and broke the skype connection. Yuuri noticed that Akio looked as if he wanted to say something but held it back. He walked them to the door and bid them a safe walk home. Outside the air was still warm, Yuuri looked at his mate who was struggling to be brave.

“I’m sorry I pulled away from you.” He reached out for Victor’s hand, and smiled as the long pale fingers wrapped around his. “It’s just, sometimes I remember how strong I was, how independent I was. I wish you had met that Yuuri.”

Victor pulled them to a stop. In the distance the cries of gulls died in the soft lull of the tide. “I met the strongest Yuuri there is. I met a survivor, a champion. I’ll never know a strength greater than yours.”

Yuuri stepped into a hug, pulling the man closer to him. Rising on his toes he took Victor’s lips to his own.

Arriving home, Yuuri needed to hold his baby. However, that was impossible. The next best thing was a Facetime call to see her. Yuuri studied the baby babbling to him in the phone screen. Another baby seemed to be answering in the background drawing a smile from the omega’s face. “She seems...happy.”

“She is most of the time. I know...she sometimes looks for you and Victor,” Lawrie answered carefully. “That’s when we pull out things that smell like the two of you. It calms her but we tried to keep some things sealed up so the scent doesn’t fade.”

“Thank you,” came out in a whisper as Yuuri’s eyes strayed back to his daughter.

“I know this is hard,” the other omega murmured. As teary brown eyes lifted to meet his, he continued. “I also know you have great fortitude. You survived so much...and you will do anything to protect your daughter. Just a little while longer.”
Yuuri hugged himself and he offered a weak smile. “I needed to hear that.”

Yuuri tugged at his clothes uncomfortably in bed before turning to Victor. “It’s so hot,” he complained.

The alpha groaned in his sleep before the sharpness of his mate’s scent filtered up through the blankets. Blue eyes popped open and took in Yuuri’s state. “Lyubov moya, I think it’s time.”

“It can’t be time,” he groaned. “The doctor told me it would start around the twenty-fifth.”

“Around, love...not on. They aren’t that accurate.”

Yuuri sighed, more annoyed than anything until Victor reminded him, “The sooner we get past this, the sooner we can return to our baby girl.”

“Let’s do this then,” the omega stated, shoving his hands through his sweaty hair. He made a face before adding, “Do you think we can take a shower first?”

Chuckling warmly, his mate answered, “I’m sure that can be arranged.”

Yuuri finished his shower with efficiency while Victor loaded the car. The alpha then showered while Yuuri dressed and slipped downstairs to tell his mother. She took the “baby” from him and into her room. “Don’t worry, my son, we’ll keep up the ruse. It keeps little Yurio quite busy.”

“I’m sorry to abandon him but...”

“It’s the way these things go. It will be fine.”
Thanks for reading! Love to hear from you!
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

Heat!

Chapter Notes

Thanks to BluSkates, we have another chapter ready. Although this is a heat chapter, remember that Yuuri’s previous heat was traumatic. Therefore, expect some throwback towards the rape. (TRIGGER WARNING)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yuuri felt apprehensive as Victor drove through the darkened streets. His eyes scanned each shadow looking for anything, the low light of a lit cigarette, the glow of a phone, the reflection of the moonlight on glass. He was so focused on looking for what he couldn’t see that he missed the police car parked in plain sight. A siren pulled him from his thoughts as Victor slowed the car to a stop and rolled down the window to greet the officer.

“You’re out rather late, sir,” he began. The eyes left Victor’s face and went straight to Yuuri’s.

Victor looked at Yuuri, then returned to the officer, understanding how this looked. “I know...my mate is going into heat. I’m taking him to our hotel.”

The officer leaned in, shining a light on the passenger. Victor felt the invasion keenly, and was barely able to hold back his growl. Then the light lowered and the voice of the officer changed, lightened, “Oh, is that Katsuki?”

“Hi, Ryota,” Yuuri waved. “Have you talked to Akio?”

Flicking off the torch, the officer seemed a little embarrassed, “Hai. He said to watch out for people who didn’t belong.” He smiled to Victor, “I spotted the silver hair through the window.”
The omega offered a pained smile. “Victor is my mate...please let us go quietly and don’t mention seeing us in public. I’m trying to maintain privacy.”

“No problem.” The young officer’s face dropped, looking at the other uniformed patrolman across the car. “My partner radioed it in, though.”

Yuuri sighed, “I’m sure you can sort it out at the precinct. Now...can we go?”

“Oh, of course. Good luck with your...ah...heat…” The officer backed away, rubbing his hand on the back of his neck in embarrassment.

Tank watched as the car pulled back onto the street and resumed it’s path. The good of living in such a little town was that the road and their destinations were easily identify. A very private, a very nice omega heat hotel was only a few miles down that road. He took out his phone.

“So, your little omega’s going into heat.”

On the other end Jaimie scratched at his skin, adjusting his jeans as a semi hard cock pulled uncomfortably. “I’m well aware of that. Trust me.” He had been able to keep the echo open, it had been hard, and disgusting, but he managed to do it. Because of this he had felt as the omega’s body was preparing for another breeding cycle and his own body in kind.

“So I won’t be able to get you any updates on the omega, those hotels are locked down pretty tight and the security’s good.”

“You sneak around that onsen easily enough.” Jaimie barked through the phone, a wave of nausea hitting him as the scents from the food vendors in the street started prepping for dinner.

*It’s like the whiter they are the dumber they are.* “Yeah, sneaking around a traditional onsen isn’t that hard, these things are designed to be open parts of the community. A heat hotel, that’s like the fucking opposite. Pretend your country actually cared about omega and female safety, it would be like that.”
“Well, since it’s that easy, we’re changing the plan…”

As they resumed their journey, Victor grumbled, “So much for sneaking out of town.”

“It’s not like our absence wouldn’t have been noticed by morning,” Yuuri muttered. “Just get us there and checked in.” He curled into the door as a wave of nausea went through him. “And order us something mild to eat. I’m not feeling so well.”

Victor nodded, his expression grim as he focused on the tasks his omega requested. “Consider it done, my Yuuri.” He turned down the dimly lit road that led to the private hotel. Pulling into the porte-cochère, Victor climbed out and guided his omega inside the heat entrance.

Greeting them, an omega clerk found their reservation. “Oh, you have our best suite. Come with me…it’s ready to go.” She guided them to the room and stayed nearby while Victor checked the space over.

It was strange testing the security of the place where his omega would nest for his heat. However, instinct took him through the process, and something deeper recognizing that there was a very real danger in their lives helping Victor approach the job more thoroughly. He released a low growl as he approached the emergency exit but testing it, he determined it was secure. Still, he scented it thoroughly. Finally satisfied, he went back into the entry and led his Yuuri into the space.

The brown eyes traveled around the sterile room with thought before he set to work pulling the nesting materials out of the cabinet. Over his shoulder, he commanded, “Get our bags and don’t forget the sacks holding our sheets.” And as Victor approached the door, the omega added, “And food, please.”

Victor nodded, starting to feel a little rattled that he didn’t anticipate these things. His inner alpha began to pine that he wasn’t taking sufficient care of Yuuri’s needs, not anticipating what the omega would want quickly enough. He stumbled out of the room and secured the inner door before exiting and securing the outer door. It took all of three trips to bring in the bags as Victor refused, correctly, to allow the staff to assist him in carrying them. Fear that their scents would get on the items, even through their thoroughly scrubbed and gloved hands. It might have seemed a needless step, but these items were carefully scented and made ready for this nest. Once they were in the egress, Victor took his car keys to the vallet’s station and they promised to put the key into their room’s mailbox once situated. Although checking in under false names and an anonymity clause, Victor tipped the two employees he encountered generously for their privacy, not catching
their embarrassed faces as tipping in Japan was unheard of, and the staff took their jobs very seriously. He then managed to pick up the food his omega requested before returning to the room.

Yuuri looked up as he opened the inner door and started bringing in the sacks of bedding. Victor set the meals on the nearby table. “Eggs and rice with ginger tea to settle your stomach,” he offered.

Yuuri breathed a sigh of relief. This he could eat. He abandoned the nest for only a moment to climb onto the cushion next to the table and moving close to his alpha. “Thank you, Vitya,” he murmured as he snuggled into Victor’s space. The low growl answering him caused Yuuri to turn and nuzzle into Victor’s neck.

Feeling better that Yuuri was cared for, and reciprocating his affection, Victor tilted his head to the side to let Yuuri move closer, a tongue darting out to lick along the gland. Victor groaned but then redirected the omega. “Eat...you need your energy.”

Yuuri nodded, turning back to his food. He consumed it without grace, swallowing the tea after. He then washed up before returning to the nest. He almost had the foundation laid out.

Victor used the computer screen to dial up their future meals while Yuuri became the marvel of efficiency as he assembled the nest. Soon their sheets and pillowcases were incorporated followed by well-selected clothes from their laundry. The final portion was the plastic bag that held baby’s things. Yuuri pulled it out and hugged it to his chest before unzipping the closure. He didn’t mingle it into the bed but placed it on the shelf next to the bed, open so that the scent could release in Yuuri’s heightened state but still in plastic and protected. He then surveyed his work. Satisfied, he crawled to the edge of the nest and reached towards the alpha.

Victor saw the eager brown eyes, wide in hope, and the slender fingers of the graceful hand calling to him. His heart elated at the sight of the omega, asking him, allowing him into the nest and he had to hold himself steady to keep from surging forward. Stepping forward he helped Yuuri over the edge. The omega began tugging at Victor’s clothes, whining in frustration. Victor’s hands were under Yuuri’s thin shirt and on his smooth skin, sliding up as his mouth began exploring Yuuri’s earlobe. Their shirts dropped to the floor and soon Victor was kneeling before Yuuri, guiding his pants down around his hips. Yuuri was already hard, precum beading on the head causing Victor to lick his lips. Stepping out of the loose pants, Yuuri backed up towards the nest and then turned back to Victor to give him a pointed stare.

Victor took the hint and soon was out of his pants, taking the omega’s hand to steady Yuuri as he climbed back into the nest. Then the omega turned back to him and invited him into the structure. Victor stepped over the walls with care and then tumbled down with Yuuri into the springy under mattress. Yuuri released a surprised giggle before reaching up a hand. Cradling Victor’s cheek,
eyes full of love met Victor’s blue before Yuuri leaned in to kiss the alpha licking into his mouth.

Victor groaned as he pushed his omega into the mattress. Yuuri reached down, tracing his finger up the inside of Victor’s shaft, licking his lips hungrily. “Need you,” he pleaded.

Popping the lid on the lube, Victor squeezed some of the slick gel into his hand. He then reached down, taking that beautiful omega length in his hand. “I’m here,” he answered even as Yuuri gasped. The omega began fucking into his grasp. Victor could feel the heat coming off Yuuri’s body in waves even as the younger man desperately sought his first release. A moan of frustration slipped from the omega. He needed something more.

Victor took his free hand, pulling Yuuri’s leg over his shoulder before sliding it down the cleft of his ass. Yuuri’s body was ready, open for him. Finding what he was looking for, he began a slow penetration with two fingers. He heard the cry of frustration as Yuuri tried to push down against those fingers while at the same time seeking the friction of the hand. The heady scent greeting the alpha from his slick made him want to turn Yuuri over and claim him but he knew he needed to hold back just a little longer. Yuuri’s body was ready for multiple orgasms, while Victor’s alpha body was not as strong, nor would it recover as quickly. He wanted to ensure this would be wonderful and fulfilling for Yuuri, which meant he would wait to seek his own pleasure after first helping his mate.

Then he heard the keening cry of Yuuri’s release as that body tightened up around him, his cum releasing onto his belly. Yuuri’s veiled eyes, his panting breath, his completely wrecked expression pulled Victor in as he pulled his fingers free and moved up that body, capturing those lips. Yuuri slid his fingers along Victor’s scent glands along his neck as the alpha buried himself into Yuuri’s shoulder.

Everything Yuuri was feeling at this moment was both too much and not enough. He burned bright like a flare in the dead of night and Victor felt he would consume them both. Unable to hold back any longer, he reached down to prepare Yuuri to receive him, the omega seeming to understand that much groaning answer. Three fingers, then four, Victor was tempted to insert a fifth to make sure Yuuri could handle him. He could feel his rut breaking through, and for the moment, he held onto the smallest thread of control.

Yuuri knew on an instinctive level the alpha was holding back, and somewhere deep within the omega he knew he didn’t want that. Leaning in to scrape his teeth along the alpha’s collar bone he sucked a mark into his shoulder. Victor’s eyes slipped back as he blinked rapidly through the claiming action. Yuuri seemed intent on making sure Victor belonged to him.

And Victor felt that thread tightening as he inserted the fifth finger. Yuuri licked at the mark he made, a hum of satisfaction coming from his lips. Raising smoldering brown eyes up to meet
Victor’s gaze, the alpha felt that thread snap. His rut took over and he wanted, needed, at a primal level to please his omega, leaving the little body beneath his spent and satisfied. Victor’s last thought was to ensure that Yuuri knew he was claimed and worshipped.

There were certain rules established between them, rules that changed as Yuuri healed, trusted more. Still, certain rules remained. Don’t startle Yuuri. Don’t grab him from behind. Don’t hold him down. Don’t slip into bed behind him without his knowledge. Don’t forget to listen, to pay attention, to watch for panic.

As the rut scent washed over Yuuri, he stilled. *It’s just Victor. It’s just Victor...*

Yuuri could feel the panic washing over him, his thoughts began to jumble in his head, Victor’s hands suddenly felt foreign. There was a scent in the room, no… not in the room. There was a scent in his nose, present and inescapable. He was choking on it. He pushing against the body kissing down his own body, weakly at first, then stronger as he felt trapped. The body above him, stretched across him, pinning...him...down. Then Yuuri found his voice. “S-stop!” Pushing once more, Victor shook out of the haze, worried eyes moving up to his omega and seeing the terror in his eyes.

The alpha pulled back, moving away from Yuuri to the opposite side of the nest. “Yuuri...it’s just me...are you with me?”

“S-stay back!” Yuuri moved to the edge of the nest on hands and knees, his body language showing he was ready to fight.

“I’m back. I won’t come any closer, Yuuri. Not unless you want me to,” he promised. He remained frozen in motion, everything in his body screaming rejection but he pushed that aside and focused on the omega.

Yuuri studied him, watching him for any movement. Victor remained still, holding Yuuri’s eyes, waiting. *With Yuuri, one must wait.* Yuuri backed off of his aggression, his fist going up to cover his mouth as he released his sob. “I-I’m sorry.”

Victor released a breath he’d been holding. “It’s okay, solnyshko. Can I come closer?” He waited, watching Yuuri. The omega slowly nodded and he crawled a little closer but didn’t reach out. Not yet. “Talk to me, sweetheart. Where are you?”
Yuuri looked around the unfamiliar room and felt too disconnected to say for sure. “I-I don’t know.”

Victor was grasping at straws, his eyes casting about for something to ground Yuuri. Then he spotted the ziplock on the shelf. “Yuuri, behind you on the shelf is a bag full of precious things. I want you to take it down and hold onto it.”

Yuuri slowly did what he was told and as his eyes took in the items, he reached in the bag and pulled out one of his daughter’s pajamas. Breathing in the scent, he whispered, “Shizu-chan…” He then snapped his eyes up to the alpha. “My baby...where…” Panicked eyes began to move around the room once more.

Victor held up his hands, calling Yuuri’s attention back to him. “She’s with Lawrie and Chris...they are watching her through your heat. Do you remember?”

Yuuri struggled through the haze to make the connection. Something was off, something was interfering...something was mixing the signals. He felt...pressure...something inside. Looking up, he realized it wasn’t this alpha. “H-help me,” he whined, reaching for Victor.

Victor closed the distance, pulling Yuuri in. “What do you need?” he whispered as he held Yuuri to his chest. Yuuri sought his scent, sought the combined smell of the two of them, the signs of Yuuri’s recent claiming, then rested his head on Victor’s shoulder as he panted through his panic.

Yuuri’s scent was souring, and worsening by the minute. He patted the side of his head, moaning, “H-he’s in my head.”

Victor frowned at first not understanding, then slowly, forming an idea. Could he be close? Could he be...competing for his omega? “What do you want me to do?” he asked cautiously.

Yuuri struggled to find the words, knowing the answer lay deep within him buried in his instincts. “Need...connection.” He made a face knowing that word was not quite right but was also perfect in the idea. He then reached behind his neck and ran his fingers along the recently healed bond mark. “Again...while...in me.”

“You need me to bond you again?” Victor confirmed.
Yuuri nodded. “Get him out of my head.” He then curled into Victor’s arms, tugging at his hair.

Victor held him close, his hand resting on the bond mark, his cheek on Yuuri’s head as he thought about the best way to accomplish the task. “I need to...do that from behind.”

“I know,” Yuuri answered, his voice so small.

Victor winced at his lover’s voice, so fragile. *I don’t want to do this.* “I don’t want to scare you again,” Victor breathed, fighting through his own fear. Hurting Yuuri was one thing he swore never to do.

Yuuri tilted his head back, taking Victor’s eyes with his own. “Only way...has to be. I can...be brave, I need this.”

Victor loosed his hold on Yuuri as the omega turned himself slowly. The slender hands held onto parts of the alpha, refusing to break contact, directing the touches to his own body. “Do I...need to knot you?”

Yuuri leaned back into Victor’s arms, back to the broad chest behind him, as he considered that question. “I think...yes.”

Victor swallowed, kissing the shoulder before him. The idea of being locked into Yuuri while the younger man fought his terror was Victor’s own nightmare. The alpha wasn’t sure he could handle being any, even the tiniest part, of Yuuri’s fear. But he would not let that other alpha have him. He watched Yuuri lean forward, onto his elbows, the back arching down, his ass presented in invitation. They both felt...deflated...something in the moment taken from them. Swallowing once more, he followed Yuuri. He leaned forward, kissing the small of Yuuri’s back, sniffing back his tears. “Mine,” he whispered.

“Yours,” answered Yuuri, looking back over his shoulder, this time offering a reassuring smile. “I know you...you won’t hurt me. I trust you with every part of me. It’s that echo...it has me scared. I need you to complete this bond, make it stronger so I can be rid of him.”

Victor nodded, swallowing, drawing in a breath of courage. “I can do this.”

Yuuri nodded. He felt a little clearer now that he’d made the decision, now that he understood
what needed to be done. He arched his back downward and lifted his ass once more. “I’m ready.”

Victor moved closer, his hand resting on Yuuri’s hip, the other bracing himself as he lined up and slowly began to breach the omega. He nipped Yuuri’s skin as he moved further up his body. Part of him screamed against this and the other part demanded it. In his heart, he hoped he was doing the right thing. Victor rested his forehead on Yuuri’s shoulder, fully seated within him.

“Vitya,” Yuuri breathed, his voice clear, almost commanding. “I’m okay...I need you to move, love.” To make sure his mate heard him, he ground back into him. “Please...” he begged.

Victor’s initial movements were slow, mechanical, his fear of hurting Yuuri almost freezing him. In his mate, he could see a mixture of fear and pleasure in his expression. The fear vanquished over and over as the brave omega shoved it away. Not for the first time did Victor admire Yuuri’s courage. He didn’t feel worthy. He felt...honored...that Yuuri would choose him, that Yuuri let him be a part of his life, to be father to his child, to be his mate. As he worked through those thoughts, he found more purpose in his movements. He wasn’t staking claim on the omega. They were coming together as one, becoming a partnership, a mated pair, spouses, connected...

He felt Yuuri’s release as the omega cried out, Victor tumbling after. The omega held onto his presence of mind enough to say, “Now, Vitya. I need your teeth in me now.”

Holding Yuuri in his arms, feeling connected to Yuuri as his knot expanded, he licked at the gland that bonded them. *This should solidify the bond, locking everything else out*. He wondered abstractly as his teeth broke the skin if this would be something they shared every heat. He felt the body in his arms convulse and Victor realized Yuuri came once more. Shifting Yuuri to his side, they remained connected, Victor cleaning the wound with his tongue, his saliva strengthening the chemical receptors.

Flynn stared at his brother as he fought against the heat in his body. “Fuck, I didn’t sign up for this. You didn’t say you were about to go into rut.” He moved away, gathering up a few of his items, a disgusted look at his brother on his face.

Jaime panted through a stomach cramp, “Not...true...rut. False rut. Omega...in heat. Need...him.”
The younger brother felt his stomach lurch, his older brother had always been strong and confident but since this fucking omega got away he’d been acting dumber. With the last ounce of pity he could spare on his pathetic brother he set the water bottle near the alpha and decided it was time to take a walk. “Whatever...I’ll see you later.”

Walking along the darkened highway, he took out his phone and connected to the Japanese spy. Let this just be the fuck over so I can go home and chase some tail of my own. As the call went through, he asked, “Are you any closer to getting the kid?”

Tank smirked, “That’s not going to be a problem. But the price just jumped up.”

Flynn rolled his eyes, “Twice what we’ve agreed upon, but not until delivery. I want this over and done with...and soon.” He hung up and looked up at the building they were sharing. Getting a bed warmer shouldn’t be this hard.

Hiroko hugged herself, the lunch crowd having been exceptionally busy. It was the crowd, and the over work, and the stress of keeping up the act. She told herself that small lie, anyway. Really, she felt emotionally wrung out. She couldn’t imagine how her son felt. The triplets had been over earlier to “play with the baby”. The game was starting to make the grandmother feel uneasy. She knew it was something more than stress, something was coming.

A video played as they set the next scene, the baby’s giggles echoing through the house. Turning to Yuuko, she suggested, “I think baby is going to come under the weather.”

The young mother raised an eyebrow. “Oh?”

Hiroko hoped the childhood friend of her son would understand her meaning. “I just...have a bad feeling. I think...it might be good if you distance the girls from the onsen for a few days.”

Yuuko frowned as she thought about it. “We were talking about visiting my mom in Fukuoka. Maybe it’s time.” She forced a smile, hoping that Hiroko knew what she was doing.

That weight lifting off of her shoulders, Hiroko only had to think about getting Yurio someplace safe. Maybe Mari had some ideas.
In a run down home outside of town, Jaimie stared glassy eyed into the dusty light of the room, motes drifting in the sunlight. Deep within him was a cold, empty hole. One that he had kept Yuuri’s bond in, even after their separation he had been able to keep the echo going. Now with it extinguished, he felt hollow. Alone, he glared at the door his brother fled through. So much for blood ties.

He groaned in pain, fathom pain filling his mind. He could feel his final connection to Yuuri breaking. Frustration filled him. “If I can’t have you, I’ll take our baby.” Tightening his hands in determination, he began to plot. “Then you’ll come crawling back.” He laughed, hysteria overcoming him as he thought about the pain the alpha would feel when he ripped that bond out of the omega, when that omega submitted to him.

Chapter End Notes

Wow! Things can't just go smoothly for these guys.
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Things are moving all around Hasetsu and Yuuri is finishing his heat.

Chapter Notes

We are so close to the finish! Enjoy this chapter and thanks to BluSkates for the attention given to this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

With Victor gone, the blonde was able to take advantage of the bike, riding it to the rink for some time on ice. It was nice to get back on the ice, practice his footwork routine and send a video to Mila who would then show it to Yakov. Yurio grumbled that his coach was still such a Soviet Era figure trying to live in the 21st Century. He waved goodbye to Nishigori and pedaled over the bridge away from the rink. It was a clear day and the skate had allowed him a few hours distraction. However, on the way home, he noticed a car that seemed very interested in him. He turned the bike and took a shortcut across the park but as he exited, he spotted the car once again. In a panic, he made a direct line for the inn, abandoning the bike near the gate and running into the kitchen entrance.

Hiroko reached out, catching the jittery boy and had to force him to slow his words down in order to follow them. “It was a dark car. Kept following me. I don’t know who it was but he was even there when I cut across the park.” Yurio allowed himself to be held in her strong arms, unaware of how much the little boy he still was to the mother.

Hiroko thinned her lips, pulling the boy in for a hug. Smoothing down the blond hair she felt trembles very like those of her own Yuuri when he panicked shake through the tiny body. “You’re safe now,” she assured him.

However, as the boy parted, headed upstairs for a quick shower and a rest, her thoughts were buzzing. Yuuri would never forgive himself, nor Victor...or even myself, if something were to happen to that boy. She moved out to the front lobby and called Minako. “I think we need to think about sending Yurio back home.”
What’s happened?” Minako asked, ready to give the boy a what-for if he had been misbehaving that badly. *Hiroko is an angel and she certainly has the patience of saints...well, the patience of a follower of Shinto.* Regardless, the ballet instructor was already grabbing her keys and preparing to head over to the inn.

“Well, he seemed to have caught the attention of someone and I’m worried it’s that man that is after the boys.”

If Hiroko’s voice hadn’t been ghostly soft, then what she had relayedterrified the dancer. Minako was moving more quickly, headed down the stairs of her home over the studio. “I’ll call his coach and arrange it. Do you need my help breaking it to the kid?”

“I’ll call if I do.” She sighed, knowing that Yurio would never be able to argue with Minako and it felt good to have her on her side. “Can you imagine the guilt Yuuri would carry with him if something happened to the child?”

“Let’s not borrow worry. Not yet.” She was opening the door to the studio and briskly walked to her office in the back. “So..what do you plan to do?”

“I think our little Shizu-chan is about to come down with a summer cold.” Hiroko used the same lie that satisfied Yuuko. “I think that Yurio might have brought something home from the rink, you know how dirty it can be.”

Of course Hiroko has already planned it out. “That’s perfect. Okay...I’ll make sure the arrangements are made and will even take him to the airport once it’s in order. Keep him at home.”

“Good. I’m counting on you.”

*You always can. When everyone gave up on me you stood by me. Even when I drink a little too much and laugh a little too loud. You...see value in me. “I won’t let you down.”* She paused before she added, “Maybe see if Mari could accompany me. That way if we are followed, we’d be more formidable.”

In her studio, she moved across to her desk where she had a small wallet that held important contacts. Among them, she found an old number for Yakov Feltsman. The old man was so set in his ways, she could count on him to never have changed his number. He’d have to be forced by
some governmental override. As she connected the call, she momentarily kicked herself for not calculating the time but the answer came loud and clear. “Da?”

“Coach Feltsman, this is Minako Okukawa in Japan. I was Yuuri’s ballet teacher from when he was five on.”

Across the line she could hear the older man moving about, he cleared his throat. “I know who you are. My wife recalls you from when she danced.” Minako had to admit she was impressed with both of their memories. “What is wrong? Has Yura gotten himself into trouble?”

She sighed, if only it were that simple. “Well, no...and he’s been wonderful. It’s just that...we’re concerned he’s not as careful as he should be. We’re actually more concerned that he can’t be careful enough.”

The old coach grunted in understanding. “This sport attracts some weirdos. It’s time for the boy to come home. I’ll make the arrangements.”

She breathed a sigh of relief and collapsed into the chair. “Thank you...he really is a good boy.”

“I know.” There was a moment of quiet and then the sound of a closing door before Yakov continued, “We...haven’t seen the men around here. Not for a few days.”

Minako gazed out the window looking at the street beyond, “I think they are here. Someone was following Yura earlier. It’s really got Yuuri’s mother worried. Both Yuuri and Victor are locked away...”

There was a clearing of the throat and an “I know” cutting off that sentence. Minako couldn’t help smiling to herself. “Send me a text with your email so I can forward his itinerary. If he argues with you, tell him I’m calling him back, time to get back to work.”

“I will...and thank you.”

“No problem. I’ve been dealing with that child for some time.”
Minako could imagine. As she disconnected the call, she sent the requested text then sent another to Hiroko to let her know things are being arranged.

Flynn stared at the headlines out of Detroit, feeling his world rocked. *Millionaire Stabbed in Lover’s Quarrel.* It was his own name that drew the alert. The newspaper stated that they were looking for the man’s heirs. Rubbing the back of his neck, he felt the urgency to leave but didn’t know what to do. *They are watching for us back home. Here, Jaimie might give us away. But he’s my father...and I need to get home.* He looked up as his brother came back into the house. “What’s with you? We were supposed to lie low.”

“He took my omega. He was mine, I hunted him, I marked him. That fucking priss punk had no right to take what is mine.” Jaimie punched the wall, the paper surface not putting up any resistance. He’d been prowling the alleys, a hoodie pulled over his head, but he had been out and drawing attention to himself. He received a few curious glances but no one came close enough to take note of his features. However, in the small town, the presence of an obvious American was easy to spot to the locals. But no matter where he went, how close he got to the onsen, there wasn’t a whiff of the omega.

Flynn glanced down at his phone, quirking his lip in worry. “It’s not like you can challenge him for the boy. They’re bonded and mated, he won. Move on, we can get you another one. We might as well go home.”

Jaimie spun on his younger brother, “Home? What the hell for? To be arrested and dragged before a jury?”

“There’s no evidence implicating me...I need to check on Father.” Flynn moved to his suitcase, opening it. The older brother paused. “Why? What do you know?”

Flynn tossed the phone across to his brother who caught it with ease. Looking down, Jaimie narrowed his gaze at the news. “That’s what he gets for bedding that foreign trash,” Jaimie sneered. “Dad was a softy, always wanting to keep the pets in bed with him. Gets all possessive over his favorites, and needs to keep them around constantly.”
Flynn rolled his eyes. *Isn’t that the very reason we’re here?* “Whatever. Fuck this. I’m going home.” He moved towards the door. Glancing back, he added, “I’ll call after I find out how Father is doing.”

Jaimie nodded, feeling a numbness set in. His world was unraveling and he wasn’t sure what to do about it. *I need my daughter. That dirty omega shouldn’t have kept her from me. Running and pushing me away when I was ready to offer him the world. Ungrateful sow.*

Yuuri panted through another orgasm, Victor’s shaft buried deep within him, sucking another mark along his shoulder. After the bond closed Jaimie out of Yuuri’s head the heat turned into what both men had wanted. Victor was able to lavish his omega with pleasure, releasing out orgasm after orgasm. Yuuri, feeling more confident, teased Victor’s body with his own, scenting the alpha and pulling him close to his body at every chance. As a result they were both a mess, littered with hickies. But even now, his mate held him with the gentlest of hands, even though they were squeezing into his hips. He thought he’d be sore, weary of the knot, but it gave some relief, wrapped up into his mate’s embrace while he felt the waves of pleasure.

He forced himself not to think about the number of condoms they had gone through. Victor was thorough, making sure his mate was safe. Once he’d realized how he’d neglected this responsibility, he rebounded and saw to it with good measure. Yuuri wasn’t ready for another baby, not yet...although one day.

“I think...it’s going down,” the alpha offered. Yuuri’s eyes fluttered, his breathing sharpening. A warm chuckle bubbled out of Victor. “You have one more in you?” Yuuri nodded, his hand tightening around Victor’s.

“So...much…”

“I know you’re sensitive, love...come for me one more time.” Victor’s voice was a sultry purr in his ear.

Yuuri curled up around Victor’s hand on his length. With a moan he cried out with his release. “H-hold me,” he murmured.

“I’m here, my Yuuri...I’m here.”
Yuuri shivered in Victor’s hold. The alpha pulled the cover over the two of them. His knot finally gone, he slipped out of his mate and the omega turned in his arms, snuggling into his warmth and scent. They dozed quietly for awhile, breathing one another in, the calm reassurance of mate settling into their bones.

Yura took the news about as well as expected, he shouted, insisting that he was grown and could take care of himself. He was determined to stay, to keep up the ruse, and beat the crap out of the guy following him. It wasn’t until Hiroko put her hand on his shoulder and cornered him with that motherly look that he knew he was defeated. In a last ditch effort he resorted to his hurt little boy voice. “But I promised Katsudon and the old man,” he argued.

“I know…and I believe you’ve more than fulfilled your obligation,” Hiroko argued.

“But…I’m family.” He winced inwardly at the childlike whine in his voice.

“And you’ll continue to be family. But you have family back in Russia that needs you as well.” Hiroko turned the chin to take those green eyes in.

“And you also have a job to do,” Minako pointed out from where she leaned against the door facing. “Yuuri would expect to meet the best skater on the ice.”

He turned towards his latest creation, having taken his time to make it look as if she’d simply crawled out of the blankets after a nap chasing down her uncle Yura. He felt his lip tremble and didn’t want to walk away. This was how he contributed, how he protected his niece. “It’s…not fair.” He knew he’d given into the most childish of protests but he also knew that Yakov had already bought the ticket and he couldn’t get out of it.

“Please do this for me,” Hiroko asked gently. “I’m already worried about my own son. Let me know that you are someplace safe.”

Of course, playing the mom card was definitely not fair. Yura sighed and nodded in agreement. “I’ll go…but plan for me to come back with Katsudon this summer.”
We’ll look forward to it,” she answered with an affectionate smile.

Yuuri woke up after his long rest, not quite into his next cycle. Victor stretched and reached for his phone, checking in with home. The omega picked up on his frown, leaning in to ask, “What’s wrong?”

Victor knew better than to hide or sugar coat anything with his mate and answered squarely. “Your mother has arranged to send Yura home...apparently someone was following him.”

“Oh, no…”

“He’s fine, it just scared him...and thankfully everyone took it seriously.” He quickly texted back.

Vitya/ Thank you so much. We’re glad to know he’ll be safe and sound.

Mama H/ Don’t worry. We’re taking care of things here. Is Yuuri okay?

Victor smiled at her motherly concern and quickly answered everything is fine. “Mari and Minako are going to personally see him off and make sure he doesn’t slip away.”

Yuuri smirked, thinking of the rambunctious blonde. “Good luck if he tries.” He knew he’d never gotten away from either of them. There was no hope if they tag-teamed.

Hiroko and Toshiya saw Yura off that morning, packing him and his belongings into Minako’s car. Mari took the passenger side seat, turning around to check on the pouty but resigned blond.

Toshiya leaned in and patted his shoulder. “Make sure you call to let us know you’ve arrived.” He
glanced back at his wife and added, “She worries.”

The boy smirked and agreed. “Da, I’ll call. Thanks for letting me stay.”

“You’re always welcome,” the senior Katsuki answered.

Hiroko leaned in and hugged him. “Be careful.”

“I will,” he promised.

Then they were pulling away and Yura watched them as long as possible through the back window. He swallowed the lump in his throat. He knew Yuuri and Victor would be in Russia before long but it still felt like he was leaving his family. With a sigh, he turned back to the front and saw that Mari was watching him.

“They’ll be okay, squirt,” she reassured him knowingly.

Yura blinked and realized that was what he was trying to do with his small action...make sure his family, all of his family, was safe. He didn’t want to risk losing anyone. He drew a shaky breath and nodded, not trusting his voice.

“Yuuri is aware of the dangers...and that is a dangerous Yuuri. He was caught off guard the first time. But I know my brother and he will fight. And Victor has his back as well as the rest of us.”

Yura huffed. “The old man…”

“Loves Yuuri more than himself...and because of that, he’ll keep Yuuri safe and prevent him from taking any unnecessary risks. Trust in their strength.”

The blonde nodded, agreeing. Victor would lay himself down for Yuuri...and Yura suspected he’d do the same for himself.
Yuuko herded her girls into the inn. She’d said her goodbye to Yura the previous evening but she was uneasy about someone following Yura. She brought a basket holding the rest of Shizuka’s belongings.

“I think it’s time for the girls and I to visit my mother in Fukuoka,” she announced as she handed the things over to Hiroko.

The older woman held her eyes with understanding, before turning to the teacups she had set out when the mother entered the room. “I’m glad. I’ve been worried about them as well.” Her eyes rested on the girls, smiling affectionately. “Such brave and courageous girls.”

“They terrify me at times,” Yuuko admitted.

“It seems like they grow up afraid of the world like Yuuri or fearless like Mari.”

“But Yuuri...he learned to overcome that fear,” Yuuko pointed out.

“That he did. And now look at him!”

Yuuko smiled as she thought of her friend as she sipped her tea. Now...to get past this last hurdle.

Yuuri stretched out in his nest, his hand hitting something soft and giving it a squeeze earned a squeak from Victor. Smiling he looked over to see his mate checking on their daughter. “How is she?”

He turned the phone that showed her playing with her new best friend Gabe. “I think she’s doing fine...which lets us focus on you.” Blue eyes surveyed the other man with worry.

“I’m...fine. But I’m tired of reacting. This is my fight and I want to go on the offensive. The biggest battle feels like it’s been won...I don’t feel him at all. Not with our bond, our connection,
redoubling after this shared heat. It’s like there was this mental battle but now there is no longer this third party competing for my attention. But that might make him more dangerous.”

Victor hummed thoughtfully. He was Yuuri’s knight, his protector, but he recognized Yuuri’s strength as well. But Yuuri didn’t want him hurt in the process.

Jaimie now no longer had his brother to reign him in and keep him grounded in reality. In the warped mind of the man, Flynn was no longer there to hold him back, to keep him from simply walking into that inn and taking what was rightfully his. Armed with Tanaka’s contact information, he began to plot how to take this further. Ranting in the pale darkness of the abandoned home, he laid out his plans to whatever demons were listening. “I’ll take my daughter and get rid of her traitor of a mother entirely. If I can’t have Yuuri, I sure as hell won’t let that other alpha have him to enjoy. Once I have the girl I’ll use her to lure out her mother, steal them both away. Then my fun can begin, maybe, if he’s compliant I’ll let him please me a few times only to watch him die a little more as the girl grows to love her alpha father. Yeah, I’ll wait until I see all the light in those eyes die out, then I’ll start hacking away at the body. A tortured death for that traitor.” He then grinned, growing excited at how he would take every pleasure out on the omega prolonging his death.

Yuuri and Victor caught their breath, lying back in a short rest between cycles. The haze had long since disappeared and now they just enjoyed one another. However, the reality of their lives seeped back in during the breaks. As Victor wiped them both down, Yuuri broached a subject with the alpha. “I don’t think he’s going to just give up. We need to set a trap and draw him out so that he can be caught.”

Victor looked up uneasily “Yuuri that’s incredibly dangerous…” his protest died as he saw the determination in his lover’s eyes. He also knew they couldn’t keep living like this, constantly looking over their shoulders. “What do you have in mind?”

It was almost four days later when they emerged tired and achy from their hotel. Yuuri was both reluctant to leave the safety of the heat den and anxious to return to his daughter. However, that couldn’t be done yet...not until they took care of their very dangerous problem.
Victor was thankful for valet service and soon, they were loaded up. Both craved familiarity...and a text home confirmed a promise of katsudon. In the darkness, they drove towards the inn, both pairs of eyes watching for someone that didn’t belong.

Arriving, they hauled the bedding and other things that needed to be laundered, loading the industrial sized machines before heading into the dining room where Yuuri’s family greeted them. They were already sitting down for dinner and Yuuri came up behind his mother and hugged.

“Thank you for looking out for Yura,” he murmured.

“Of course, dear...he’s your friend...and family,” she answered warmly before rising up to get their meal in order. “Sit...let me take care of the two of you. Then I want you both to rest well.”

They agreed, accepting her ministrations. They had a plan to put into place but that would require police cooperation. As they curled up in the familiarity of their own bed that night, Victor sent a text.

**Vitya/ Let’s meet tomorrow and talk about how to eliminate this threat.**

**Akio/ Come by my office. I’ll commandeer a room where we can talk in private.**

**NOTES:**

In this world, a rut could last for days if prolonged artificially. The same with a heat. However, typically, a rut lasted around half to three quarters of a day with residual effects of protectiveness and care. For an omega, their heat operates in waves. The first round is around the same length as a rut followed by a long rest. Then they have more rounds of slowly decreasing lengths and intensity. Typically short rests cycle between them with a long rest every third or fourth cycle. It is usually completely done within three and a half days.

Chapter End Notes
Hmmm....
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

Things start to unravel for the Donovan clan...

Chapter Notes

Hey! Did you think I forgot you? Well, I did. But thankfully, BluSkates and I were able to find what I had written, polished it up with some sadistic love and get it ready for all of you to read. The next two chapters are ready and edited as well.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Flynn disembarked at the airport glad to be on American soil and back in Detroit. He had traveled under his alias to avoid giving his brother’s location away. While the false identity served its purpose, and served it well, protected them both from the law he’d be glad to get rid of the name Silas McElroy. He stalked through the airport to the lobby, greeted by the familiar sight of his name on a placard held by two hands in an ill fitting suit. The family sent a car to meet him at the airport. Shaking his head he remembered to send a text, checking in with his brother, still abroad.

Flynn/ So far, it’s quiet. No cops.

Jaimeson/ Be careful.

Flynn rolled his eyes. I’m not the psycho obsessing over some plain-ass omega. And he thought to rub it into his brother that unlike him, Flynn had nothing to worry about.

Flynn/ Technically, I’m clean. Nothing criminal.

He waved down the driver, signalling him over with a condescending snap. “Hello, Brentley.”

“Mr. Donovan. Shall I take your bag?” The driver didn’t wait for the answer, knowing the
petulant boy who had grown into a spoiled privileged douchebag. “I’ve just checked on your father and he is still stable.”

Flynn pursed his lips nodding quickly, “Thank you. I’d like to head directly there.”

“Of course, sir.” He took Flynn’s one backpack and dropped it into the trunk turning back as he heard the sound of the high pitched silenced shot. The family had been one of the most powerful alpha dominated families in America, one that reached back to the Mayflower. As such they hired guards who understood violence. Brentley’s fingers were already secured on his side arm as he swung around. “Down!”

He turned, expecting to see the pseudo alpha cowering, but was met with a sight guaranteeing termination of his employment. He stared in horror as the puddle of red around his employer’s useless son expanded in sickening stickiness, feeling pale and panicked himself. Backing away to spare his shoes the taste of blood, he looked around hoping to spot the source. That’s when he noticed a person advancing with deliberate steps. The driver weighed the options, stay and fight. He would easily take this opponent, but for what? He would be chewed out by the ridiculous family?

It was then that the approaching figure stopped. He raised his hands, one with the gun still smoking. Brentley assessed the scene quickly. This far above his pay grade. He returned the gesture and with only another glance towards the quickly dying man next to his car, he returned to the driver’s side and drove off. “I don’t get paid enough for this.” He knew that Flynn had some shady friends. Both boys were useless privileged thugs at best. Perhaps one of those had caught up to him for some deal gone bad. Regardless, it was beyond the driver’s paygrade.

Watching the Mercedes peel away, the hitman approached the boy as if he was checking to make sure he was okay and slipped the identification from the man. He then was pushed aside by true emergency responders, airport employees, a doctor who had been lucky enough to pass by the scene, and he slipped away as they argued over whether he was dead or not. But the boy continued to bleed out and the hitman smirked as he confirmed his kill. *Silas McElroy.*

Yuuri stared at the information pouring out of media sources and gave his mate an uneasy look. At this moment, he was glad both Yura and his daughter were far away. “So...the little brother is dead. Mistaken identity. The father is also dead, fatal heart attack. What does this mean regarding the one that kidnapped me?”
Victor frowned as he read through one more article over Yuuri’s shoulders. “It means he has nothing to lose.”

“Fuck!”

Victor nodded in agreement. At least they weren’t sitting back waiting for something to happen. Looking around what was typically an interrogation room, they were utilizing all of their resources in this operation. Takeshi would join them soon as well as Mari and Minako. Yuuri begged his mother and father to maintain things at the inn and they reluctantly agreed but only after they had pointedly told Akio to keep their family safe.

Akio walked into the room giving them each a cup of tea. “The others are on their way. Detective Benson also contacted me with some updates of interest to you. It seems the senior Mr. Donovan was stabbed by an omega he had shipped over from India. That was the reason he was hospitalized to begin with.”

Yuuri’s eyes widened as he took in the meaning of the word, “Had shipped over? Like...he was...bought?” Yuuri clarified.

Akio grimaced and sat down, “That’s about the jist of it. Benson’s trying to reach the mate on record, the mother of the two boys that we’ve been after...although it appears the youngest one is no longer a problem.”

“Nor the father...I guess learning his son was shot was the final straw,” Victor muttered. “A monster raising monsters.”

“So...what do you have in mind to get the last monster off of the streets?” Akio asked quietly.

There is a certain poetic justice in life, like Karma getting the last laugh as things start to come together for the right people and fall spectacularly apart for those in the wrong. And perhaps the moment when Donovan Senior learned that the hit was paid out only for it to be his son under an adopted alias that was killed was that last laugh towards the club. Donovan Senior, still in the hospital due to the stabbing, suffered a massive coronary. Death had been sitting in the corner, watching as nurses and doctors flitted about the room in that jerky way the living always move in.
Their bodies, so full of life she could smell it, practically pulsed. Soon the man in the bed grew aware of her presence. Time slowed, a beeping sound blared quickly, then dulled as she held up a finger to shush it.

In horrible, beautiful slow motion a nurse’s hand let go of a tray, it would take a century for the dish to fall but for now it was only the dying man and the woman come to collect him. He admired her beauty, her great and terrible beauty. She rose, coming closer to him.

A doctor’s foot entered the door, in three years he would be by the bed and all would be gone. The man felt relief as his body gave away, falling back, falling through the bed. He reached a hand toward her, the beautiful, slender hand, of alabaster skin, shining perfection.

A young doctor flicked the defibrillator on, the electricity trickling slowly through the wires, like the molasses that had taken so many in Boston that day. She smiled fondly, thinking of the one little girl that she had lead away as her mother lay engulfed and screaming silently all those years ago.

The senior looked up, saw the smile, that radiant perfect smile on those lips of ruby red. She took his hand, the fingers trembling at her cold strength and it was then that he saw the demon that she was. The horror she brought to the world. He opened his mouth to scream but it shattered away into a million terrible little pieces, each flickering out into the universe, bursting in pain and fire. And she vanished in the smoke.

The room came alive. Time started immediately, the plate crashed to the floor, the electricity whined as science tried to fight something older than the planet itself in a losing battle. And the man lay dead in agony, a twisted expression of horror painted on his face. The doctors in their naivety assuming it was the pain of his heart finally giving out. Pain was nothing next to the fear of the pale rider.

The now one and only Donovan stared at the report. His brother was dead, gunned down in a parking lot. His father lay dead in some morgue, a bloating corpse. Rage boiled over in his body. There was no love in him, nothing to mourn...only to revenge. The object was obvious to him. This had to be Yuuri’s fault. It was simple. If that worthless, trashy omega hadn’t decided he was more important than the alphas in his world, hadn’t dared to defy him, to deny his right to claim him and use him as his right, they wouldn’t be going down this path. “Someone needs to put Katsuki in his place!”

He had no more contacts. One by one, all of the active members either dropped out or were caught. Tanaka wasn’t necessarily trustworthy...he was simply all the alpha had. He picked up his phone and made the call.
Tank blinked his eyes, the heroin running through his veins felt like a smooth song of summer. But the phone ringing that fucking tune his exgirlfriend loved was pulling him from the warmth of drug slumber. Beside him, a white woman...practically a ghost smiled as she ran a finger over his arm. He giggled childishly as little goosebumps appeared. Turning he looked at the phone.

**Jaimie / Hey, I need you to hunt down Katsuki and take him for me. Right. Fucking. Now!**

Tank laughed at the text. Holding the phone up to air he talked to the lady, “Oh, fuck this.”

She smiled and nodded, pointing at the second loaded needle waiting for him.

Smiling back he typed the words she mouthed and tossed his phone off the bed. It fell, lighting a few times, then dying out. He pulled up, taking the second hit and watching her eyes dancing in the light as the world slowly went black around him. The last sight were here eyes, they looked like foxes...

He snapped up, coming out of it with a terror. He looked around the room quickly. *Where the fuck?* The woman was gone. Shaking his head he realized she was never there. He reached down to see his phone blinking rapidly with too many messages.

Yuuri stood in plain sight talking to the street vendors, his “daughter” in a pram covered by a screen to protect her from the sun. Her gurgles could be heard on the device tucked into the blanket and a few of the older ladies fuzzed, wanting to see her but Yuuri deflected apologetically. “I’m sorry, she is just getting over a cold and I’m keeping her somewhat isolated.” They understood and gave warm smiles before walking away.

Victor stood nearby with Takeshi under the guise of talking about something on their phones while they actually waited for the signal from Akio. They knew who to watch for, the Japanese reprobate had been less than skilled while following Yuuri around and spying on the family. A text came through, although the words were odd, and Victor called Yuuri over.

**Akio/ No Tanaka but there is an American jogging in the area. Be on the lookout.**
The omega situated the pram in the shade and took about three steps away to look at the screen. The man jogged into the area, casually knelt down close to the “baby” and tied his shoe while he listened to the baby noises. Spying out the corner of his eyes, he could see Yuuri engrossed in an argument with the other two men. Glancing around to see if anyone else was walking, he casually stood up and began to roll the pram away.

He was over a block away when he heard the excitement of a mother looking for his missing child. He smirked. All of these weeks, and his patience paid off. The alpha took off running with the baby.

Across the street, Tanaka watched with a smirk glad to be rid of the racist Americans but couldn’t help but think, white men have no chill.

Turning on his heel prepared to casually walk off, he found himself face to face with a uniformed officer. He sighed, realizing now it had been a trap. “I didn’t do anything.”

“You’ve been seen casing the town and stalking Katsuki and the family.”

“Yeah, well, the American is the real danger. His name is Donovan...and that dude is off his rocker. Why would Katsuki risk his kid like that?” He turned, his eyes meeting the Japanese man.

The officer smirked. “He didn’t. Come along.” Handcuffed, Tanaka was led off while they talked about kidnapping and conspiracy to commit kidnapping, the tattooed man arguing he didn’t help him out.

Jaimie sighed with relief. He’d shaken them all off and now squatted over the cart pulling back the veil. His baby had grown quiet but he didn’t think anything of it. I’m her sire and she knows it. Of course she wouldn’t cry. However, as he looked into the pram, his eyes widened as he shouted, “Katsuki! What the actual fuck!”

Lifting the doll out of the cart, he turned her over and spotted the recorder. Then he realized he was not alone. A tracking device also lay hidden within the folds of the blanket and now he was surrounded. “Yuuri…” he whispered even as he was forced against the wall, handcuffs on his hands.
“So what’s going to happen?” Yuuri asked as he sat in Akio’s office finishing up the paperwork.

“Thailand and the U.S. are both pressing extradition but the U.S. has a greater claim. Olivia has already dropped the packet and they have a liason already talking to the Japanese government. Now, we would typically be cautious about releasing to the U.S. due to capital punishment laws. However, in this case, with it involving one of our own, they just want him taken care of.”

Yuuri let out a breath, “So...he’s gone either way.”

Akio smiled, “For a long, long time.”

The omega leaned into Victor, feeling his body sag as the weight is lifted off of his shoulders. “It’s over.”

“Let’s check in with the attorneys,” his mate began, “then make arrangements to go get our daughter.”

Phichit sat in front of his computer talking with his old roommate while Yuuri packed up their things preparing to go home. “I was surprised when Olivia called.”

“So...they were brothers...the one after you and the one after me. That’s...so crazy.” Phichit shivered slightly, remembering the scent of being hunted.

“Well, at least the one that was stalking me is now dead...ironic that it was from his own father’s hitman.”

“Or poetic justice,” Yuuri suggested.
“Karma at her best!” Phichit added.

Yuuri came around and sat in front of his own computer. “I just hate that he managed to separate me from my daughter.”

“Hey, don’t think like that. You had someone you trusted to take care of her, and you kept her safe. It was selfless what you did. You’ll be back with her soon.”

Yuuri leaned towards the screen studying his best friend’s image, “It can’t be too soon.

With the attorneys stepping in to ease the way with the extradition, Yuuri put everything on silence with the trial. He needed a few days to rest mentally and focus on returning to his daughter. Victor was surprised when Yuuri’s phone was found on Donavon’s person. It was returned to Yuuri but the omega backed up his pictures and the important things and traded it in. He wanted nothing that Donovan had touched. Now they were boarding a plane. It was time to return to his baby girl.

Notes:

**The Great Molasses Flood**

Chapter End Notes

Credit to BluSkates for the lovely supernatural elements and for breathing life into Tank. It's scary how she can torture a character. ;) And well worth the wait. Enjoy, give some love to Blu, and let me hear from you. I'll have the last two chapters up by the end of the week.
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

Coming home...

Chapter Notes

Almost done! I hope you enjoy the wrap up.

The motion of the airplane seemed to rock Yuuri’s body into a lull as he curled up next to Victor, after all of the excitement in Hasetsu he was crashing with exhaustion. His one thought was on his daughter, soon he would see her again. Hold her tiny form, smell her rich scent, and hear her beautiful voice. Focusing on her, he let everything else go. In the rest of the world, people were negotiating where Jaimeson Donovan would face trial lawyers first...and Yuuri knew he’d have to fly over and testify. He was committed to this course, needing to see the man who tortured him for days and continued to torment over the following two years put to justice. He also knew his attorneys were still fighting the university that had sold him and so many others out. A whistleblower in the accounts department came forward, shedding light on the final bit of evidence, several high ranking administrators and deans had accepted bribes from the “Club”. Yuuri grimaced thinking of a school that advertised omega safety as a perk of campus, only to learn that they were actively brokering in human lives to the rich and powerful families.

Beside him Victor pulled him tighter, feeling his body stir in agitation. Yuuri settled, breathing in his mate’s calming scent. He was safe, and Phichit was finally safe, his own stalker dead in a freak assassination due to mistaken identity. The man that helped the Donovan brothers in Japan was facing charges but he appeared to have only operated as a paid spy...one that wormed out once the stakes became higher. However, there was an intent to kidnap his daughter, which told Yuuri he was right to send her away.

Disembarking, they didn’t worry about baggage claim. They only had their carry-ons, the rest having been sent to Russia. Backpack slung over his shoulder, he made his way through customs, presented his visa, and then his face lit up. Just beyond the clear door stood Chris, Shizuka bouncing in his arm excitedly reaching for Yuuri. The omega didn’t even wait for Victor but broke into a run to greet her.

He scooped her into his embrace and she wasted no time finding his scent, a repeated
“mamamamama” on her lips.

Chris chuckled, watching them both with affection. “She knows where she belongs.”

Yuuri looked up with happy eyes even as Victor reached his side, a warm hand on his back and smiled gratefully. “You don’t know how much this means to me.”

“I do...and I know you would both do the same for Gabe.” Chris thought of his own child, the fight to bring the little boy safely into the world. “Now...let’s go home so Lawrie can see you and be satisfied you’re okay.”

They followed Chris out to his Maserati Levante, Yuuri choosing to sit in the back with his daughter. Victor whistled as he ran his hand over the Italian luxury SUV. “Is this what you’re driving these days?”

Chris preened as he lowered into the buttery leather seats, “Well, I had to upgrade with Gabe...the two seater wouldn’t do anymore...and with a few ad campaigns, it is actually affordable.”

“Affordable? You drove a GranTurismo before.” Victor was well aware of the Swiss skater’s love of speed.

“I’m an adult now!” he defended.

From the back seat, Yuuri smiled at their argument. It’s nice to know that out there somewhere is someone even more extra than Victor. He turned back to Shizu, his hands constantly checking his daughter, letting her drool around his finger, his wrist sliding over her and making sure she smelled like him. Not that she didn’t naturally carry his scent. But time away from her father allowed the other scent to peek through and he hated that he could smell Donovan on her.

They pulled into the garage and Chris led him inside the gracious and elegant building, causing Yuuri to smile. He knew Chris’ family had money and that Lawrie was successful in his own right but the apartment was luxurious and spacious, big enough for a baby grand piano as well as tasteful and comfortable furniture. Lawrie rose gracefully from the stylish sofa to greet them, Gabe bouncing excitedly to see his friend again, not that they hadn’t spent the last week together. Laughing, the Swiss mother scooped up his son and carried him over leaning in to kiss Yuuri’s cheek. The little boy grabbed the hands of his playmate and the girl squealed happily as their fingers tangled in friendship.
“We’re so glad you are here and safe. We came home once we heard the news that they caught him,” Lawrie stated warmly.

Yuuri shivered slightly, “It was unnerving how close he was willing to get to me. We put the carriage about a meter away.”

“At least mon petit chou was here and safe,” Lawrie breathed with a sigh.

“When I think about how he could have gotten his hands on her…” Yuuri began but Lawrie placed his fingers over the younger mother’s lips.

“Hush, now...we won’t think of these things. They didn’t come to pass.” Lawrie led Yuuri into the space and that was when the younger man realized that dinner was in process, his stomach growling in answer.

Yuuri glanced down, embarrassed. “I think that with stress, I didn’t eat so well,” he confessed.

Lawrie clicked his tongue in disapproval then smiled. “Mon ami, you must take care of yourself. Don’t worry. I have mehlsuppe simmering in the pot and then we’ll spend the evening with raclette on the grill and visiting. I know you have an early flight in the morning and are eager to get home but we should enjoy one another in the moment.”

As they settled down to enjoy the elegant meal, Yuuri hummed in pleasure. Victor now held their daughter making sure he scented her well, as she began demanding it as soon as she caught a whiff of him. She was eager for some of the basel flour soup, enjoying the warm flavors. Sighing, Yuuri lamented, “She’s no longer a baby anymore, eating adult food.”

Chris chuckled warmly. “She eats some but she only has those two front teeth so far so that does limit her.”

Lawrie nodded and added, “She does seem to enjoy a variety of flavors. Some babies are reluctant to new things and she embraces them eagerly. That shows courage.”

“We have such a variety of cuisines in our home, she’s grown up smelling them and occasionally
sampling them when Yuuri wasn’t looking,” Victor pointed out, winking when Yuuri snapped his napkin at him.

Yuuri shifted happily in his seat, silent for a moment. “Home...I can’t wait. It’s been so long but now...I feel safe.”

“And you’re a happily bonded omega ready to enjoy his family,” Lawrie pointed out as he redirected the spoon in his son’s hand. “It seemed like it wasn’t until we bonded that I finally settled into our home even though we shopped for it together, decorated it together...it wasn’t home until we were...connected.”

Yuuri hugged himself as he considered that thought. “I don’t know...I think once I decided to make Victor my home, nothing else mattered. But I love to be surrounded with my things and familiar places. I don’t mind adventure and spending time with friends and family, but I think part of me is really a homebody.”

“Nothing wrong with that,” Chris pointed out before leaning forward to tickle Shizu’s chin. “As long as we get to occasionally see our niece.” Yuuri smiled as the little girl giggled at the love surrounding her. She had so many uncles looking out for her.

Yuuri yawned as he waited to board the plane, leaning against his mate. However, the warmth snuggled into his chest made it all worth it. He kissed her hair now pulled into a pair of pigtails that stuck straight out on either side of her head. She smiled and cooed and snuggled in closer.

“I think someone is very happy to be with her mother,” Victor murmured, pressing his own kiss into Yuuri’s hair.

“You wouldn’t have thought it last night when I had to separate her from Gabe. It’s like they knew it was goodbye and were inconsolable.” It had been a hard night settling her down to sleep, puckers and tears with no breast to comfort her. Yuuri was tempted to try but knew his milk was dry. She sucked at her sippy cup then handed it to her mother before taking it back again. Finally, she cuddled between them, holding onto Yuuri’s fingers as she sought Victor’s scent.

“Imagine years later, the two of them skating as pairs,” Victor dreamed.
Yuuri chuckled. “You and Chris would fight over who’d coach them.”

At that, Victor snorted. “We might fight over them but in the end it would be you they listened to,” he pointed out.

Yuuri pressed a kiss into her hair. “I’d be okay if she chose another path, though...something other than skating.”

Victor heard the worry in his mate’s voice but chose not to press. “I don’t care if she’s a skater, a dancer, a pianist, a doctor, an artist...as long as she’s happy. I want her to have all of the choices in life. But she will at least be familiar with the ice.”

Yuuri laughed once more at his mate. “Of course, she’ll know the ice. She’s going to grow up on it. I just don’t want to pressure her down a path.”

“Agreed,” Victor murmured as the line began to move forward allowing them to board the plane.

For once, Yuuri didn’t complain about first class, enjoying the extra room he had to see to his daughter. Usually on short flights, Yuuri would say it was a ridiculous luxury. Today, he wanted to focus on Shizuka.

“Soon we’ll be surrounded by the dogs and Yura,” Victor pointed out.

Yuuri chuckled. “I look forward to all of them...I’m sure the boys will stop by and Mila and Katya and Pyotr...and you know Yakov and Lilia will need to make sure their granskater is in good order.”

Victor grinned. Their home would be a revolving door of love that day and he would take it all in stride. “Maybe I’ll set out a veggie and fruit tray.”

Yuuri hummed thoughtfully before stating, “You can but I think Yura and Mila are already cooking. They were arguing between piroshkis and okroshka soup. I told them they should probably make both.”
“We’ll set everything out on the bar with some pickles and veggies and everyone can eat as they come and go,” Victor decided. He was homesick and very glad to see his family/friends.

For once, no one met them at the airport and they caught a ride home via taxi. Yuuri was glad to have a few more moments of quiet as they rode into the city. They shuffled into the building loaded with their daughter’s gear as well as their own backpacks and were greeted by Dmitry and Ivan who relieved them of their daughter, fussing over who would carry her. Yuuri and Victor exchanged glances and rearranged the gear following them to the elevator. As they stepped off, Yura quickly snatched away the baby and the other two chased after him. When they entered the apartment, Mila had her and was giving them all a stern lecture on how to treat a lady. As they put things away, Georgi arrived and cooed at the baby, breathing in her scent and expounding about the beauty of babies. Everyone else rolled their eyes.

True to prediction, they soon had a houseful and Victor didn’t need to worry about setting up the bar as it soon filled with a Russian potluck, everyone glad to see their friends and relieved they were all alright. Yuuri could keep an eye on his daughter as she went from person to person but his only constant was the little poodle who crawled up into his lap demanding attention. He hugged him close and whispered, “I missed you too, Vicchan.” Next to him sat Victor with Makkachin half stretched across his lap. A soft smile settled on his lips. They were home.
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

The ever after...

Chapter Notes

Just a wee bit more to tie up loose ends...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

---

Epilogue

The attorneys asked Yuuri and Victor into their office. The criminal trial had gone easily with the mountain of evidence against Jaimie, but it was easily won when, against his attorney’s advice, he took the stand to defend himself. The judge had to call a stop to the insane rant the delusional young man launched into against Katsuki, omegas, and all foreign born people. The jury convicted on all counts in less than an hour.

The civil case followed quickly and was settled out of court. They had won their suit but there was other interesting news. Since the last remaining heir to the Donovan estate was destined to spend the rest of his life in prison everything was left to Shizuka. Jaimie’s own words damned him to poverty in prison as his only living relative, the little girl who would know only Victor as a father. In her name, Yuuri donated large portions of it to omegas recovering from sexual exploitation and rape, the home providing a place for them to find their feet again. He set up funds for recovery of omegas being trafficked around the globe and supported THORN, a online organization dedicated to stopping human trafficking in all forms that had been founded by the American actor, Ashton Kusher, one of the most famous omegas in the world.

Jaimie’s mother came out of hiding and supported the decision, teaming up with Silas’ mother and sister to oversee the shelter. Of course, Jaimie’s mother chose to continue living in Tahoe and although he connected with Yuuri and met Shizuka, he decided that his presence brought more pain to the family than comfort and quietly retreated. Predictably, Jaimie didn’t do well in jail. Although he thought he’d land in a white collar facility, he found himself in general population of a maximum security facility with other alphas...prison is an interesting microcosm of the population. As Tolstoy would point out, the best way to understand a society is to examine its prisons. Society doesn’t like those who prey upon children, women, and omegas. They are an abhorrence. They are
a reminder that in each of us lurks an evil better kept in check, pushed into the dark corners of our souls, hidden in the furthest reaches of the bedroom closet. However, prisons, as Stephen King so rightly pointed out, have no closets. Prisoners consider it their obligation to take out societies unspoken rage on those monsters and the evil of the closet, the darkness of the soul, was unleashed on Jaimie...nightly. He ended up taking his own life.

Through a blurry eye that barely worked, having been blackened and bloodied too many times, Jaimie saw the form of a woman. She was white...not European, but white as a sheet. Long dark red hair trailing behind her. He had spotted her from the corner of his eye many times that month. Sitting at a table as men played cards, standing in the yard as they walked in endless circles, peering at him from the shelves in the library. It was late in the night that he removed the shiv and stuck it deep into his thigh. Immediately the world turned warm, time slowed, and she came again, that long, dark hair flowing all around as if in water.

He reached out, seeing for the first time how warped his fingers were. They had been broken, each one, each bone on that first night and reset at odd angles. She leaned in, the skin so pale it was translucent. The veins under the skin, pulsing black. It was her eyes...they were black and spreading.

Somewhere, a universe away he heard his roommate call for the guards, the sounds of a prison waking to riot.

She held her hand out and smiled. It was sickening, the lips turned to slithering scales, the teeth behind them sharpened to points, the pulsing black under her skin throbbed. Jaimie cringed, hearing it...feeling that beat in his brain, the dull throb pounding him.

Doors clinked open, rough hands grabbed at him, but the woman was there, pulling him out of himself and shattering him as she had done his father. He remembered pain, like being pulled to piece...to shred as each molecule in his body suddenly let go and he burst in pain and torment and was no more.

A guard whose daughter liked figure skating was there that night. He watched as they pulled the lifeless corpse from the room, dragging what was a man like a sack of dirty laundry. That night he sent the only fan letter he would ever write.

Years passed, Yuuri would take out and reread the letter. I wanted you to know, he was dead, he stabbed himself. My daughter watches you on youtube and we’re getting her lessons. She’s not any good but she loves it. Ain’t that what it’s about? What you love?
It most certainly is about what you love. Yuuri watched his daughter grow and blossom, the little one loving the ice. He and Victor didn’t have any more children, choosing instead to dedicate their time to other children building their love of dance and skating. Victor now ran the training facility, working with the national and world team skaters but Yuuri handled the younger skaters. True to their prediction, Gabe and Shizuka decided to become pairs skaters and by their debut in novice they had three countries vying for the skating teens. They decided to skate for Switzerland because that country was the first to legislate protections for omegas. They split their training time between Switzerland and Russia, gaining from all three skaters’ experiences as well as Shizuka’s many uncles (and a couple of aunts).

Chapter End Notes

All done! Let me know how you liked it!

End Notes

Thanks so much for editing this work, BluSkates.

For the rest of you, I have written a number of stories and encourage you to dive in. I don’t always respond to comments on completed stories but I do read them. Thanks so much for all of your support. I feel greatly encouraged to continue writing

SO here is my tentative posting schedule:

Monday - The Inconvenient Truth
Wednesday - Songs in a Minor Key
Friday - Gravity
Sunday - Sirin's Call

And so much thanks to those who do my edits and beta reads and encourages me to keep going...BluSkates, Magrathea, and Songbirdsara...and all of my great readers. You make this fun.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!