Ten Past Six | Johnten

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Summary

If Ten could describe his relationship with Johnny he would say it was like being in the same city and yet being in a long distance relationship without there being an actual relationship. Because if Ten was head over heels in love with Johnny, he was pretty sure Johnny was as oblivious to his feelings as ever.

Notes

Hello everyone! We are back with a new NCT fanfic. Put your hands up for Johnten! Hope you enjoy it :)}
See the end of the work for more notes.
Ten looked at the clock for what seemed like the hundredth time in the last five minutes.

“You can just call him?” Kun said, looking up from his Uno cards.

Ten gave him a glare and placed a plus four on the pile. “Call who? I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Ouch, no need to take out your frustration on me and I’ll get you back for this plus four.”

“Yeah, right. I have,” Ten pretended to squint at his cards, “like three more of these so keep threatening.”

Two minutes and some bickering later, Ten had spaced out yet again, eyes fixed on the clock.

Kun threw down his cards with a sigh. "Seriously, Ten, just call him."

"I can't call him until it's at least twenty minutes past the recording. Otherwise, it will seem like I was waiting for him to get free."

"But you are. You were waiting so just do it," Kun said, calmly.

Ten glowered at him. "You just wait, Qian Kun. Just wait until the day you have someone you like as desperately as I do and then I'll see if you're so calm. Ugh, you have no idea how it feels."

Kun scrunched up his nose. "Anyway, it's twenty minutes now. You can call him without sounding like you were waiting. Which you were but that's, of course, not the point, yeah?"

"Haha, don't be sarcastic with me. I'm the only sane one in this dorm. You're lucky you have me."

"You're as much a baby as the dreamies." Kun smiled before leaving the room.

Ten watched him leave and then picked up his phone. He dialled Johnny’s number and thought about how far Johnny was. All the way over in LA. Their recording for Jimmy Kimmel Live would have finished by now. Johnny and the others would have changed out of their stage clothes. Maybe they were already in the van, traveling to their next schedule. He hoped Johnny would pick up.

"Hello?"

Of course, he would. He always did.

"Hey, Johnny!"

"Tennnn! Guys, it's Ten. Say hi, everyone!"

There was a chorus of loud excited hellos and shouts and he smiled, already feeling at ease. Johnny must have moved away soon after because it quietened down.

"How are you, Ten? Missing me?"

Always. "No, you dork, I have the spawns of Satan to keep me entertained."

"Hey, the dreamies are my babies!"
"That's what I said." Ten laughed.

"Ehh, so mean."

"How was your day? You were recording for that show, right? What was it...was it Jimmy Kimmel or Jimmy Fallon?" Ten was happy Johnny couldn’t see him blushing at this obvious lie. He couldn’t show he was too interested.

Johnny laughed. "Jimmy Kimmel. It was real fun. LA is fun, overall. I miss my favourite photography buddy though."

"Take lots of photos for me," Ten said.

"I will. How was practice?"

"Gruelling but I think we're done with the tough parts. You're going to love the dance break."

"You got to show me as soon as I come back. Take care of your knee though. And eat well."

Ten rolled his eyes. "My knee is totally fine, John."

"Still, you should take care."

Ten could hear someone calling Johnny in the background. He said, "You have to go."

Johnny heaved a sigh. "Yeah, there's another performance. It's okay, we can still talk. Go ahead. How was your day?"

Ten could hear manager-nim saying something. He nodded to himself. "It's fine. You take care of yourself. Remember to drink lots of water. See you soon. Bye bye."

"I'm missing you, Ten, like always."

"Johnny, go. You'll get late."


Ten stared at his phone after they'd cut the call and realised that he was feeling even worse than before. Johnny felt so so far away. Something very much like loneliness gripped him and he laid back on his bed, staring at his phone, grimly looking through his messages. There was one from Johnny but he had already seen it in the morning.

[6:10 am]

**Johns:** Good morning, have a lovely day, Ten!

He looked at his reply. What time is it there? Your brain still on Korean time? XD

[6:12 am]

**Johns:** haha, jetlag?

Ten hadn't replied after that. He had fallen asleep. It was too early in the morning to be awake enough to know what to text. In fact, all of Johnny's early morning messages were too early to reply to.
He typed a reply now. *I miss you too.*

Johnny's reply came within seconds. *Hey, I'll be back soon. We can try out the restaurant Jaehyun recommended.*

*You'll be too busy.* He shook his head. He couldn't send that. He erased the words and typed again, *I'd like that, yeah. Good luck for the performance. You'll do well.*

He added before he could think twice. *I'll be watching the AMAs tomorrow. Fighting!*

**Johnny:** *Ooh, I'll get nervous if you're watching haha*

**Johnny** sent you a picture!

It was a selfie of Taeil and Johnny, making crying faces.

**Johnny:** *Missing you.*

Ten replied, *I know, I know, I'm too charming.*

He looked up from his phone as he heard a crash from outside his room.

*Gotta go, I think the dreamies are wrestling again.*

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[6:10 am]

**Johnny:** *Good morning, I look hot today As usual ;)*

**Ten:** *I'm sleeping*

*But fine send me a pic whenever and I'll be the judge of that ;)*

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Johnny was busy clicking a hundred pictures in a variety of poses when Taeil tapped him on his shoulder.

"Johnny, I'm pretty sure your phone is running out of storage space with all that narcissism you’re feeding it."

"I'm just looking for the perfect picture, Taeil hyung," he groaned in response. "I can't seem to find the right lighting or the right angle."

Taeil quirked an eyebrow. "Why? Do you plan on—"

They stopped talking as Jungwoo walked past them, talking loudly on his phone. He had been pacing around the room, talking worriedly into his phone since the last five minutes and his volume had progressively increased.

"Woah, that's the first time I've seen him this excited. What's he so worked up about?" Johnny asked.

Taeil shrugged. "It's Lucas, I think."
Jungwoo was nearly shouting now. "Oh my god, Lucas, I'm telling you it's right there. You always keep it there. Have you even looked? Under the pile of shirts in the second shelf of your cupboard. Of course, you don't think it's there. Now, go check."

There was a pause for a few seconds in which Jungwoo stood in the middle of the room and exhaled into his phone, looking partly irritated and partly worried. Then, he put the phone away from his ear.

"Lucas, you're going to damage my eardrums this way." His voice softened, "You found it, right? You should have called me right away. What would you even do without me?"

Lucas must have said something because Jungwoo snorted into his phone. "Don't act cute with me. Yeah, okay, love you too. Bye. Don't forget to eat. Yeah, me too. Bye bye."

Jungwoo slipped his phone into his backpocket. He was smiling as he turned around, only then noticing that there were other people in the dressing room. His smile dropped as he tried to appear nonchalant. "Lucas couldn't find his passport," he said, walking out quickly.

Johnny groaned. "They're so adorable. Ugh, how is everyone in cute relationships!?"

"Speaking of cute relationships," Taeil began, "I was about to ask you. You taking all those pictures to send to your boyfriend?" He winked. "I know everything, John," he said in put-on Ten voice.

Johnny spluttered. "Ten's not my boyfriend."

"Whatever you say, whatever you say," Taeil said, laughing. He waved as he left the room.

Johnny ran a hand over his face and sighed.

"Why isn't he your boyfriend?"

Johnny jumped at the voice. He looked around with a frown, only then noticing that Doyoung was sprawled across a chair, quietly busy with his phone. He looked up from his phone once with a questioning stare.

"I-I didn't know you were here."

Doyoung smiled. "It's alright." He put his phone down. "So, why isn't Ten your boyfriend? I mean, you two...would look good together."

Johnny looked away. "You guys shouldn't assume things. We're best friends. That's all."

"Sorry if it looked like I was intruding," Doyoung said, apologetically.

"You don't need to apologise. It's okay." Johnny looked at him. "Why are you so quietly sitting in a corner?"

"I like peace?" Doyoung laughed. "And I have a horrible headache."

"Maybe stay away from that screen for a bit?"

"Okay, Mom." Doyoung rolled his eyes before going back to his phone.

"That's my line!"

Doyoung waved him away, attention on his phone again.
Johnny sidled up to him. “Which one of these look the best?” He showed Doyoung his pictures gallery. “Don’t laugh, okay?”

Doyoung looked at the offered phone, taking it in his hand. He scrolled for a moment. “Hmm, I’d say this one?”

“Oh.” He sent it quickly. “If he says I look ugly, it’s your fault.”

“Eh, it’s your fault if you look ugly,” Doyoung replied.

Johnny glared at him.

“Just kidding. You look good. You should ask him for a selfie too.”

“I should? No way. That would be weird, wouldn’t it?”

Doyoung shrugged. “I thought you were best friends.”

“Fine, I’m asking for it.”

10/10: Nooo, I look totally not-hot rn

You’re wearing a fucking tuxedo and glowing

This is unfair

Fuck off, I’m not sending you a pic

Johnny took a deep breath. “You’re really bad at this whole wingman thing, Doyoung-ah.”

“Sorry.” Doyoung patted his shoulder. He added as an afterthought, “I’d still say you guys would look good together.”

“I’d still say I need a better wingman.”

“Being a wingman is too much effort. Maybe ask Yuta?”

Johnny made a face. “Have you seen his love life?”

“At least he has a love life.”

“Aww, Doyoung, do you want someone too? I can set you up with a blind date.”

“Too much effort,” he replied.

Taeyong called them from the door. “Let’s go, guys. It’s showtime.”

Johnny nodded, smiling as he was reminded that they were going to the AMAs. He whooped. “Let’s go!”

It was sometime during the end of the AMAs when he checked his phone. He had been too distracted by all the millions of minute and wonderful things that had been going on around them to remember his phone.

10/10 sent you a photo.

The timestamp was two hours ago. It was a picture of Ten rolling his eyes and looking like a meme,
his hair all brown and soft in the light and his t-shirt all wrinkled comfortably.

10/10: I hate you but here is a pic!

Johnny felt like his heart would burst from happiness. He had replied. Ten had replied! It was such a small thing but he couldn't help but feel like screaming on the top of his voice.

“Bro, did you just win a lottery?” Mark asked, from beside him.

Johnny smiled widely. “Uh, something like that.”

He sidled up to Doyoung later and ruffled his hair. “You’re a fantastic wingman.”
He misses his Johnny-boo

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

“Johnny didn’t reply to my selfie. I hate him,” Ten said, vehemently.

Lucas nodded. “Okay.”

They were sitting in the kitchen with bowls of ramen, Lucas listening to Ten complaining about Johnny.

“I know he’s seen it. I sent a selfie to Taeyong right after and he replied but Johnny didn’t. Isn’t it unfair? I mean, it was Johnny who asked me to send it in the first place. Why is he like this?”

Lucas slurped some ramen, nodding. “True.”

“Like I don’t get it? I wasn’t dying to send it to him, right?”

Lucas’s eyes were round as he tried to appear understanding. “Yeah, you’re right.”


“Exactly,” Lucas said.

“He has some serious mood swing issues. Are all tall people like that?”

“Ten hyung, oh my god, don’t generalize like that!” Lucas said, straightening up.

“Lucas, you’re supposed to be pretending to be Kun and listening to my problems. Just agree so I feel better.”

“Oh, right. Sorry. I mean, yeah all tall people are like that,” Lucas said, supportively.

“Maybe romance is just an illusion. Maybe what I feel is just lust because he’s all sexy and tall and stuff. But then I also have these feelings like I want to go on dates with him, I want to draw his portrait, I want to tell him he’s cute when he laughs and every time I’m with him I just forget to breathe and stuff. I wish I didn’t like him so much. It’s so confusing when he doesn’t give me any signs. What do you think?”


“Oh my god, Lucas, that was horrible!” Ten groaned. “I’m being serious here.”

Lucas laughed. “That was a good pun, c’mon.”

Ten put his head on the dining table and scowled. “When will Kun come back from the mart?”

“Romance might be all kinds of weird but love isn’t an illusion, you know? I mean, if you find someone you love…you just kind of know. It’s a good feeling. You feel complete and…”

“Peaceful?”
“Yeah,” Lucas nodded, excitedly. “Like you can do everything.”

Ten’s eyes softened. “I feel like that with him. He’s really nice.”

“I know,” Lucas said, dreamily.

“Wait, who are you talking about?” Ten sat up.

“Jung—I mean, haha what?” Lucas blushed. “I just remembered I had to do some squats.” He rushed out of the kitchen.

“Kun, come back quickly. I need single people so I won’t feel bad,” Ten said, sighing.

Renjun and Chenle walked into the kitchen, making a beeline for the fridge.

“Hyung, who are you talking to?” Chenle asked, amused.

Ten reddened. “I was just practicing some vocals.” Suddenly, he was struck by an idea. “Oi, evil kids, tell me something. Do you think Johnny likes anyone?”

Chenle and Renjun exchanged grins.

“Yeah, I think he does,” Renjun said, making a huge show of thinking deeply about the question.

Ten perked up. “You think so?”

Chenle and Renjun looked at each other, eyes full of laughter.

Chenle chimed in. “Of course, he likes Taeil hyung!”

They ran out of the kitchen laughing at his expression before Ten could say anything.

Ten called Kun, “Kun, where are you? The dreamies are bullying me. I don’t care if it’s the groceries…Yeah, Lucas was no help…Fine, come soon…No, I don’t need anything…Wait, I have something really important to ask. Do you think Johnny likes Taeil? I mean, like as in like? Hello? Kun? Hello?”

“Someone’s not in a good mood?” Doyoung said, as he passed Johnny in the corridor.

They were in the hotel, rushing to their rooms to catch up on what little rest they could do before they left for Seoul.

“No! I’m not upset,” Johnny retorted, looking totally upset.

Doyoung took a deep breath. “Alright, I’m sending Taeyong.”

“I’m not upset, Doyoung. Truly. Don’t send Taeyong. He’s having his Jaehyun-time. I’m perfectly fine.”

Doyoung stared at him in disbelief.

Johnny finally said, “He sent a pic to Taeyong too.”
“So?”

“Ten sent a pic to Taeyong too, Doyoung.”

“I still don’t see what the problem is.”

Johnny ran a hand through his hair, anxiously. “It means that I forgot, okay? That we are just friends. That I get swayed even now and I thought I was over this!”

“Why would you feel that? Aren’t you overreacting?”

Johnny shook his head. “I have my reasons. It’s just that I keep forgetting.”

“Look, I know you’re closer to Taeyong and I’m not a great help in this department but maybe you need to talk to Ten once we go back,” Doyoung said.

The taller guy looked scandalized. “I can’t do that. That would mess up everything.”

“You like him.”

“N-no, when did I say that?”

Doyoung rolled his eyes. “Okay, this is a chore. How about you treat me to some ice-cream so we both feel better and later Taeyong or Yuta can help you? It’ll be fine. Just yeah, fighting!”

“You 96 liners are pretty heartless.”

“You don’t even tell me the details. How am I supposed to offer magical solutions?” Doyoung said. He nudged Johnny. “But we all hate seeing you upset so hang in there, yeah?”

“Okay, heartless 96 liner. But since I’m upset, you have to treat me to ice-cream.”

Over ice-cream and horrible puns, Johnny found himself laughing and forgetting about things that he felt were out of his control. He was grateful to Doyoung’s easy chatter for taking his mind off things and making him realize he had been over-thinking stuff.

“Ten sending Taeyong a selfie is seriously so cute,” he even found himself saying. “You know what, I think I was just tired before. I only needed some ice-cream to lift up my mood. Thank you, Doyoung. Take some rest before we leave, okay?”

Doyoung gave him a look. “Okay, as long as you’re happy…ish.”

In fact, Johnny had totally forgotten the incident by the time they reached Seoul and seeing Ten’s excited messages, he decided to suggest visiting the restaurant Jaehyun had recommended.

**Johns:** *Yoo*

*Wanna eat something?*

*We can go out around eight?*

**10/10:** *You had a showcase today, right?*

*Won’t you get tired?*

**Johns:** *Nah, we haven’t met in ages*
10/10: We met like a week ago

Johns: Exactly!

Ten had been wrestling with Jaemin for the TV remote but he quickly let go of the younger one when he saw the newest message from Johnny.

“Oh my god, Kun, I need your help!”

“I’m in the kitchen,” Kun yelled back.

Ten ran to him. “See this message.”

Kun looked at the messages and looked at Ten. “You’re going out for dinner with Johnny. Congratulations. Now shoo, I’m making dumplings from this really cool YouTube recipe I saw.”

“I need your help, beautiful Kun.” Ten tugged at his sleeve.

Kun shook him off. “No, Ten.”

“Don’t be so heartless. All you need to do is come along with us and see if you think Johnny likes me or Taeil?”

“Is Taeil going to be there?” Kun asked, not even looking up from his cooking. “Because if not, then your plan is useless.”

“Uh no, he isn’t, but you have high IQ. You can figure it out.”

“Ten, I think you’re just bored and want some drama to spice your life.” Kun sighed.

Ten walked to the fridge, tapping something into his phone. “Thank you for agreeing to my plan, Kun. Appreciate it.”

Kun frowned and grabbed at Ten’s phone but the messages had already been sent.

10/10: Can I bring along Kun?

He’s lonely and keeps crying

He has no friends

He says he misses his Johnny-boo

Kun groaned. “Ten, you made me sound like a loser. How could you? I thought we are friends!”

“You’ll thank me for this opportunity one day. Now, where did you keep the bread?”

“The bread?”

“Yeah, you went grocery shopping, right?”

Kun opened his mouth and then closed it. “Ah, I think I forgot to get the bread.”

Ten looked around in the kitchen. “What did you get? I’m hungry.” He turned to Kun when he didn’t answer. “Oh you haven’t sorted out the stuff yet? As a favour to your undying friendship and loyalty, let me sort out the stuff? Where are the grocery bags?”
Kun drew in a breath. “The grocery bags? Uh…um, I forgot to get the grocery.”

“What do you mean? You were out for hours.”

Kun shrugged.

Ten blinked. “Well, we’re going for dinner soon anyway so I’ll just steal from Jungwoo’s chocolate stash. Be ready to make Johnny jealous so we can gauge his reaction, okay?”

“Be ready for what!? Ten, Johnny could kill me!”

Meanwhile, Johnny was begging Doyoung to come along.

Doyoung was sprawled in his room, trying to pretend he was asleep.

“C’mon, I know you’re awake.”

“No, I’m asleep,” Doyoung mumbled.

“I’m treating you to dinner.”

“I don’t want to go out. We just had a performance. Ask Jaehyun or someone.”

“Jaehyun already said no and told me not to mention the restaurant in front of Taeyong. Something about it being their special place. I don’t know, nobody’s helping. You’re my last hope.”

“Why does anyone need to come along to your dinner plan?” Doyoung asked.

Johnny replied, “Because I wanted some time with Ten to talk about something and I can’t do that if there’s someone else sitting there. You and Kun are the same age. So, I don’t know, distract him or something? Just come along and give me five minutes of alone-time with Ten.”

Doyoung let out a pretend-snore.

“I’ll do your laundry for a week.”

The younger guy opened an eye. “A month.”

Johnny glared. “A fortnight.”

Doyoung sat up. “Okay, I’m in.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so so much for reading this story, sending kudos, bookmarking and subscribing. It means a lot. Hope you all enjoyed this chapter! Please do comment what you thought of it, it’s lovely to hear from you! :)}
“You are *not* wearing that!” Ten said, scandalized as he saw Kun walk out of his room wearing a simple beige sweater over some pants. “You’re supposed to make Johnny jealous so he realizes that he loves me.”

Kun patted his sweater and buttoned shirt. “What is wrong with this outfit? Lucas said I look fine.”

“You look like someone’s aunt, not my hot date,” Ten said, beseechingly. “Please wear a choker, at least?”

Kun gave him a look. “First off, I’m not your date and secondly, a choker, really? Ten, you should be grateful I’m coming along on this foolish plan of yours.”

Ten nodded. “You’re right. I shouldn’t complain. This is your aesthetic.” He looked him over once again before lunging forward. “But at least let me open some of those buttons. And fix that hair!”

In the end, when the two of them reached the 127 dorm to pick up Johnny, Kun was wearing a denim jacket and his shirt was deprived of three buttons.

“Stop fidgeting,” Ten said. “You look hot.”

“I feel naked,” Kun muttered, “and if I catch a cold because of you—”

“I’ll nurse you back to health,” Ten said, waving a hand. “Anyway, here’s the plan. You flirt with me. I act all aloof in front of Johnny. He goes mad with jealousy. At the end of tonight, Johnny professes his love for me. We get married and you will be our kids’ godmother.”

“Wild night. But just in case, your first child will be called Kun,” Kun added, ringing the bell.

Johnny opened the door within seconds, nearly as if he had been waiting for them to arrive.

Ten couldn’t help but smile when he saw Johnny grinning at him. It felt like he hadn’t seen him for ages. He could feel his heart constricting with how much it had missed this tall guy with the beautiful, warm smile. He launched himself at Johnny, hugging him. “John, I missed you so much.”

Johnny hugged him back, laughing. “You look great.”

Kun followed the two of them inside, muttering darkly at Ten’s back. “*I’ll act all aloof*, he said. Huh.”

Doyoung was nearly dozing on the couch but he gave the newcomers an enthusiastic smile when he saw them. “You’re here. Let’s go!”

Johnny gestured towards him. “Doyoung is coming with us. He couldn’t sleep and needed a night out.”

Doyoung hugged Ten and Kun, looking appreciatively at the latter. “Kun got a makeover?”

Kun shoved him, blushing. “Shut up.”
Ten said, “Oh right. Uh, that’s how Kun usually dresses when we go out.”

Kun reddened even more. “Yeah, what he said.”

Doyoung looked at his own oversized hoodie over faded jeans, then at Kun and finally at Johnny and Ten who had coincidentally worn flowery shirts and leather jackets, and shrugged. “Let’s just go.”

“Wait, we wanted to say hi to the others,” Ten said. “Where’s Taeyong hyung?”

“They’re all sleeping like normal people do at this ungodly hour,” Doyoung said.

Johnny nudged him with an elbow. “It’s just nine-thirty.” He smiled at Ten and Kun. “They haven’t recovered from jetlag, I guess. Let’s go, I can’t wait to try out this famed restaurant.”

The famed Jaeyong-handpicked restaurant turned out to be a cosy, side-street restaurant that Johnny immediately fell in love with. “You were right, Ten. It’s so pretty. I’m going to take a picture.” He placed his bag on the table, rummaging in it for his camera.

“Me too,” Kun said, taking out his phone.

“And I’m going to look at the menu,” Doyoung sighed.

Ten gave Kun a look and the latter hurriedly said, “But first, I’ll take a picture of prettiest person in the room. Give me a pose, Ten.”

Johnny looked at Ten posing and smiled. “I keep telling you, Ten, you are a total muse. See even Kun agrees. Wait, stand together so I can take a picture of you both. The background is really good here.”

Kun looked thoroughly confused as to what to do but the picture was taken with a scowling Ten looking angrily at the camera but soon they were all seated, waiting for their order.

Ten reached for Johnny’s bag. “What book are you reading these days?” Sure enough there was a book. He pulled it out and read aloud, “Fathers and Sons by Ivan Turgenev.”

“I’m nearly done with it. It’s going so well,” Johnny said. “I was telling Yuta the story and he liked it too.”

“You’re still reading Russian Literature?” Ten asked. “I thought you gave up on it months ago. This one is a new one, though. What brought you back to the genre? Man, this brings back memories. Remember how you gifted me Crime and Punishment for my birthday? Dude, what were you thinking?”

Ten flipped through the novel, narrating his shock at seeing his birthday present this year. Opposite him, Johnny’s smile had dropped. If someone had asked him, he wouldn’t have been able to repeat a word of the conversation happening around him. His eyes were unfocused, signalling that he was somewhere else.

He nodded vaguely when Kun asked him something, pointing at his camera gallery but he only realized that the others were looking through his camera when their food was brought in. He thanked the waiter politely, taking the plates as they made room on their cluttered, small table. His hands shook slightly as he placed the plates in front of him.

“Looks like you had a lot of fun,” Ten said. “Plus, I see that someone actually even took pictures of
you on your camera. Who did my work there?"

“Hmm?” Johnny peered at the photo he was pointing at. “Oh that was Taeil hyung. His photography has improved a lot.”

“Oh. That’s nice.” Ten nodded slowly. “Your camera roll is filled with his pictures. Red hair suits him.”

Johnny hummed.

“Oh, pay attention to me,” Ten said. His eyes softened. “Sorry, you must be tired. Let’s finish here quickly so you can go catch some sleep.”

Johnny looked at Ten’s concerned face and shook his head, offering a small smile. “No, no, I’m sorry. What were you saying? Oh yes, Taeil hyung was my unofficial muse there. Though it was mainly because of how cooperative he is. I told him he should straight up model.” He laughed. “It was really funny.”

Ten nodded again, shaking his head at Kun who was patting his knee sympathetically. Dinner was quickly souring into a silent affair which was saved by Doyoung and Kun gushing over the dreamies.

“Jeno is balancing so many things these days. He’s doing really well,” Doyoung said, excitedly. “He’s going to go far.”

Kun agreed and added, “And Chenle, the baby, is not just doing well in practice and everything but you should have seen his gradecard. He’s a genius. If he wasn’t an idol, he would probably be at Harvard.”

“With Renjun because that one is an intellectual,” Doyoung said, eyes shining. “I’m so proud of the kids.”

Ten caught Johnny’s eye and made a face. “You know, I’m the one they should be proud of. I spend all day listening to Jisung’s game making those irritating noises, Chenle and Renjun bully me while Jaemin, Jeno and Lucas laugh like hyenas in the background.”

“Aww, poor Ten,” Johnny said, “but hey, you spend most of your time at our dorm!?”

“I spent a week with the little devils! Kun didn’t even protect me. Thank god, I get to sleep at your dorm tonight.”

Johnny asked, “You’re sleeping over?”

“Of course,” Ten said, “where else would I be?”

Doyoung cleared his throat. “Kun, do you want to go and try the sweet potato stall outside with me?”

Kun frowned. “There was a sweet potato stall?”

“Yeah, yeah, I saw one when we were coming in.” He grabbed Kun’s arm and nearly dragged him outside.

Johnny watched him go out with a bemused expression.

Ten groaned. “They just tricked us into paying their bill, right?”
“It’s alright. It was my treat anyway,” Johnny said.

“Woah, what’s the occasion?”

Johnny rubbed the back of his head, shyly. “Nothing in particular.” He rummaged in his bag. “Umm, also, I—uh—brought you a memento. It’s nothing great but I...I was passing this shop and I saw it, and I kind of wished then you were there with me, I guess...because you would have liked it.” He laughed nervously, pushing a package towards Ten. “You know what, it’s getting late. Let’s go.”

He got up, handing the bill to the manager. “Thank you for the food.”

Ten got up slowly, blinking at the package in his hand and following Johnny who was walking quickly, head ducked slightly. He felt stunned, heart warm at the thought that Johnny had remembered him and yet the nagging feeling that Johnny was walking away from him hit him acutely. He wanted to say something but he was out of breath suddenly. He reached for Johnny’s jacket sleeve and pulled slightly. “J-Johnny.”

Johnny stopped right outside the restaurant door and Ten nearly walked into him. He looked up at him and found himself shy under the taller’s gaze. “Thank you.”

Johnny smiled a small smile and ruffled Ten’s hair. “You haven’t even seen it yet.”

“No, I meant...” Ten lowered his gaze, cheeks pink. “You thought of me.”

“You say that like it’s surprising.” Johnny put an arm around Ten’s shoulder. “Woah, why are you shivering? Are you cold?”

Ten let out a breath as he felt Johnny’s comforting warmth at his side and he relaxed into a half-embrace. “Okay, now I’m opening it. I’m curious,” he mumbled. He opened the package trying to make as less noise as possible on a deserted street at night. “It’s a painting,” he breathed out, awestruck at its beauty. It was a miniature oil painting of the Hollywood sign in its landscape and Ten knew that he was going to set it right beside the window in his bedroom. It was so beautiful. “I hope it wasn’t too expensive because suddenly I feel so guilty I didn’t get you anything to celebrate Regular. Shit, you should have just brought me a lousy keychain. I feel so bad now.”

Johnny peered over his shoulder. “So, you like it?”

“Like it? I love it,” Ten said, winding his arm around Johnny’s. “You have a good eye for art.”

Johnny looked at him sideways as they began to walk back. “I know I do.”

They met a very tired-looking Kun and a satisfied-looking Doyoung as soon as they turned the corner.

“Kun! Look what Johnny brought for me—wait, what happened to your outfit?”

Kun looked away, looking adorably soft in Doyoung’s oversized hoodie.

Doyoung said, “Oh we couldn’t find the potato stall so we looked for it a bit.”

Kun interrupted him, complaining. “I’m pretty sure he dreamt up that stall and then dragged me all over the place to look for it when obviously nobody is around so late.”

“He complained all through it, first about me being an idiot and then about you, Ten, being an idiot
and then, he sneezed like five times in his flimsy jacket until I took pity on him and lent him my hoodie,” Doyoung completed.

“You’re an idiot and if you freeze to death, it’s not my responsibility,” Kun sniffed.

Doyoung rolled his eyes. “Why am I surrounded by overdramatic people?”

“Don’t squabble kids.” Johnny laughed. “Let’s go home.”

Kun stopped suddenly on the way back. “Oh wait, I have to go to my dorm.”

“C’mon, Kun, Jaemin and Jeno will look after the kids. Let’s go have fun,” Ten said, his hand still in the crook of Johnny’s elbow.

“Actually, Jaemin and Jeno are kids, Ten. I’ll see you tomorrow then. Thanks for dinner, Johnny. Bye then.” He waved politely.

“Oi, will you be okay going back alone?” Doyoung called after him.

“Yes, Mom,” Kun replied.

“The world is not made for kind people,” Doyoung muttered as he followed Johnny and Ten. “Wait up, guys, I’m also here.”

Ten was talking. “So, can I take your bed?”

“You’re taking the couch,” Johnny snorted. “My bed is mine.”

“Let’s decide through rock, paper, scissors,” Ten bargained.

“Uh, no? I don’t think so.”

“I’ll ask Taeyong to lend me his bed then.”

“Oh my god, Ten, you can’t just ask people to lend you their beds.”

Doyoung followed them, feeling ignored and forgotten, muttering. “I have become a third-wheel. Fantastic.”

Chapter End Notes

oooh, did you notice johnny being a bit aloof there for a bit? Any guesses? because i swear, johnten have backstories in this so hang on for a bit as things are unveiled and let us know your theories ;)

as for kun, don’t you think there’s something up with our cutie?
Ten woke up and tried to stretch but found himself wrapped up in strong arms. He moved slightly only to bump against Johnny's chest. The steady beat of his heart made Ten smile sleepily. He was aware that Johnny had rested his chin against his head. He closed his eyes with contentment, wanting to remember this moment, to stop time and trace this feeling onto his memory.

When last night, he had sidled back into Johnny and Taeyong's room, he'd been sure he would be kicked out.

"Psst, Johnny? Are you awake?" he had whispered.

"No," came Johnny's sleepy voice.

Ten stood on the doorway. "The couch is uncomfortable."

Johnny didn't say anything but the light from the corridor outside the room was just enough for Ten to see Johnny scoot closer to the wall, raising the bed covers. Then a low mumble, "Okay, Tennie."

Ten punched the air and rushed to Johnny's side, settling in under the covers against him.

By the time, he remembered to say good night, Johnny was already asleep but he whispered it to him anyway, just happy to be close to him.

Ten shifted so he could look at Johnny. He looked so peaceful right now. It reminded him of other days, other early mornings…a time that seemed so far away now that it felt almost unreal. Back when he had been surer, when things had seemed to be moving on a path he could see the direction of, when he had known Johnny like the palm of his hand. He missed that, he missed what they could have been.

“What changed, Johnny?” he wanted to ask. Instead, he breathed in Johnny’s warmth and was grateful for this absolute trick of fate because moments like these, they had been neither very possible nor very common for the two of them in a while.

Ten frowned as he saw the slight dark circles that had appeared under Johnny's eyes. He must be working very hard. He felt guilty as he realized that dinner last night had probably eaten a chunk out of what little rest Johnny could have got. His eyes followed the wave of a stray curl that rested against Johnny's forehead. He was so beautiful.

With an almost painful jolt, he realized just how deeply he loved Johnny. He eased himself out of the tangle of Johnny’s arms slowly, placing one of Johnny's usual plushies in place and got up. Jumping in shock on hearing Johnny’s alarm ring, he reached for it and quickly silenced it, heart beating at the sudden noise that had startled the peaceful dawn.

It was six o’clock in the morning. Who even woke up at that time?

He looked fondly at both Johnny and Taeyong and decided they could afford another half an hour’s sleep. He tip-toed out of the room, still yawning and wishing he hadn’t lost his sleep so early in the morning. He must have been sitting in the kitchen for around twenty minutes—owlishly staring in the distance, sipping coffee—when a fully-dressed Jaehyun walked into the kitchen, whistling a
cheery tune.

“Jaehyun-ah!” Ten exclaimed, brightening up.

Jaehyun smiled at him. “Ten! When did you come?” He hugged Ten affectionately. “How have you been?”

“Ugh,” Ten said, “I have missed you and Winwin so much. I had no one to rant to. I mean, I did have Kun but he actually offers me sensible responses instead of holding my hand whilst I cry, you know? Jaehyun,” he wailed, “your best friend is dying of heartbreak.”

Jaehyun settled on the chair across him and held his hand, comfortingly. “What happened? I’m listening.”

“Okay but wait, let’s wake up Winwin because I don’t have the strength to tell the whole story again.”

Ten minutes later, a very irritated Winwin was sitting with the two of them still complaining at having been rudely awakened and forced to get up.

Ten showed them the painting Johnny had gifted him last night.

Jaehyun looked at it appreciatively. “This is really pretty. I don’t see what you’re complaining about.”

“The only one who has the right to complain at this table is me,” Winwin said. “I can’t believe you woke me up early to gush over a painting, Ten.”

Ignoring the Chinese boy, Ten turned to Jaehyun. “The gift is great and I love it—seriously, I do—but you weren’t there! He basically ran out of the restaurant after giving it to me. I don’t know.” His voice dropped as he told them about the incident. “I feel like there’s a kind of awkwardness that has come between us. It just keeps growing.”

Jaehyun said, “I probably sound like a broken record right now but maybe you should tell him what you feel about him. He’s your closest friend. You know you can talk it out with him. At this point, it looks like you’re just scared of your feelings, Ten.”

Winwin sighed. “The fact that you’re admitting your feelings is a huge feat but it’s not us but to him that you need to admit it to. I agree with Jaehyun on this one.”

“I think it should be pretty obvious to him that I like him. I am not the shy type. I openly flirt with him. I am literally throwing myself at his feet and all I get is a nice smile—as if I am a kid showing some party trick—and that’s it. Is he that oblivious? Has it occurred to you that maybe he doesn’t acknowledge it because he doesn’t want to?” Ten was breathing heavily, staring at his hands, waiting, hoping one of them would disagree because right now his heart needed something, anything that he could hope with.

Winwin looked at Jaehyun worriedly before speaking softly. “Ten, everyone knows you’re a huge flirt but have you really not noticed that you’re kind of different around Johnny? If you flirt, it’s so tame that it’s hilarious. You are so shy around him when the rest of the group isn’t chiming in. To be honest, you seem more awestruck around him than anything else. Which is funny because you’ve known each other for years. With you two, it’s always extremes, either you’re going overboard and pretending to not take things seriously or you’re both skirting around the topic, waiting for some divine intervention. You can’t live your life like that and expect things to happen on their own. I am sorry I’m being so brutally honest but as your friend it’s my duty to tell it like it is.”
Ten blinked as the words settled down in his mind. *You are kind of different around Johnny.* Was he? He remembered the time they had had one of their rare vlives, just the two of them and how they’d forgotten that a whole world of people were watching them through screens—how he had let his usually snarky, sarcastic exterior melt away and laughed at Johnny’s jokes and taken his pictures…and he realized. He realized why his plans to act all aloof in front of Johnny always failed, why his plan last night to make him jealous had been scrapped the minute he lay eyes on him, why there was no way, no matter how many times he rehearsed it, for him to behave as if Johnny’s mere presence didn’t send his heart haywire. He realized that he wasn’t different around Johnny. *He was the truest version of himself around him.* He forgot to put up his usual walls when he was with him. He just let himself enjoy the moment when he was with him.

“I woke up beside him today,” Ten said, his voice low, lips wobbling slightly, “and I was so happy. Until I realized that if he woke up, he might get all tense and awkward like he does these days. It’s like whenever we get closer, whenever things seem to look up for us, he steps back. He steps away. And I can’t even hold him guilty because he is always really nice and kind. He takes care of me. He looks out for me. But I know him by now. I know that sometimes when he smiles, his eyes still look sad. I keep thinking, am I pushing him into a corner? Am I making things weird? He is holding me at arm’s length and it’s killing me.”

“Talk to him, Ten,” Jaehyun said, patting his shoulder. “It gets worse the longer we hold it in. Taeyongie and I…we fought so much and over totally worthless stuff because both of us were waiting for the other to initiate a conversation that we were scared to start on our own. Too long a silence can be dangerous. It causes an unnecessary amount of pain.”

Ten smiled. “You and Taeyong are made for each other. We all knew it was only a matter of time before you two started making out everywhere.”

Jaehyun blushed deeply. “We don’t make out everywhere.”

Winwin gave him a look. “Believe me, you do.”

“Ehhh.”

“And don’t worry, Johnny and I are never going to fight. At least I am never going to fight with him. I can’t afford to.” Ten leaned back, taking a deep breath. “You know why you could afford to argue with Taeyong? It’s because you knew that no matter what, at the end of the day, he would come back to you. If Johnny and I fight, I know he won’t come back. And I can’t….I just can’t afford that.”

The three of them turned in the direction of the sudden sound of doors banging and running feet. Taeyong was knocking on doors and waking up everyone. “Guys, we have to leave in fifteen minutes. Get ready now.”

Johnny was following him, looking guilty. “I have no idea why my alarm didn’t ring. I remember checking it last night. Sorry if we get late because I didn’t wake up on time to wake you up on time.”

“It’s okay,” Taeyong could be heard saying as they entered the kitchen as the trio there hurriedly looked away so that it wouldn’t seem as serious as it had been. “Happens. We’ll be ready for the showcase in no time, I’m sure.”

Johnny stopped short as he saw Ten on entering the kitchen. “I thought you left—”

“Nope,” Ten said, interrupting him before he could go on. “Still here.” He greeted Taeyong too. “I switched off Johnny’s alarm. You two looked like you could do with some extra sleep. Oi, don’t
give me that look, Taeyong. It doesn’t work on me and you look like a cutie when you try to glare. I swear, I was going to wake you two by six-thirty but I forgot because we were talking.” He laughed nervously. “Sorry.”

There was flurry of movement in the dorm after that, everyone rushing around to get ready. Within the estimated fifteen minutes, they were leaving, yelling goodbyes to Ten.

Johnny was the last to leave. As he stepped past Ten, he slowed down. “Ten, I—”

“C’mon, Johnny hyung!” Haechan called out. “The lift will go without you.”

Ten laughed ruefully. “You have to go.”

Johnny looked torn.

“Johnny hyung!?!” Mark called this time.

“I’ll call you,” Johnny said and for a moment it looked like he was leaning forward but he stopped. “Take care. I’ll see you soon. Bye, Tennie.”

Ten nodded. He stayed in the same spot even after the door closed, enveloping the dorm in sudden silence. He took a deep breath. “I guess, it’s time I went back to the baby dorm.”

Chapter End Notes

are you ready for johnny's backstory now? the next update will be really interesting! please look forward to it :D
“Everything alright?” Taeyong asked, quietly.

Johnny raised an eyebrow, looking into the distance.

They were backstage waiting for their Regular stage as another group performed.

Taeyong placed a comforting hand on Johnny’s shoulder. “You look…preoccupied.”

Johnny didn’t respond and Taeyong had to repeat. Johnny finally looked at him and said sheepishly, “Sorry. I guess I am. Don’t worry I’ll pay attention onstage.”

Taeyong rolled his eyes. “You know I’m not worried about that.”

“There’s really nothing to worry,” the taller one said.

“Everyone noticed Ten and your awkward breakfast conversation or lack thereof, or the even worse doorstep tension you two had.”

“Sometimes I want to scream so bad.”

“At Ten?”


“I knew I shouldn’t have allowed Jaehyun to marathon High School Music with you once again. Seriously, that series can mess people’s minds.”

Johnny laughed. “I grew up on that series. And Camp Rock. And Zack and Cody. Disney, basically.”

“Sooo,” Taeyong started again, “do you want to talk about what you want to scream about? Or we can go scream later together, all over the terrace. I’ll even bring Chenle along. We can have a whole banshee session.”

“He brought up the letter last night,” Johnny said.

Taeyong looked stunned. “He did? Just like that? At dinner, in front of the others?”

Johnny nodded. “Well, he didn’t say it explicitly. He mentioned how I’d given him Crime and Punishment for his birthday. He laughed about it, Tae. Like he doesn’t even care that I spilt my heart out in the middle of one of those pages.” He took a deep breath. “He was so nonchalant about it. Dude, what were you thinking? That’s what he said. Like it was some stupid joke to him. I know it was but I wish I wasn’t reminded of it every now and then.”

“Johnny.” Taeyong didn’t know what to say. He was shocked at how good Johnny was at hiding when he was hurting. He had thought maybe over time the sting would lessen for his friend but it looked like nothing had changed. “I’m sure he didn’t mean it. Maybe there was some misunderstanding. Did he really say that?”
Johnny shrugged. “He saw I was reading *Fathers and Sons* and he was talking about Russian literature and I suppose that reminded him of what I did for his birthday. I wish I could turn back time and just…”

Taeyong listened as Johnny narrated the whole thing but he couldn’t help but think how his friend had suffered, how angry he had been and how much Johnny had pleaded him to not say anything to anyone.

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“Fuck, I’m nervous suddenly,” Johnny giggled.

“Why are you nervous? Seriously, you two are practically dating already. I’m kind of jealous of your happening love life,” Taeyong muttered. “I wish Jaehyun would give me even a quarter of attention of what Ten gives you.”

Johnny laughed. “I know I am supposed to show you pity but I can’t help being super excited about actually asking Ten out so wait for two days and then I promise I’ll hold your hand and devise a sweet plan for Jaehyun to confess to you since you’re a coward.”

Taeyong punched his shoulder. “Why am I even your roommate?”

“Because you love me and I’m tidy and I’m the bestest best friend you could hope for?”

“Ew, I don’t know how Ten likes your narcissistic ass.”

“Taeyong, at least I have an ass.”

“Low blow,” Taeyong said, pretending to be upset. He plucked the letter Johnny was holding, out of his hand. “To, the love of my life—god, that is cheesy—”

“Give it back to me,” Johnny squealed but Taeyong was running around their room and reading out aloud.

“This isn’t really your birthday gift, you know? Well, it is. Kind of. It’s part of your birthday gift. *This is my copy of Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking, ‘I can’t believe you gave me an old book for my birthday, John!’ but this is a special copy! Seriously, don’t laugh. I was reading this book when you dislocated your arm and I remember I felt like I would die seeing you get hurt like that. And that I wanted to kiss you so bad when the doctor set it right. I was like woah, I really like this Thai guy. No, that I knew since quite a while. I was like woah, I love Ten. I’d do anything for Ten. Whenever I read this book again or whenever I look at it, I remember that moment once again.

Oh no, this is not how this letter was supposed to start. Ugh, it was supposed to be more poetic. Just ignore what you read and think that it starts from here, okay?

**Ten, I think you’re a wonderful person. You make me so hap —**”

Taeyong had been laughing and reading the letter but his voice slowed down until he was reading it quietly. The sudden change made Johnny stop and look at his friend for some sort of expression to gauge what he was thinking. Taeyong didn’t look up until he had finished reading—it was a long letter—but when he did finish it, his eyes were shining.
“You really love him.”

Johnny looked taken aback and then he smiled proudly. “Yes, I do.”

“You’re growing up so well,” Taeyong said, dabbing at his eyes. “I feel like a proud Mom.”

“That’s Doyoung’s job,” Johnny said, laughing. He took the letter from Taeyong, looked over it once and folded it and was about to slip it between the pages of the novel. “I’m going to give this to Ten tonight itself, at midnight.”

“Right the midnight birthday dinner. And then you’ll do the whole romantic terrace dinner thing tomorrow night.” Taeyong’s scrunched his nose as he remembered his friend’s lines. “I’ll be waiting for you on the rooftop, Ten, so if you feel the same way meet me there and I promise, I’ll spend my whole life treating you like the star you are. Oh my god, Johnny, some parts of your letter are so cliché but it totally suits Ten and you.”

“Yes,” Johnny said, shyly. “Tonight’s the best-friend’s dinner. Tomorrow, hopefully, it’ll be the boyfriend’s dinner.”

“I can’t believe you think there’s a possibility he’ll turn you down. Even in your letter you go on and on about it. What was it? Oh yeah,” he took the letter from Johnny’s hand, “If you don’t come, I’ll know and I’ll accept it. Ten, and I’m saying this really seriously, there’s no pressure. If you don’t feel the same way, know that I’ll understand and we will remain best friends and I will respect your decision just like I respect you. If you’re not down for taking a step further than what we are right now, I promise I will never speak of it again. I don’t want this to make things weird or uncomfortable. Whatever you want, I’m okay with that. So, it’s okay, okay? Either way, I’ll always be your best friend. Johnny, what the hell, you know he won’t say no. You guys flirt so much and anyone can see he is head over heels in love with you.”

Johnny pulled back the letter, this time sliding it into the book. “He’s a complex guy. He might not want what I—okay, what you and I—think he wants and I care for him a lot. So, I just want him to know there’s always a way out, that I’m not pressurising him or anything. It’s his call.”

27th February, 2018.

It was raining and Taeyong was staring worriedly at his phone.

Taeyongie: Johnny, you’ll catch a cold

Just get down already

You can wait here till he comes

It doesn’t have to be a cliché YA movie scene

Youngho: I’ll wait a bit more

Don’t worry

I’m fine

Taeyong read the texts, wanting to tell him that it had been over two hours, that Ten should be here already, that Johnny shouldn’t be spending hours on a night like this in the open but he knew his stubborn friend.
Taeyongie: Can you just text him and ask him to hurry up

Youngho: You know I can’t do that

It’s got to be his decision

Taeyong

Don’t text him, please

Let him decide on his own

Please

Taeyongie: I won’t, don’t worry

But just...what if you catch a cold

Youngho: I won’t

I’m strong as nails

Taeyong sighed, looking up from his phone. He had been so sure Ten would jump into Johnny’s arms by now. What had happened? His fingers itched to contact Ten, to put Johnny out of his misery all alone on the rooftop under the rain. Instead all he could do was send Johnny the consolation he needed right now. He couldn’t imagine what he must be going through right now but he knew it must hurt.

Taeyongie: He’ll be there, I’m sure

Youngho: I have a raincoat

Taeyong scoffed. He must have waited around forty minutes before he gave up and with his anxiety eating him up, he decided to ask Yuta for help.

Yuta was asleep but he woke up and tiptoed to Taeyong’s room when the latter fetched him. “Is everything okay?”

“I don’t know. Johnny’s on the terrace and it’s raining and Ten isn’t coming and I’m so helpless and scared.”

Yuta sat him down and tried to ask him but Taeyong had promised Johnny he wouldn’t tell a soul. From what little Yuta could coax out of Taeyong, he nodded and picked up his phone.

“You can’t call Ten. Johnny—”

“I’m not calling Ten.” Yuta said into the phone. “Hey, Kun, sorry to wake you up so late...Yeah, yeah, everything is okay. I was just wondering if Ten is okay?...Yes, can you check please?” There was a pause. “Oh, he is sleeping?”

Taeyong mouthed to Yuta. Ask him if he opened the book. Ask him if he opened Johnny’s gift.

“Did he like his gifts?...Haha, yes, yes. Did he open Johnny’s gift?...Oh, oh, I see. Okay. Sorry for waking you up...Good night...Bye.”

Yuta sat down beside Taeyong. “Look I have no idea what is happening, Tae, but you should tell
Johnny to come down.”

“What did Kun say?”

“Ten is sleeping. He did open Johnny’s gift, morning itself and he thinks that Johnny has totally lost it. But Kun did say Ten was reading it so that’s a good thing, right?”

“And he’s sleeping!?”

“Woah, calm down.” Yuta looked worriedly at his friend. He knew Taeyong had been going through a lot of stress lately and maybe Taeyong was projecting some of his anxiety on to the situation but he also knew there was something going on between Johnny and Ten. So, he didn’t ask questions. “Get him down. I’ll lay out some clothes and heat up some soup for him. I’ll leave it on the counter so he doesn’t need to know that I was here. Just take care of him and call me if you need anything. I’ll be awake.”

Taeyong was thankful for Yuta who was understanding and patient and he wished he was half as strong when he approached Johnny on the terrace.

“Youngho,” he called out his real name, “let’s go.”

Johnny didn’t move from his place under that tarp that hung over some of Taeil’s plants.

“Johnny, you can’t wait all night. You’ll get sick. He’s…he’s not coming.”

Johnny stirred from his place and walked past him, towards the stairs. “I know he isn’t coming. This was all so stupid. Sorry I kept you up. Let’s go.”


“Hey, Ten?”

“Hmm?” Ten replied, not taking his eyes off the screen.

They were sitting on the couch in the 127 dorm, watching a drama Johnny liked. Taeyong and Doyoung were arguing in the kitchen over the chicken the former was making. Winwin and Jaehyun were playing video-games in the latter’s room and their excited screaming often thundered over the walls. Yuta and Taeil were arm-wrestling, already red in the face. It looked like an ordinary afternoon at the dorm.

“Did you really read the book I gave you?”

Ten frowned, tearing his eyes away from the screen, irritation flashing across his face. “Yes, Johnny, that’s like the tenth time you’ve asked me.”

Johnny shrank back inadvertently. “No, I meant, you read everything?” He put a stress on the last word.

“Yes, Johnny, I read everything,” Ten snapped. “Seriously, what do you want me to say? If you want me to lie I will. It gave me a headache and—and can we just stop talking about it? I’m over the topic already.”

There was silence.

Doyoung and Taeyong had stopped arguing in the kitchen.
Ten spoke up, “I’m sorry, John. It was—”

Johnny shook his head, offering a smile. “Hey, it’s okay. I’m glad you’re honest with me. Sorry for...Just...I’m happy we’re still best friends. Thank you for that.”

“Oh, I know I’m not the best person but you can’t think I’d stop being your best friend over such a thing, right?” Ten pressed himself against Johnny’s arm. “I’m a forever kind of deal.”

“I’m glad.”

“And you never know, maybe I’ll change my mind in the future? Things change, people grow kind of thing, yeah?”

“Yeah?” Johnny felt his heart skip a beat and he looked at Ten for confirmation. “Okay, umm, let me know when that happens?”

“I will.”

Ten never did.

And Johnny learnt to say, whenever Taeyong offered a helping hand, “It’s fine. I’m over it. Really. Don’t nag, Tae.”

They’re now lining up to go on the stage and Taeyong looks over at Johnny, who has got his mask up again, laughing at something Haechan has said.

He remembers how Johnny was delirious with fever for a week after that day, how Johnny had begged him to let Ten be, how Johnny had reminded him that it wasn’t Ten’s fault, how Johnny had gone back to being Ten’s best friend as if nothing had happened, how he had convinced everybody, including him, that he was over it, how he was still hurting and he wished that Johnny could find happiness again.

The music blared and the fans started chanting. Lights. They were onstage.

Chapter End Notes

FML poor Johnny :( see, now you guys know his side of the story. How did the chapter become so sad? Let’s be emotional together *cries in every language*

So what do you all think about the chapter? Did you expect this? Do tell us your thoughts!

The next chapter is already ready and soon you’ll find out about Ten’s backstory. Please anticipate it ♥️ Thank you so much for reading.

Love, positive vibes and high school musical marathons~~
Ten walked into the dorm. He hadn’t waited long in the 127 dorm after they had all left for the showcase. He sighed remembering that he had a practice scheduled in two hours and decided that a short nap would be a good idea.

What he hadn’t counted on was the dreamies having some sort of indoor volleyball match. The living room was a mess and he nearly had a fit when he saw that someone had drawn an unflattering caricature of himself on the ball. He saw this in the quick seconds as the ball flew towards his face.

The dreamies stopped yelling when the ball smacked Ten’s face loudly.

“Oops,” Jisung said.

Ten stood still, aware of how his face was burning up.

Jeno seemed to be on the verge of apologizing profusely when Lucas burst into loud nervous laughter. That was enough for Chenle to start laughing and soon all the kids were laughing.

Renjun cackled. “You should have seen your face!”

“That’s it, you devils. No more volleyball in the house and you’re going to clean everything right now!” Ten said, in as much a stern tone as he could muster.

There was a collective groan at this but since Jeno started cleaning up, the others followed soon.

Ten began walking towards his room, muttering at how he didn’t deserve kids who weren’t even his own at this stage in life. “And where is Kun? How did he allow this to happen? Have you locked him somewhere?”

Renjun and Jaemin passed a look. Jaemin was the one who asked, “Didn’t you two go out together last night?”

An icy hand gripped Ten’s heart. “He came home last night.” When none of them responded, he added, “Right?”

Jeno said, “No, he didn’t.”

Ten felt faint. “He didn’t come back?” His imagination was jumping to conclusions. He should have come home with Kun last night. He shouldn’t have let him go alone. He took out his phone, fingers shaking as he dialled Kun’s number. Kun picked up after three rings. “Kun?” Ten found he could breathe again. “Where the fuck are you?...Oh, oh...Okay, yeah, alright...Bye-bye.”

The dreamies were all watching him now.

“You guys scared me!” Ten laughed awkwardly. “He said he came home last night and headed out just a few minutes ago to get some chocolate milk.”

“Well, no offence but that’s a lie,” Renjun said.

Jisung nodded slowly. “We would know if he came home last night.”
“And when he supposedly left a few minutes ago? Bruh, we have been playing here since hours.”

Ten made a face. “Anyway, Kun is safe so it’s all okay.”

The dreamies were passing another look amongst each other and since it was a well-known fact that despite all appearances Ten liked Renjun best, it was Renjun who grabbed his hand and made him sit on the couch. All of them crowded around him.

“Hyung,” Chenle said, “we have to tell you something.”

“You guys killed my cactus, right?” Ten asked, accusingly.

“No, that was you,” Jaemin said, sighing as if that question had been asked often.

“Then, is it about—”

Renjun blurted. “We think Kun gege has a boyfriend.”

Ten looked at their faces and began laughing. “Wait, you guys are serious!?”

“We have receipts,” Jeno added.

“Kids, kids, you are all so clueless. Kun has probably never even kissed a guy let alone have a boyfriend. He’s—he’s Kun! Besides, we’d know if he was dating. He’s always at home. It’s preposterous. The stuff you kids think up.” Ten wiped a tear, still laughing. “Wow, you guys made my day.” He made to get up but Chenle sat beside him.

“Remember when he said he was out grocery shopping for two whole hours and then turned up with no grocery?”

Ten frowned. “Yeah, he said he forgot to get the bags. It happens. Us adults are under a lot of stress.”

Renjun tsk-ed. “And where was he all night?”

“He must have come back after your bed-time. It was pretty late when we got free,” Ten rationalized.

Jaemin rolled his eyes. “We were up till three.”

“What??”

“He’s always texting these days,” Jisung quickly said.

“So, you all think he has a boyfriend?” Ten was still laughing.

“Well, I think he’s Batman,” Lucas commented, raising his hand.

Everyone turned to him and Ten realized he had been quiet until then.

“Yeah, Lucas has a different opinion,” Jisung said.

Lucas said, “I mean, you know there have been reportings of a vigilante lately? Doesn’t it seem fishy that Kun seems to be leading a secret life. I mean, it would be way cooler than finding out he is in a relationship.”

There was silence.
“So, we think Kun has a secret boyfriend and we’d like to enlist you into our club of Let’s-Find-Kun’s-Man members,” Renjun said to Ten.

“I’m telling you Kun is the king of singlehood,” Ten said, stopping when they heard the front door open.

In walked Kun, totally unaware of the meeting that was happening in the living room.

“Kun!” Ten exclaimed. “You’re home, finally. You can save me from these hyper-imaginative kids.”

“Where is the chocolate milk, hyung?” Jisung asked.

Kun frowned. “What?”

“You went to get chocolate milk, right?”

“Ohh, *that*. I drank it on the way. It was yum. I’ll get some for you all when I go shopping.” Kun smiled. “I’ll be back in a sec. What do you guys want for breakfast?” He walked to his room, still unaware of the mood of the room.

“Look at him,” Ten said. “You think he’s capable of having a secret love life? He’s too soft and honest for all that shit. He’d probably be singing about it.”

Chenle narrowed his eyes wisely. “You said he went out to get milk, right? He didn’t have anything in his hands right now.”

“Because he drank it on the way,” Ten said.

“And he is still wearing the same outfit from last night,” Jaemin said.

Kun walked back into the living room, smiling, and Ten was forced to admit that he was indeed wearing the same outfit from last night.

“You didn’t change your clothes?” Ten asked.

Kun looked at his denim jacket and jeans. “Ah, I must have worn the same clothes again in the morning. I was thinking about this song I’m writing. Haven’t been able to concentrate on anything else. I’m making some omelette if it’s okay?”

Ten whispered to the dreamies when Kun went into the kitchen. “You guys nearly made a fool of me right now. He’s making breakfast for us and you want to spin tales about him. He’d be so disappointed when he finds out. Now, if you’ll excuse me I have some art to hang in my room.” He went to his room, clutching the painting Johnny had gifted him.

“God, he’s stupid,” Chenle whined.

Renjun sighed. “I used to think he’s different but I guess all adults are the same.”

They looked at Kun who was smiling over absolutely nothing as he made omelettes.

“It’s okay. We’ve got Haechan on our team too. We’ll uncover it soon on our own,” Jeno said, comfortably.

“I know,” Jaemin said, brightening up, “let’s make a bet with Ten hyung about it.”

There was a chorus of “you’re a genius, Na Jaemin”.
They heard a crash from Ten’s room.

“Oh, is he throwing things again?” Jisung asked.

“It didn’t seem like he was in a bad mood,” Jeno said.

They waited for Kun to go check on Ten but he was busy smiling over his omelettes.

Lucas stood up and struck a noble pose. “Since I’m the functioning adult right now, I’ll go and check.”

He peeked into Ten’s room and found Ten getting up from the floor, clutching his back. “Uh, you need help?”

Ten took the offered hand and straightened up. “I was hanging the painting and I slipped off the bed.”

“I’ll do it for you,” Lucas said, easily. “Where do you want it?” He stifled a laugh when he saw how high Ten had been trying to hang the painting.

Ten said, “I want it there so it’s the first thing I see in the morning.”

“It is pretty. I can see why you would like that,” Lucas said, effortlessly setting the painting in place. “Are you done with the sketch you were making that day?”

“Yeah, I am. Wanna see?”

Lucas nodded excitedly.

Ten took out a sketchbook from his shelf.

Lucas gasped as he saw the sketch. “Oh my god! That looks just like me. Wow, you’re a genius.”

Ten tore out the page neatly. “You can have it.”

“Shit, really!? Wow, can you please autograph it? Woww, thank you. I’m going to frame it and put it in my room.” Lucas clutched his autographed sketch happily, looking at Ten’s shelf of books. “Wow, you have so many sketchbooks here. You draw a lot. Oh, you have Crime and Punishment?” He looked at Ten with even more respect. “I didn’t know you read classics.”

Ten looked towards the book he was pointing. “Oh, that. Nah, I am not much of a reader and classics give me a headache. Johnny gifted me that for my birthday and I read like two pages before I gave up. He kept asking me if I’d read it so I looked up a summary online—thanks, Cliffnotes—and memorized it so I could repeat it to him. Hey, but don’t tell him that, okay?” Ten gave him a conspirational look.

“Nah, man, I can relate. I’d do that too if I had to read such a huge book. Must be a thousand pages.”

“I remember Johnny being so excited for my birthday and he kept hinting that I’d love the gift that I thought it would be something romantic. Imagine my disappointment at opening the gift and realising I had been conned. I remember promising myself I would give it a try once I had some more time because my sister says reading tastes are cultivated not born. And maybe, one day, I will be able to gush over it like Johnny does over all of Russian literature but as of now, the sight of it irritates me. Maybe because I expected something totally different.” He laughed without humour. “I was even more of a lovesick fool during my birthday. Anyway, at the end of the day, Johnny gave it to me...”
“So, you keep it,” Lucas completed it for him. He looked around the room. “You do have a lot of his photos and stuff around the room.”

“I guess, I just like having something of him around me.”

“It’s cute. I’m sure Johnny hyung’s room is filled of photos of you too.”

Ten blinked. “Um, no, actually, it’s not. Taeyong has stuff up everywhere but Johnny…he doesn’t decorate much.”

“Oh, I’ll help him decorate next time I go there,” Lucas said, walking out of the room, tripping over a stray sock.

Chapter End Notes

yes ten is an idiot, didn't even flip the book wow... johnny help this dumbass please lmao.

also what do you all think kun is up to? O_o are you Team Dream or Team Ten on the kun issue? also, any guesses as to who the bf could be if the dreamies are right? so many questions hahaha

hope you enjoyed the chapter! please do tell us what you thought about it :) thank you so much for reading!

love, positive vibes & cliffnotes~
Do you like cheese?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

[6:10 am]

**Johns**: Good morning, Tennie!

[8:40 am]

**10/10**: Why do we need to get up so early?

**Johns**: It’s not that early

*Go get some breakfast*

*Or should I get you some?*

**10/10**: I’d rather have you

*Uh, I mean, I’d rather have *yoghurt and strawberries from the cafe near the coex*

*Haha stupid autocorrect*

**Johns**: Oh I can get you some if you’re coming there for practice

**10/10**: Okay, see you there :DD

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[6:10 am]

**Johns**: Morning, beautiful

**10/10**: Likewise, sexy

**Johns**: You’re up early

**10/10**: Your messages always wake me up early

**Johns**: Aww, go back to sleep

**10/10**: Good night, John!

[9:45 pm]

**10/10**: Did you eat?

**Johns**: Will do in a bit

**10/10**: Take care of yourself, okay?
Johns: You too

Are you okay?

10/10: Yeah

You?

Johns: Yeah

[6:10 am]

Johns: GOOD MORNING, I’M SO EXCITED

We going Halloween!

When will you be there for the costuming?

[8:10 am]

10/10: Let me ask Kun

Kun says ask Doyoung xD

I wouldn’t be surprised if Kun said he’s more interested in his phone rather than his costume

You know, Kun keeps smiling at his phone a lot these days

I told you about the dreamies thinking he’s dating someone, right?

What if it’s true?

Nah, it’s Kun after all

I can’t even imagine

Anyway, Kun says we’ll be there at whatever time you guys want so let us know asap

“Aww, Johnny, you look so cute,” Ten said, giggling at Johnny’s costume.

Johnny did a mock-growl. “I am always cute.”

Ten flicked his wig. “But you have to admit I look the best.”

“You look alright, Chenle looks the best,” Johnny said, eyes twinkling.

Ten clutched his heart. “Oof, Taeyong! Johnny is being mean to me.”

Johnny patted his head. “Just kidding, you look amazing and I love the idea of carrying that frame.”

“I know, I know, not everyone is as intelligent as me,” Ten said, laughing.

Truth be told, Ten was really happy just sitting beside a soft-looking Johnny in his Tony the Tiger
costume while others were getting ready. They had both been busy lately and it was difficult to
spend time together, just the two of them. He lay his head on Johnny’s shoulder as they watched
Chenle chase Renjun who was filming everything.

“You know, the kids are nice,” Ten said, quietly.

“I’m glad you finally agree.” Johnny laughed and Ten could feel Johnny’s body shifting with the
deep rumble of his laughter.

Ten closed his eyes. “They’re still evil and prank Kun and I all the time but they’re also kind of cute
and I would die for every one of them.”

“Ten hyung is dressed up as Rapunzel’s witch-mom,” Haechan shouted across the room.

Renjun and Haechan started singing *Mother Knows Best* replacing ‘Mother’ with ‘Ten’.

Ten sat up. “I take it back. They’re all pure evil.”

Johnny laughed. “You kind of look do like Mother Gothel.”

“And you look like Tigger.”

“Hey, I like Tigger,” Johnny exclaimed.

“So do I but that’s not the point and thanks to your paws I can’t even hold your hand not that I want
to but speaking as a completely objective third party observer with absolutely no personal interest in
the matter, I think hand-holding is definitely underrated. I mean—” Ten stopped when he felt
Johnny’s eyes on him.

Johnny was smiling at him but it was the way his eyes were full of something deeper, softer and
almost adoring that made Ten stop and stare. He blushed and asked the taller guy. “What?”

“I can’t believe you just quoted *She’s the Man* to me,” Johnny said, breaking out of whatever trance
he had fallen in and looking at his feet, the smile still held in place. “And I think Mona Lisa suits you
because you’re really beautiful but more than any piece of art.”

Ten drew in a breath. There it was. The feeling of having suddenly stepped into a deep ocean. Like
there was a whole crest and fall of meanings behind Johnny’s words, like the words were as serious
as the tone which held no trace of a jest, like the words reached out to him but Johnny himself held
him back. Ten was aware of it maybe even before Johnny—that Johnny was going to walk away yet
again.

“Wow, this costume is really hot. I think I—” Johnny made to get up.

Ten entwined his arm around Johnny’s and pulled him back slightly. “I’m going home for a couple
of days. Wanna come along?”

Johnny blinked.

Ten laughed nervously. “Dad told me to invite you. It’s been a while since you last saw him and he
misses his favourite tennis partner.”

Johnny smiled wide. “Well, I guess, then I’m coming along.”

“You will?”
“I-If you want me to,” Johnny said.

“Of course, I want you to.”

They smiled shyly at each other, pretending for a moment that it was as easy as that, that there wasn’t a string of managers and paperwork and fansites that they would have to traverse.

Later, when they were all stuffed in cars and Johnny was beside Ten, Johnny took off his paw glove and wrapped his fingers around Ten’s.

Ten looked up to Johnny who cleared his throat. “So, um, do you like cheese?”

There was silence and then they started laughing while the other members looked at them warily.

Jaehyun sighed. “Why yes he does. His favourite's Gouda!”

The party turned out to be really fun. Jaehyun and Jungwoo were a hit, everyone loved Ten’s costume and Chenle was asked to be photographed with by everyone. Somewhere over Lucas’ booming Thor laugh, Renjun playing catch with his elf ears with Taeil, Kun’s cap falling off his head and Doyoung fixing it for him, Yuta randomly distributing apples, Taeyong getting drunk after two sips of his drink, it was probably the best day they had all had in a while.

When that night, Ten was pinning up the polaroids he had taken over the course of the party, he looked at the two pictures he had with Johnny and he couldn’t help but smile. He was going to spend a whole vacation with Johnny!

“If everything goes well, I’ll tell him this time.”

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It had taken quite a bit of convincing and subterfuge that both of them disliked but Johnny and Ten found themselves enjoying three days with Ten’s family. Ten spent a lot of time with his dogs while Johnny played tennis with his Dad. Johnny liked Ten’s family. They had always been kind and welcoming to him and he was happy he got to see them again.

Ten’s Dad especially doted on Johnny, calling him ‘son’ and inviting him to come over next vacation on the first day itself.

The second evening, Ten managed to wrench away Johnny from his Dad and they went on a phototrip around the flower market.

“My Mum loves this place,” Ten told Johnny as they entered the sweet-smelling market.

Johnny looked around with wide eyes. “Woah, this is amazing. Our camera roll is going to be blessed today.”

Ten smiled at his enthusiasm as Johnny began clicking pictures. He raised his camera to his eye and clicked a picture of Johnny talking in all the Thai he had ever learnt from Ten over the years at the first stall. The shopkeeper smiled at Ten over Johnny’s shoulder and called out, “Your friend is very excited.”

Ten laughed. “He doesn’t get to be a tourist often.”

The shopkeeper handed over a flower to Johnny, pronouncing slowly, “Dok krachiao.”

“What’s he saying?” Johnny asked Ten, looking clueless at the exchange.
“It’s the name of the flower. He’s giving it to you because you’re so excited,” Ten explained.

In fact, as they walked through the market, Ten quickly found out that Johnny was really popular with the shopkeepers who went out of their way to point out names of flowers to him, some even handing out free samples.

“Do you two want anything else?” the auntie on the last stall asked them while they waited for the bouquet Johnny was buying for Ten’s mom.

“Yes,” Johnny said, still very much excited. “Can I have that…umm, that one…one of those small garlands?”

The auntie nodded and handed him the small garland. Johnny smiled at Ten and held it out to him. “Thank you for today, Tennie.” He grabbed Ten’s hand lightly and slipped it across his wrist.

The auntie laughed, saying a string of quick words, looking at their hands.

“What?” Johnny looked at Ten who was blushing profusely.

Ten giggled, looking away, rubbing the back of his head with his other hand.

“What did I do?” Johnny asked.

The auntie handed him the bouquet of flowers he had ordered, aww-ing at them.

Ten finally spoke up. “She said it’s a version of the garland used in marriage ceremonies here that’s really popular among tourists and…yeah.” And you two look cute together.

“Oh,” Johnny said. “Ah, I thought it was…just a garland…I thought you would like it, I mean, I thought it would look pretty on you, yeah? You can take it off if—”

“No! I mean, yeah, it looks pretty.” Ten looked at his wrist, making no attempt to take it off.

Johnny smiled and intertwined their fingers. “Anything else you’d like to have?”

“Hmm, let’s have some food but it’s my treat,” Ten said.

“Lead the way,” Johnny said.

The short vacation came to an end quickly but it was some of the best days they had had. They were going to the airport separately because Ten would greet his fans and since Johnny was supposed to be on a ‘secret schedule’, Ten’s dad volunteered to take the latter there early.

As Johnny said his goodbyes to Ten’s family, Ten’s dad asked him, “Have you found the one then, Johnny? I remember how romantic you were when we first met you.”

Ten had been texting Jaehyun and Winwin on their groupchat but his ears perked up.

WinkWink: DID YOU TELL HIM?

NotPeaches: YOU CAN DO IT, TEN, YOU CAN DO IT

ElevenMinusOne: Stop using caps, it’s making me more nervous!

I’ll tell him on the plane
Ten slid his phone into his pocket, waiting for Johnny’s reply to his father.

Johnny laughed. “Still single, still romantic.”

“It’s okay, son. Some good things take time. Now, I took forever to woo this wonderful lady but believe me all those long letters I wrote and the sonnets I read out…it all works out in the end. Just lay your heart bare when the right time and person comes along.”

Ten’s mom smiled fondly. “That kind of romance isn’t found anymore.”

Ten felt Johnny’s eyes on him, the stare almost piercing, before they swept away as Johnny nodded to his mom. “Not everyone appreciates that kind of stuff anymore, I guess.”

“That’s just bad taste then. Anyway, c’mon, son, we got to go or you’ll get swamped at the airport with our Ten’s farewell squad.”

“See you…” Ten’s voice trailed off as Johnny left without even looking at him, “…on the plane.”

The flight back was pretty uneventful. It was as if the mood of the last few days was totally changed. Johnny was silent for most the time which surprised Ten who stopped trying after several failed attempts at light conversation.

“I’ll see you tonight?” Ten asked, quietly. What he wanted to ask was, are you angry? Upset? But he didn’t know how to cross the chasm that opened up between them during times like this. What he wanted to hear was, yes, come by and we’ll talk it out.

“I have a fansign with the others. It might get late.”

Ten nodded sharply. “Okay.”

Johnny must have heard his tone because he looked at him with concern. “I meant that you might get tired.”

“Yeah, I’ll head to my dorm then.” Ten scowled.

Johnny nodded slowly.

They parted after the plane landed and Ten fumed as he saw the messages on ‘the trio’ groupchat.

WinkWink: Did you tell him omg

NotPeaches: What did he say omg

We planned a party already so tell us ALL the details asap

ElevenMinusOne: Can we not talk about him all the time?
so many things happened in this chapter omg did you enjoy it?

let us know what you thought of the chapter! and the next update is going to be very eventful please look forward to it :D
He’s nearly sleep-walking

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

[6:10 am]

Johns: Good morning, Tennn!

[7:55 pm]

10/10: You wanna grab dinner?

[8:15 pm]

Johns: There’s NNN tonight :/

[6:10 am]

Johns: Good morning, sunshine!

[9:40 am]

10/10: Let’s try the new café

Johns: Would love to but let’s do it maybe day after?

I have a schedule today

[6:10 am]

Johns: Good morning, Tennie

[9:58 pm]

10/10: Jaehyun told me you guys don’t have NNN tonight

Want to get dinner?

[10:10 pm]

Johns: I’ll be free later than usual, I think

I’m really sorry

I promise I’ll make it up to you

Ten sighed and resisted the urge to throw his phone across the practice room.
“Johnny?” Kun asked, sitting on the floor beside him.

Ten nodded. “I know he is really busy but I wish I could at least meet him. Even if for just a few minutes. Here I am, distracted out of my wits because I miss him so much and there he is…” He shrugged.

The room’s door opened and someone peeped in.

“Doyoung hyung!” Lucas greeted, leaving his dance practice to run past Ten and Kun towards the door.

“Hey, Lucas,” Doyoung said, smiling. “Hey, Ten, Kun. Johnny and I ordered some chicken for ourselves and since I heard you guys might be here, I ordered some extra.”

Lucas clapped excitedly. “This is why you’re my favourite.” He took the takeaway from Doyoung, pulling him towards their group. “Let’s eat.”

Ten, however, zeroed in on something else. “Wait, Johnny is here?” There was already a hint of a smile around his eyes.

“Yeah, he’s still practicing in 415. He said he’ll eat later,” Doyoung informed, sitting down beside them. “I told him he’s too tired to practice but he doesn’t listen. He’s nearly sleep-walking these days.”

Ten stood up, not really listening anymore. “I’ll be back.” He rushed out of the room.

Lucas’ phone rang before he could grab a bite of the takeaway and his face brightened as he saw the caller ID. “Excuse me, guys.” He got up too. As he walked out of the room, he could be heard talking on the phone, “Hey, Jungwoo. What’s up, man?”

Kun laid out the takeaway carefully and the two of them began to eat. “I thought you guys finished practice a while ago.”

“Johnny missed a session a few days ago and he stayed back. I decided to stay back too since he looked sad.”

Kun raised an eyebrow.

“What?” Doyoung asked, setting down his chopsticks.

“Nothing.”

“Go on, say it.”

Kun tilted his head. “I…Is it just me or do you like spending time with sad people?” He blushed at how harsh his words sounded, inadvertently letting out his inner frustration, and started to apologize, not having meant them that way.

It was Doyoung’s turn to raise an eyebrow but he just smiled impishly. “Why? Are you sad?”

Kun opened his mouth to retaliate and then closed it.

Doyoung continued to eat. “I guess, I want to be there for any one of us who’s hurting. I mean, you all are there for me always. So, even if I can’t do anything, I want to be there too…for some kind of comfort—support, I don’t know—does it make sense?”
Kun was silent for a long while and then, said, “You are a really nice guy.”

“So, will you tell this nice guy what’s got you in a bad mood?”

Kun look flustered. “I’m not—”

“C’mon, I know you’re worried or irritated or both about something and I’ve been told I am an excellent listener,” Doyoung said, nudging him with his shoulder softly.

“You wo—” Kun stopped as the door opened and Lucas bounded in.

“Please tell me you guys left something for me!” the tall guy said, laughing.

When Ten peeped into the practice room, he nearly didn’t see Johnny. The latter was lying on the floor, his chest rising and falling as he breathed while he looked at the ceiling.

“Johnny?” Ten said, suddenly feeling nervous. He wanted to ask why Johnny hadn’t told him that he was practicing late. No, scratch that, what he wanted to ask was—*are you still ignoring me? Are you upset?* He felt a flare of angry irritation in his chest. He didn’t even know what he had done for Johnny to behave this way ever since their flight back to Seoul. But there was also that bigger part of him which knew that he was letting all the stress of endless practices get to him and that it was unfair to drag Johnny into a conversation, albeit an important and dangerously pending one, the latter might not want to talk about.

Johnny was still staring at the ceiling when he breathed out. “Ten.”

Ten’s heart fell as he noted that Johnny hadn’t even looked at him. The flare of anger leapt up again. It was a combination of sleeplessness, aching limbs and the fact that Johnny was making him feel really, insignificantly small. He sidled up to him and lay down beside him.

“See something interesting?” Ten asked, following his gaze to the ceiling.

Johnny turned his head towards him and gave a small, rueful smile. “I think I pulled a muscle.”

Ten blinked as he took in Johnny’s faint pink cheeks, tired eyes and damp hair flopping over his forehead, and then, frowned. “Where? Let me help you,” he said, half-getting up.


“Come, I’ll take you back to your dorm.”

Johnny shook his head. “You practice. Doyoung will take me.”

“Doyoung’s eating. I can practice some extra tomorrow. So, don’t worry. Besides, a night with me? Healing,” he winked.

“Seriously, it’s not a big deal. If Doyoung is busy, I can ask Taeil hyung to pick me up. Don’t bother,” Johnny said, looking steadfastly at the ceiling again. “You go practice. The earlier you practice, the earlier practice gets over.”

There was silence.

“Just say you don’t want me near you,” Ten said, bitterly.
Johnny sat up. “What?”

Ten got up too, standing as if to leave. “I know you’re busy, Johnny. I know you guys had to jump straight from Regular schedule to Regulate preparations but seriously!? You cancel every plan I suggest and now you don’t even want me to come to your dorm?”

“When did I say that? You’re creating drama out of nothing,” Johnny sighed.

“The old Johnny made time even when things were tough. I thought that’s what we both did. We put each other first. You’ve changed and I hate this so much.”


“Okay, so I am overdramatic and stupid. Anything else you’d like to add?” Ten crossed his arms across his chest.

Johnny stepped close to him, putting his hands on his shoulders. He looked at him with sudden understanding. “Ten, I know you’re stressed with practices and the unit being pushed back but it’ll be fine, I promise. It’ll be worth it when the day comes.”

Ten flinched away. “See this is the thing. You assume things on your own. You don’t even want to know what’s wrong but expect me to pick up the hints. You used to be a thoughtful person.”

“Okay,” Johnny took a deep breath, “what’s wrong?”

“You forgot me, Johnny. I don’t know what’s happened to you. Do you even care about me? From where I stand, all I see is you pushing me away. I feel so replaced all the time and I’m not even supposed to say anything in retaliation? So, don’t give me your pity. Just don’t pretend like you care one moment only to ignore me in another. I’m not your puppet, dancing to whatever call you decide to make today. Make up your mind and if you can’t, just stay away from me!”

“Ten,” Johnny’s voice was low, an almost dangerous edge to it, “shut up.”

“Or what?”

“You of all people should know better than to accuse me of these things. You know how I feel,” Johnny said, looking at him with a precise gaze.

Ten walked towards the door, cold decision apparent in his posture. “Save it. I don’t care.”

Johnny stared at him in shock. He swallowed the emotions that were fighting in his throat and said, “Wow, Ten, you amaze me every time. I should get used to the fact that you don’t—can’t—understand anything about me but like to create whatever narrative you want about me. When it comes to the two of us, remember that I have been more patient while you have been insensitive. Don’t you dare accuse me of thoughtlessness.” Johnny was breathing heavily. “Yes, walk away from me. Stay away. You hear me? You stay away.”

“It gives me no pleasure to stay with you either,” Ten said, gritting his teeth as he walked out.

He was sobbing by the time he reached his practice room to grab his things. Kun and Doyoung were laughing over something Lucas was animatedly retelling. They watched him cross the room and went quiet.

“Ten, wha—?” Kun began, getting up.
“I’ll see you at the dorm. I don’t feel hungry.” Ten hated how his voice wobbled. He ran out of the room, rubbing his eyes.


Ten allowed him to walk with him but wouldn’t tell him a word, opting to hide his face beneath his hoodie. “I’m okay, Kun. Leave me alone.”

It was only when they reached the dorm and Kun threatened to call Johnny that Ten burst into tears. Kun hugged him, patting his back, wishing he knew what to do.

“He hates me. He hates me so much.”

Kun shushed him. “He doesn’t. It’s Johnny. He adores you.”

“No,” Ten wailed, “he told me he wants me to stay away. It was so horrible.”

“I’m sure it’ll be fine. He’ll call to apologize in the morning you just see.”

“He won’t. We fought so badly. I didn’t want this to happen.”

Through the haze of tears, Ten realized that someone had placed a cup of tea in front of him. He looked up and saw a sympathetic Jaemin trying to skulk away quietly. He realized where he was and wiped his tears. He detached himself from a concerned Kun and turned towards where the Dreamies were hiding, watching him with sympathy, a couple of them even tearing up. He cracked a watery smile. “I’m sorry you guys had to see that. I’m going to my room.” He walked to his room and locked the door behind him.

“Is Ten hyung going to be okay?” Jisung asked Kun.

“I hope you kids have gone back to playing your irritating and loud games and are not talking about me,” Ten said through his bedroom door.

Kun sighed. “It’s Ten and Johnny. They’ll be fine.”

The dreamies nodded, disappearing into their rooms, whispering.

Kun sat down on the couch and pulled out his phone.

Somewhere in the night, Johnny’s phone was blinking with messages.

**Doyoungie:** Dude, you better explain what happened

Ten was crying wtf

**Kun Mama:** I don’t know what happened but Ten is really upset

Johnny

Johnny?

**Taeyongie:** Hey, so um, Jaehyun is sleeping in your bed tonight

You’re rooming with Haechan
Please tell me it’s okay?

Chapter End Notes

this was so heartbreaking omg :( when will these idiots learn?
so what do you think will happen next? please share your thoughts with us.
I don't care about him

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Ten had walked out of the practice room, Johnny had stood there feeling a medley of emotions. He was so upset, he could feel his body shaking. He wanted to shout and cry at the same time. He wished he had just gone back with the others because anything would be better than what he was feeling now. He had thought that things were fine. He had thought he could make it fine. Turns out he couldn’t do anything.

He willed himself to pull it together at least until he was out of this place. With trembling hands, he grabbed his bag and cap and walked to the service stairs that lead to a backdoor on the ground floor. He was in no mood to meet anyone.

And yet when he let himself out into the cold night air, he found himself stopping by the figure who was sitting huddle on the edge of the stairs.

“Yuta?” he asked, his tone incredulous.

The figure moved slightly. “No, umm, it’s not me. Please ignore and move on.”

Johnny crouched down beside him. “Didn’t you go back with the others? Since when have you been outside here? You must be freezing.” He reached for his hands and it felt like he was holding ice.

Yuta giggled. “Everyone is too fucking busy. Taeyong was busy with Jaehyun. And Winwin…well, fuck him. He thinks he’s a prince.”

“Are you drunk?” Johnny helped him to his feet but he could see how he was swaying.

Yuta smiled. “Just a tiny bit. It feels amazing. I can’t feel anything. Take that Winwin!” He threw an empty can towards the fence.

It was then that Johnny realized that Yuta was sitting with a bunch of mostly empty beer cans throwing them at an anime version of Winwin he had drawn clumsily on the fence.

“I don’t care about him,” Yuta told Johnny.

Johnny sighed. “Let’s get you home, okay? We’ll talk about why this is all wrong when you’re sober in the morning. Come on.”

Yuta didn’t budge. “I don’t want to go home. I want to have coffee.”

“Now? I don’t even know what coffee on beer does to a person. I’m taking you home. End of discussion.”

“You’re being mean to me. Everyone is being mean to me. What did I do to deserve this?” Yuta sniffled.

“Okay, okay, we’ll get you coffee but then you’re agreeing to come home with me. Okay?”

“Okayyy.”

“Starbucks?”
“Yes. And you, stop smirking at me.” Yuta stuck out his tongue at the Winwin drawing on the fence.

They walked quietly. Johnny looked at his friend and felt a twinge of guilt. He had been so wrapped up in his own problems, he hadn’t even realized that Yuta might be suffering. Whatever tonight was, there was obviously something way too deep going on between Yuta and Winwin. He took off his hoodie when he saw Yuta shivering.

“Here,” he said, “you may not be feeling it but I can hear you teeth chattering with the cold. Sorry it might be a bit sweaty but I think you might turn into an ice block otherwise.”

Yuta took it without a word. He opened his mouth and then shook his head.

“What?”

“You know, I think I’m a lot drunk.”

Johnny laughed. “You were angry at Winwin. Yes, I would say you’re ‘a lot drunk’ because sober Yuta is never angry at him. You find excuses to clear his name.”

“No, I wasn’t angry at Winwinie, I meant that I couldn’t find our dorm. I was going to go back home after buying some beer but I just couldn’t find the place so I went back to where we were practicing. I was feeling tired so I thought I’d sit down for a bit and next thing I know…”

“Next thing you know, the great Johnny has rescued you?”

“No, I see my friend looking like he’s crying and I was like, Johnny? Why is he crying? Why are you crying?”

Johnny stopped. “I am not.”

“You aren’t?” Yuta squinted at his face. “Oof, you’re out of focus.” He stared. “You aren’t? Guess I am drunk but you have to admit I am an easy drunk to take care of.”

“I prefer a drunk Taeyong over you right now.”

Yuta laughed. “He’s so difficult to handle. What are you saying!?”

They entered the coffee shop together and soon they were seated across from each other, feeling the cold thaw. Johnny found himself calming down and inadvertently, his conversation with Ten kept replaying in his head and while he knew Ten had been wrong in saying all that he had said, he was forced to admit to himself that he wasn’t absolved of some guilt too. And that hurt him.

Yuta was telling him how much he hated Winwin. “Like his smile, ugh, why is it so beautiful? Have you seen him smile, Johnny? Don’t you hate how wonderful he is? Because I do. His voice is soft and I hate how I want to listen to him always. You know, he sounds just as beautiful when he speaks Japanese. I hate him.”

Johnny laughed again. “You keep using that word. I don’t think you know what it means because I’m pretty sure you mean you love him.”

Yuta stared. “You’re crying again.”

Johnny frowned and touched his cheek, looking surprised at the moisture. “No, I am not.” His face crumpled. “Oh god, what is happening to me?” His shoulders shook. “I’m so sorry. I know you are sad and I should be strong for you but oh god, why can’t I stop crying?”
“Joh—”

“Let’s leave,” Johnny said, getting up.

They walked out and Yuta’s head must have cleared in the air because he sprang to action. He rubbed Johnny’s back. “Hey, hey, it’s alright. You can tell me.”

“I thought I had it under control but it hurts so much. All the time. I really thought that I was managing it but now he’s upset too and I hate this, I hate hurting him and I am so…”

“Angry at yourself?” Yuta said, softly, his eyes filled with understanding. “I know I am the last person who should be giving this advice, but you shouldn’t be angry at yourself.”

“But I am!” Johnny said. “Everything up till now has been for nothing because, Yuta, you don’t know, how rude I was tonight.”

“Then, go apologize.”

Johnny ran a hand through his hair. “I don’t think he would take my apology at this point. He was angry too.” He sighed. “Plus, he’s got this weird idea that I don’t want him near me. Yeah sure, it’s tough sometimes when he’s all flirting without really meaning it but I treasure him as a friend and I don’t know how many times I have to tell him that he is my priority.”

“Maybe Ten doesn’t want to be your friend anymore.”

Johnny’s face fell.

Yuta quickly added. “Maybe he wants to be more.”

“No, he doesn’t. There are things you don’t know.” Johnny had the grace to blush as he revealed to Yuta about his confession and rejection.

“You don’t look surprised.”

“I knew bits and pieces,” Yuta said, shrugging. “I figured you’d tell if you wanted to.”

“I’m sorry I kept it from you.”

“Don’t be. We’re cool.” Yuta stared at the building as they reached their dorm. “I can’t believe I couldn’t remember this place.” He looked at Johnny. “Dude, I don’t know why Ten does anything he does but I know he likes you and maybe he’s just stupid but one conversation, you can start with the small things, and please, an actual conversation—no love letters, to be honest, they’re outdated—this time. If nothing, he’ll know you’re sorry for tonight and that mends stuff, right?”

Johnny nodded slowly. “You’re really good at this whole heart-to-heart.”

“Only when drunk, I’ve been told.”

“Okay, I’ll get going then,” Johnny said, as he ushered Yuta into the dorm.

“You’re going to Ten right now?”

Johnny nodded.

“It’s three-thirty,” Yuta whispered, pointing to the clock in their living room. “Or am I seeing things?”
“Yes, it’s three-thirty but better now than later, right?”

Yuta took a deep breath, looking slightly green. “Okay, good luck. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I think I’m going to be sick.”

“Oh, should I help?”

“No, please. Go away now.”

Johnny grinned as he watched Yuta grumbling in the dark. He tip-toed over to the room Yuta shared with Winwin and Taeil.

“Winwin?” he whispered, tapping the sleeping guy’s shoulder.

Winwin cursed sleepily.

“I think Yuta is sick. Could you take care of him? I have to leave.”

Winwin sat up. “What happened?”

“Had too much to drink, I guess. Just—”

But Winwin was already rushing out of the room.

When Johnny reached the Dream dorm, he had lost what little motivation the pep talk with Yuta had given him. He was seriously reconsidering the whole ‘apology at three-thirty in the night’ plan. Maybe he should have texted it but he remembered how adamant Yuta had been for it to be an actual conversation.

“Okay, Johnny,” he told himself as he rang the bell, “actual conversations, for once.”

It took quite a while and another ring for the door to be opened.

A sleepy Kun opened the door, looking bewildered. “It’s not even sunrise!”

“Hey, Kun, sorry I woke you up but this is really urgent,” Johnny said. “I really need to see Ten.”

He stopped mid-way towards Ten’s room. “Um, how upset is he?”

Kun blinked, still sleepy. “Uh, yeah. He was really upset when we came home and then he locked himself in his room. We tried to get him out for dinner but he told me to ‘fuck off, you gingerbread man, can’t I just be angry in peace?’ So yeah, he is really not in a great mood.”

“Upset and hungry. Great, he’s going to kill me,” Johnny said, downcast.

“Yeah, I don’t think a single apology is going to do it but it’s a starting place. Also, I would really appreciate if you guys filled me in to the whole picture one of these days because I really don’t know what to make of you two anymore.”

“I’m sorry. Soon.”

Kun gave him a look but retreated to his room after giving him an encouraging nod.

Johnny, grateful for the privacy, walked to Ten’s bedroom and knocked. “Hey, Ten?”

For the first time since his impromptu plan he was faced with the question of whether Ten was awake or not. Maybe I should have waited till morning, he thought.
“Um, are you awake, Ten? It’s me, Johnny.”

He knocked again, slightly loudly.

“I came to apologize. If you aren’t sleeping, can we please talk?”

Ten’s voice was sharp through the door. “Do you think after what you did I would have the mental peace to lie down and just sleep? Can’t you let me be?”

“Ten, c’mon, don’t be this way.”

“I told Kun not to call you. You shouldn’t have come.”

“Wha--!? No. Please, just let me in.”

Inside the room, Ten huffed. He knew what would happen if he let Johnny in. He would forgive him and Johnny would forgive him. They would continue to avoid the fact that they were falling apart. He would never tell Johnny that it was so difficult sometimes to see Johnny and not kiss him, to feel his presence beside him but not be able to tell that he adored him, he admired him, he loved him so much. Ten knew he was destroying himself at this point and taking it out on Johnny. No, he couldn’t let Johnny in. He couldn’t let Johnny see his puffy, tear-stained face and see just how much he affected him. Because what Ten wanted, he believed Johnny didn’t, and so there had to be a line and he was going to have to draw it.

“I’m sleeping, Johnny.”

Maybe it was how tired his voice sounded or the fact that both of them knew he was giving up, but Johnny nodded, more to himself than to Ten who was behind a locked door, and stepped back. “I’m sorry, Ten.”

He left without meeting Kun.

Ten heard him walk away. A click, the front door closed. There was a river of pain at the back of his throat. He curled up in his bed and tried to breathe over it. His eyes caught sight of the polaroids hanging around in his room.

It was them, the two of them and their friends but it was so obvious it was the two of them, growing up through the years. It had been so easy in those early days. Whenever he found anything tough, there was this tall, comforting boy who would step up beside him and make everything okay. They had been friends first but he had fallen for him so easily and quickly. So many cafés they had explored together. Johnny loved coffee and he loved going anywhere with Johnny. It was like every memory he had of his life in Korea was stamped with Johnny’s presence.

He felt a surge of emotions. Johnny was everywhere. He couldn’t even escape him in his own room. Johnny had entered his life and taken it over and now, Ten didn’t know how to organize his life.

He pulled down a couple of the polaroids, the ones where he looked the happiest because they hurt the most right now but soon, he was overtaken by an almost furious impulse to destroy everything that reminded him of him. Some pictures wouldn’t come off easily and then there were the birthday cards with long, long wishes inside and they all infuriated him.

“Why are you everywhere?” he shouted.

He emptied a box by overturning it messily in a corner of the room and started throwing things inside. He wanted to throw every piece of suffocating memory away. Except more pictures fell out
of the box rather than in it and maybe it was because of that or maybe it was because he couldn’t reach the painting Johnny had got for him, soon Ten was just throwing things across his room.

He caught sight of his open sketchbook and he hated the fact that most of it was filled with half-drawn sketches of Johnny that he did in the name of portrait-drawing practices. He was so stupid. Johnny was right, he was stupid. He pulled out his sketchbooks from the shelf and was in the process of throwing them when he caught sight of the wretched book that Johnny had given him for his birthday. He threw it to the floor with special vengeance, hearing it fall and thud.

“To think I read the whole boring summary to impress him!”

After having wrecked his room thoroughly, he felt no less sad but definitely exhausted. He climbed onto his bed and fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

omg don’t hate us for this, please! we promise the next chapter will be up real soon and there will be quite a few revelations, including kun’s side story but what do you think is going to happen with johnten?

also, did you see the yuta side-plot developing? hmm, wonder what that means ;)


Kun groaned as his phone woke him up, ringing shrilly. It had been quite a busy night and it was not even seven yet, judging by the clock in his room. He reached for his phone, wondering who wasn’t letting him sleep.

“Doyoung, I’m sleeping,” he said, voice hoarse.

“Kun, come over right now.”

Kun sat up, hearing the serious tone of Doyoung’s voice. “Is everything okay? Is it the members?”

“No, it’s you. Dammit, what were you thinking, Kun?”

Kun felt a dread set in at the bottom of his heart. He immediately knew what Doyoung was talking about. He just knew. “I’m coming over.”

He dressed quickly, way too quickly for someone whose mind was a whirlwind of quick thoughts and questions, thinking explanations and excuses knowing very well that it was the truth he would have to finally own up to.

He woke up Lucas. “Hey, there’s an emergency. You’re the designated adult until I’m back.”

Lucas blinked. “Wha—Is everything okay? Is there something I can help with?”

Kun smiled at him. “Nothing I can’t manage, I hope. Just take care of stuff here, okay?”

“Of course. Call me if you need anything.”

“I’ll get going then. Bye.”

Lucas walked with him till the door and gave him a packet of chips. “Don’t go hungry.”

Kun waved at him and closed the door behind him.

Lucas looked around the empty living room and said to himself, “I guess, I should fix up breakfast for the kids then.” He didn’t really know what to make except for ramen so he woke up Jaemin who nodded, sleepily, before getting up to make some coffee, cereal and toast for everyone.

Lucas knocked on Ten’s door. “Ten hyung, you didn’t even have dinner. You have to eat some breakfast at least. Just let me give you a tray of food.”

And even though Ten was quite awake and quite hungry, he was too miserable to face the others. So, he said a mild, “I’m not hungry.”

Lucas sighed. “Okay, that’s it.” He turned to the dreamies. “Let’s find a YouTube tutorial on how to pick locks and just…”

“Break into his room and drag him out?” Renjun’s eyes lit up. Chensung cheered.

“Not drag him out exactly. A milder version maybe?”
And that was how they ended up picking the lock of Ten’s room. Before Ten could even say anything, Lucas was slipping into his room after having told the kids, “Let me handle this. You all eat breakfast.”

Lucas stopped after he closed the door behind him because the room was in a mess. “What happened?”

Ten was sitting on the bed, glaring at him. “How dare you break into my room?”

“Did you try redecorating?” Lucas said, gesturing at toppled over box of knickknacks, pictures and books strewn across the floor.

“Your humour is going bad,” Ten said, looking away.

“I think one of your paint bottles broke,” Lucas said. “Wait, I’ll get a cloth to clean it.” He returned with a tray of food which he deposited wordlessly beside Ten and began to clean up the room.

“Throw them away,” Ten said, mournfully picking up a piece of toast.

“Your pictures and sketchbooks? Ten, I’m going to put everything in your shelves. You can sort through them later. If you really don’t want your stuff, I’ll put it in my cupboard until you need them.”

Ten groaned. “Why are you here all kind and wise? Where is my Kun? I need to bother someone.”

Lucas smiled brightly. “I’m the designated adult. Kun had to leave due to some emergency. It’s not serious.”

“He made you the designated adult? Excuse me, I’m elder to you.”

Lucas stood straight and just looked around the room as an answer.

Ten blushed. He began eating and picked up his phone. He caught sight of his reflection and was grateful that Lucas hadn’t commented anything on his appearance because his face was puffy and his eyes were bloodshot, harsh remnants of the past few hours. He unlocked his phone and even though he hadn’t been expecting it, his heart dropped because there was no “good morning” message from Johnny at the usual ten past six at the crack of dawn.

He scrolled up and it saddened him because it seemed like this was the first in what seemed like forever that there wasn’t a text that said, New message from Johns! (6:10 am). So, this was another thing he had taken for granted. He wondered just how many more he would find and whether it would always hurt this much. He closed his eyes and threw away his phone towards his pillow.

Lucas was grumbling. “Why did you throw your sketchbooks? And this is a record…it could have broken. Wow, I’m glad that that painting is still on the wall.”

Ten glared at him. “I couldn’t take it down.”

It dawned on Lucas suddenly. He began to laugh. “Oh my God! You couldn’t reach it, right?”

Ten ignored him, eating his breakfast, watching him clean up his room, listening to his unrelenting commentary.

“Oh,” Lucas picked up a book that was lying spread-eagled on the floor, “I was thinking of asking you. Can I borrow your copy of Crime and Punishment? Since you’re not readin—Oops.” He
looked at Ten, guiltily. “I swear, that page fell out on its own.” He picked up the thin sheet of folded paper. “Phew, it’s not from the book. You seriously shouldn’t keep your documents just inside books like that.”

Ten frowned. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. What document?”

Lucas opened the letter. “To, the love of my life—” He reddened. “I’m sorry. I didn’t realize it was a personal letter.”

Ten got up and walked to him. “What are you talking about?” He took the letter and his eyes widened as he read.

To, the love of my life,

This isn’t really your birthday gift, you know? Well, it is. Kind of. It’s part of your birthday gift. This is my copy of Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoevsky. I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking, “I can’t believe you gave me an old book for my birthday, John!” but this is a special copy! Seriously, don’t laugh. I was reading this book when you dislocated your arm and I remember I felt like I would die seeing you get hurt like that. And that I wanted to kiss you so bad when the doctor set it right.

Ten gripped Lucas’ arms tightly. “Where did you find this?”

“I-It fell out of the book. I swear, I didn’t do anything.”

Ten blinked back tears. All he could think of was no no, this can’t be. How can this be? But the letter was there in his hands and he was reading it. It was Johnny’s writing. He turned it over and there it was. I’ll always love you. Be mine?—Your Johns. P.S. Don’t you dare laugh at me for this. I will spread your ugly baby pictures online!

Ten’s voice was faint as he asked Lucas, “Where’s Kun? Oh god, I don’t know what to do. Please call him.”

“He left. He had an emergency, remember? What is it?”

Ten’s hands were trembling as he flipped the letter and began to read it again. “It’s Johnny…He wrote a letter and ugh, why didn’t he tell me?”

I was like woah, I really like this Thai guy. No, that I knew since quite a while. I was like woah, I love Ten. I’d do anything for Ten. Whenever I read this book again or whenever I look at it, I remember that moment once again.

Oh no, this is not how this letter was supposed to start. Ugh, it was supposed to be more poetic. Just ignore what you read and think that it starts from here, okay?

Ten, I think you’re a wonderful person. You make me so happy. I love traveling with you, trying out new things with you and I probably think more of you than is necessary but that’s not really my fault now, is it? You’re breathtaking.

Thank you for always being there for me. You made the tough times bearable and the good times magical. Do you know that you are the first thought that crosses my mind when I wake up? I hate being away from you. I like that you don’t mind that I spam you with texts but hey, am I not an amazing person to talk to? Plus, I send you memes. Appreciate me, please, I’m trying to serenade a guy I like through a whole letter. Points for effort, okay?
Ten was crying. “I didn’t even read it. It’s been months. No wonder he...oh my god, how did he even get through these months when I have been an ignorant fool?”

“Don’t cry,” Lucas said, looking bewildered as he patted Ten’s back.

*I’ll be waiting for you on the rooftop, Ten, so if you feel the same way meet me there and I promise, I’ll spend my whole life treating you like the star you are.*

“Oh God, he waited and I didn’t go and it was all because I was upset that he gave me a book instead of something romantic like I had hoped for. I didn’t even read the book. I didn’t even flip through it. And all this time, I thought...I behaved so...I have been horrible to him. This is why he hates me now. I disappointed him. I hurt him. Lucas, what do I do?”

*If you don’t come, I’ll know and I’ll accept it. Ten, and I’m saying this really seriously, there’s no pressure. If you don’t feel the same way, know that I’ll understand and we will remain best friends and I will respect your decision just like I respect you. If you’re not down for taking a step further than what we are right now, I promise I will never speak of it again. I don’t want this to make things weird or uncomfortable. Whatever you want, I’m okay with that. So, it’s okay, okay? Either way, I’ll always be your best friend.*

Suddenly, things made sense to Ten. Johnny’s incessant questions about his having read the book in those early weeks after Ten’s birthday, Johnny changing his behaviour towards him, Johnny flinching away from his touch, from things that had become almost natural for them, Johnny retreating after doing anything even mildly resembling affection.

“He thinks I rejected him,” Ten said. He picked up his phone and dialled Johnny’s number. “Please pick up, please pick up. Johnny, please!” He dialled Jaehyun’s number next and then, Winwin’s. None of his friends were answering. It was too early, maybe. And Johnny, Johnny who woke up early was probably ignoring him by now. After everything, Ten wouldn’t blame him if he was. There was only so much someone could take.

He sobbed as he remembered Johnny’s words from last night. Johnny hadn’t been angry or inconsiderate. He had been hurt when he had said, “Wow, Ten, you amaze me every time. I should get used to the fact that you don’t—can’t—understand anything about me but like to create whatever narrative you want about me. When it comes to the two of us, remember that I have been more patient while you have been insensitive. Don’t you dare accuse me of thoughtlessness!”

It was all so clear now. He had been a fool.

“I messed it up. I messed up everything.”

Lucas pulled him into a hug. “Stop crying so much. Drink some water and then, go to hyung’s dorm.”

“He won’t listen to me. He’ll hate me even more. Lucas, he asked me so many times about the letter but I kept on thinking he was asking me about the wretched book and I lied. I said horrible things. Turns out I made him wait on the terrace and made him feel rejected while being all friendly and...flirty with him all this time. He must have such a low opinion of me by now. I can’t imagine why he still remained friends with me. I don’t deserve him.” Ten sniffled.

Lucas shook his head. “He loves you, remember? Of course, he’ll listen to you. Things will be fine.”

“Promise?”

“Promise. Now, go.”
And so Ten went. More like he ran because he reached the other dorm in record timing.

[Nearly an hour ago]

Kun rang the doorbell to the 127 dorm a bit louder than normally. It was probably the nervous energy bubbling inside him.

Taeil opened the door and greeted. “Hi, Kun. What’s up?”

“Hello, hyung. I was just—”

“Oh my god, Kun hyung, guess what? I have the tea,” Haechan interrupted them. “You won’t believe it!”

“Haechan,” Taeyong warned. “Let Kun have a seat at least.”

“Actually, I came to meet Doyoung,” Kun said, smiling apologetically. “Give me a sec.”

“So, you know about Doyoungie hyung too?” Mark said. “The news is sure spreading quickly.”

Jaehyun wondered aloud. “I still can’t believe he didn’t tell us.”

“He used to be on the phone a lot. When I asked him why he was smiling, he always said he’s watching a drama,” Taeil said.

“I still can’t believe he gifted him the hoodie I designed for him,” Taeyong complained.

“What are you all…?” Kun asked, looking very confused.

“You don’t know?” Mark asked.

“Doyoung hyung is dating a model from YG!” Haechan announced dramatically.

Kun felt the colour drain from his face. “What?”

“Yeah, see this article from Koreaboo. It’s trending. And the pictures are all over Naver searches.” Haechan handed him his phone.

Kun stared at the pictures of the model who was smiling at his fans at the airport. He looked at his members. “How did Doyoung get dragged in the scandal? He isn’t even there. This is just Jun-Ki.”

“You know Park Jun-Ki?” Taeyong asked. “How come I’m the only one who didn’t know?”

“He’s famous, dude. He’s going to star in this amazing drama. The posters are everywhere,” Taeil said.

“Guys,” Kun began.

Jaehyun answered his question. “Oh well, his fans and ours put together stuff. See this hoodie he’s wearing. This is the hoodie Taeyong designed and made for Doyoung during our talent show last year. See the sleeve has D-O-Y-O-U-N-G written in huge letters. I don’t know what they were thinking but the fans not only got it but it spread online.”

“Ya, Park Jun-Ki is a legend. When OP’s friend asked him where he got the hoodie from, he said it
belongs to his ‘cute’ boyfriend,” Haechan said in admiration. “The man has got courage. No wonder Doyoung likes him.”

“OP’s other friend says she asked him if his boyfriend works at SM and he said, and I quote, ‘yes, please cheer for his sexy ass!’ Aww, this is kind of cute,” Taeil said. “I mean, we all know Doyoung doesn’t even have an ass. It must be true love for it to be this delusional.”

“He should have told us though. To think we had to find it through the media,” Taeyong said. “We would have thrown him a party!”

“Guys,” Kun had been trying to squeeze into the conversation. “Guys!”

Everyone quietened down.

Kun looked at them with worry. “It’s not Doyoung who is dating Jun-Ki. It’s me.”

“Oh shit,” Mark said, before covering his mouth.

Haechan stared in shock.

Taeil whistled. “The plot thickens.”

Taeyong’s eyes widened as he opened and shut his mouth like a goldfish.

Jaehyun nodded slowly. “Suddenly, the ‘sexy ass’ comment makes sense.” Taeyong slapped his arm and asked, “Wait, but how does he have Doyoung’s hoodie?”

Kun sat down on the couch, misery evident on his features. “Doyoung lent it to me when we went out with Johnny and Ten once. I must have left at Jun-Ki-ya’s place that night.”

“Oh no, he spent the night at a YG artist’s place,” Haechan said. “The plot indeed thickens.”

“Shut up, Haechan,” Mark whispered.

“Where’s Doyoung?” Kun asked. “He called me here. Why didn’t he tell you guys?”

They looked at each other, unsure how to relay the news.

“Manager hyung picked him up. They left a few minutes before you came. He’s probably in a disciplinary meeting with the press team as they decide what’s to be done,” Taeil finally supplied.

“Fuck,” Kun said, dialling Doyoung’s number quickly.

“Did he just—?” Taeyong asked.

“Yes, he cursed,” Jaehyun confirmed.

Haechan wiped a fake tear. “Hyung is growing up.”

Mark sighed. “I’m worried about Doyoungie hyung. He must be in so much trouble and imagine, he doesn’t even know what’s happening.”

Everyone looked worried.

“You’re right,” Taeil said. “The management must be freaking out right now.”

“I hope Doyoungie is okay,” Taeyong said.
“He isn’t answering calls or messages. He must be in the meeting still. I’m going there. I’ll tell them it’s me. I can’t have him suffer because of me.” Kun walked towards the door with determination.

The door opened and in stepped Doyoung looking annoyed. His expression changed when he saw Kun and the others. “Quite a party here so early in the morning?”

Kun grasped his shoulder. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine.” Doyoung smiled at him. He turned to the others. “Sorry I didn’t tell you guys before—”

“Save it,” Taeyong rolled his eyes. “We know you’re not dating the YG guy.”

“Park Jun-Ki,” Haechan provided.

“Yeah, that guy.”

Doyoung’s eyes widened and he looked at Kun. “Wait, you told them?”

“How long have you known?” Mark asked Doyoung.

“I found out when I saw the news in the morning. My name was everywhere and to be honest, I freaked out but when I saw the pictures with the hoodie, I put two and two together. I remembered giving Kun the hoodie because he thought wearing a flimsy denim jacket at night was a great choice.” Doyoung smirked. “I know, I am super smart.”

“Doyoung, what did the management say?” Kun asked, still worried.

“You needn’t worry about them. They asked me if I was dating Park Jun-Ki. I said yes and apologized a million times. The management told me to break up with him. Easy since we weren’t dating in the first place. They are going to release a statement later that we aren’t dating. I’m basically on house arrest until the foreseeable future but ha, little do they know I don’t go out of my room anyway. It’s all settled. You’ll be fine. Just tell your stupid boyfriend to release a statement saying the same stuff and not to wear my hoodie or say weird stuff to the public in the future.” He informed the others, “Oh, and we don’t have any schedule today because of what they are calling my ‘stunt’. We can all chill.”

The others joked about Doyoung and congratulated Kun on his relationship, telling him off for keeping it under the wraps for so long, simultaneously asking him for details.

Kun looked uncomfortably guilty all along and as soon as he could, he dragged Doyoung to the latter’s room. “Are you crazy? Why did you do it? This could have affected your career!”

“You’re happy with him and you no doubt kept it a secret because you value your privacy. Congratulations, by the way,” Doyoung said, smiling at him.

Outside the room, things were just settling down when Ten rushed into the dorm, out of breath. He didn’t greet anyone, just rushed to Johnny’s room.

“Where is he?” He rushed out and asked the others. “Where did he go?”


“Jaehyun, I messed up. It’s all over now,” Ten said, clutching his phone as he tried once again to get in touch with Johnny.
Yuta walked down the stairs, followed by a yawning Winwin. “Johnny, your phone keeps ringing. Where are you?”

“Why do you have his phone?” Ten asked.

“It was in his hoodie that I borrowed,” Yuta said, defensively.

Taeil sighed. “These hoodies can be very dangerous.”

As little by little, they got filled in to the Johnten story, Winwin rubbed Ten’s back comfortingly while everyone tried to find out where Johnny was.

“He’s not with his Daegu cousin.”

“Not with his friends.”

“Not with him either.”

“Did you try him?”

“He’s not there too.”

“Oh wait, found him.”

Ten looked at Taeyong with hope. “Where is he?” His voice was hoarse from crying.

“He crashed at Sehun hyung’s place for the night. Sehun said he’s sleeping and he’ll wake him up if it’s important. What should I say?”

“Let me talk to Sehun hyung.” Ten took Taeyong’s phone. He came back in a few minutes and handed back the phone. “Thank you, Taeyong. I owe you.”

“Just…take care of him this time,” Taeyong told him.

“I hope he lets me.”

“Where are you going?”

Ten replied, “I’m going to wait on the terrace.”

Chapter End Notes

so many revelations! you have to tell us what you thought of this chapter. TEN FINALLY FOUND THE LETTER! we finally know what's up with kun (or at least most of it...wait there's more?)

how many of you still ship dokun though? dokun or junkun? ;)

be ready for the next chapter because there's some more major stuff about to happen or tell us what you want to happen!
Ten looked at his phone for the fiftieth time in the last hour. He was ignoring messages from Jaehyun and Winwin who had even tried to cheer him up by texting him about Kun’s love story but Ten couldn’t be consoled let alone cheered up. His friends were concerned but he was worried too. In fact, he was scared. He hadn’t said much over the phone to Sehun.

“Hello. Sehun hyung, I’m so sorry I’m calling like this.”

“Ten? Hello.”

He had known right away, from the tone of Sehun’s voice that he knew.

“I-I heard Johnny is with you.”

“Yeah, he is sleeping. Should I wake him up?”

“No. I mean, just…when he wakes up, please tell him I’m waiting at the dorm, on the terrace actually. And, um, I’m sorry. If he can…come, I’d be grateful.”

“I’ll do that.”

“Thank you.”

“And, Ten, take care of him.”

Ten closed his eyes and faced the winter sun, breathing in. Taeyong had told him the same thing, “Just...take care of him this time”. He had always thought that he was the one attached to Johnny, that he was the one who needed him and depended on him. Johnny always took care of him. Ten had felt increasingly over the last few weeks that maybe he was a burden to him and he had tried to lean on him less. But maybe Johnny, strong, smiling Johnny needed someone to take care of him too. He wanted to be someone Johnny could lean on too.

His face fell. But what if it was too late for that? His brain kept screaming at him that Johnny wouldn’t come, that there was only so much someone could take.

Maybe it was foolish, then, that he listened to a small part of his heart that held on to hope, that maybe Johnny would come. He blinked back tears, smiling ruefully at himself. He was such a mess.

“Please just text me,” he breathed out.

But there were no messages from Johnny and so he sat on the wooden stool near Taeil’s plants, shivered against a gust of cold wind and just waited.

There was a sound on the stairs and he craned his neck to see. His breathing hitched and he stood up in disbelief.

Johnny strode up to him, out of breath, hair windswept. “Why are you on the terrace when it’s so cold?”
Ten reached up to touch Johnny’s face. “You came.”

Johnny took his hands and rubbed them. “You’ll catch a cold. What kind of idiot—!”

Ten laughed out in a combination of relief and disbelief. “You came. I can’t believe you came.” And suddenly, he was crying, bawling out his eyes, his body shaking as he dug his face in Johnny’s chest. “I’m so sorry, Johnny. I’m so sorry.”

Johnny didn’t respond at first, still shaken by Ten’s sudden behaviour but a second later, his body eased and he wrapped his arms around Ten. “Hey, hey, don’t cry. Tennie, it’s okay.”

Ten mumbled. “I thought you wouldn’t come.”

Johnny sighed, resting his chin against Ten’s head, holding him close. “That’s impossible. Besides, I literally just woke up and basically had to run all the way here. I’m sorry you had to wait and I’m sorry about yesterday. I promise, it won—”

Ten stepped back from Johnny, rubbing his tear-stained face against his sleeves. “Please don’t apologize. It’s me who should apologize.”

Johnny smiled at him. “Let’s just forget about yesterday, yeah?”

“No, that’s not… I’m a horrible person, John.”

Johnny frowned at his serious tone, sensing that there was something else going on underneath Ten’s voice. “What are you talking about?”

Ten looked at his face, searching for a sign, anything to know how he should do this. He looked away as he realized that it had to be he himself who had to do this. “I’m sorry I stood you up on my birthday.”

Johnny stared at him in shock. He took a step back.

“Wait, I know it’s inexcusable but please believe me when I say this I really didn’t know. If I had, I would have—”

“Ten, you don’t need to do this. It’s okay about yesterday. You really don’t need to refer to that. We can just forget about it.” The taller guy was talking quickly, as if he would do anything but go through that discussion. He didn’t want to ask what he was thinking, haven’t you forgotten about it already? Isn’t it what you want? Because I can pretend to forget it for you.

“I can’t,” Ten said, looking at him decidedly. “I feel like I would die if I tried to even think about forgetting it so listen to me. I didn’t read the book.”

“What?”

“The book you gave me. You know the one, Crime and Punishment. I didn’t read it.”

“But you told me the story,” Johnny said slowly. His eyes widened as he realized and he closed the distance between them, snapping out of whatever trance he had fallen. “Oh my god, you liar!”

Ten did a very failed attempt at being cute but there was definitely something that was changing in the air about them. Or maybe it was just resettling. In the seconds it had taken for Johnny to put two and two together, something heavy had lifted off both of them. It was happening so smoothly that they didn’t even realize but all of a sudden, they were easing back into themselves instead of rigidly...
behaving as if they were walking on broken glass. Ten had expected Johnny to shout at him, be angry and even threaten to leave—hell, he had prepared himself for it—but Johnny had just blinked at him and even though he was rightly accusing him of being a liar, there was a hint of a hopeful smile around those lips of his that Ten loved.

“Haha? But see I care for you, that is why I read a Cliffnotes summary for it. It something I didn’t even do for school back home. Credits for effort, right?”

“Wait a second. Does that mean…? Ten, seriously?” Johnny asked, voice filled with incredulity. His heart was hammering in his chest. He didn’t read it? He didn’t read it then? But he read it now? And he’s here? He came? Does this mean…? Dare he hope? He had been so confident about it then but after everything that had happened his confidence had taken a blow. He couldn’t help but give in to second-guessing himself, especially if it was anything related to Ten.

Ten hid his face behind his hands. “I know, I know. I didn’t even try to read it and I only found out the letter this morning and then you didn’t respond to my calls, you didn’t even message me—”

“I left my phone behind by mistake,” he offered quietly.

But Ten wasn’t listening at this point. “—we couldn’t find you anywhere and I have never been so scared in my life. I thought of you wandering around in the cold morning, thinking all kinds of things about me. I was so relieved when we found out where you were but I think I must have died a couple of times while waiting here because there was no way you would come here after all I’ve done. I’m so sorry that I hurt you. I’m an idiot and I’ll totally understand if you hate me after all this.”

Johnny didn’t say anything. He was thinking back to the time he had been so heartbroken and confused about everything, how he had hung onto everything Ten said or did for a sign, anything but at least something to know why he had been rejected without even a response. He had craved for a response, even negative, but just anything. He had felt crushed, reduced to nothing and it had hurt so much.

“Say something, please?” Ten pleaded.

“You read the letter now, right?”

Ten nodded miserably.

Johnny took a deep breath. “So, you know I don’t—can’t hate you ever.”

Ten opened his mouth to say something but Johnny stopped him.

“You read the letter and you’re here?” Johnny still looked surprised.

It finally dawned on Ten what Johnny was exactly asking. He looked at him with affection because seriously, his heart felt like it would burst from all the love he had for him. “Johnny, if I had known then, I swear nothing would have stopped me from coming to you. I would have run over. Hell, I would have been here before you probably, dressed in my best outfit to impress you and then seduce you. I mean, isn’t it obvious? You’re the one for me. Always have been. It hurts so much that I let that chance go. If I could go back in time, I would change that. I wish, I could have come then. I’m sorry for these past few months. I am a shitty best friend. I didn’t even know what was going on and I just thought you didn’t like me anymore. It felt so bad to see you pull back every time I tried to…” He laughed sadly. “Well, every time I tried to make a move. I was so jealous of the others. It felt like you had only changed towards me. And that too when I had begun to think that maybe I had a chance with you.”
“Ten,” he said, shyly, “I only pulled back because I thought you didn’t like me that way and it would make you uncomfortable. It was so difficult but I did it for you. Well, for us, I suppose. I didn’t want to lose your friendship. Everybody around us would tell me that you might like me but I knew you didn’t—or I thought I knew, at least—and I thought if you heard that kind of stuff, you would freak out.”

“I messed everything, didn’t I? To think that we could have been dating right now,” Ten said, “I mean, to think you liked me. You idiot, how could you think I didn’t like you back!?”

“Um, excuse me? You are the idiot in this situation because it’s totally your fault that we could have been dating these past nine months but couldn’t? People can have kids in that amount of time!” Johnny retorted.

“Hey, whose idea was it to confess through a letter? In this day and age?”

Johnny snorted. “I did it because that was how your Dad proposed to your Mom. I thought you would find it romantic, you moron.”

“Oh.” Ten blinked. It was his turn to come to a few realizations,

Oh, so that’s…well, shit, I’m going to start bawling again. He did it because…Ohh, so that’s what he meant back home. That’s why he was upset when we came back. He was reminded that I didn’t react to his letter. The trip became bitter for him. It makes sense now. “When you put it that way…Johnny, you’re kind of adorable. Is that why you were ignoring me when we came back from Thailand? I can’t even begin to right all of the wrongs that have come about because of my stupidity. Wait, before you distract me. How am I the moron when you put such an important letter in a huge book? Like where did that make sense? You know, I’m not much of a reader,” Ten said. “How was I supposed to know that I have to go through a whole treasure hunt for you?” But he was catching on now. He had begun to feel in the past months that he didn’t understand Johnny anymore, that there were pieces of him that he was locked away from but now, those pieces fell back together.

“You weren’t supposed to read the whole book. I didn’t expect you to. You were supposed to read the letter and come by and enjoy dinner with me under the stars and…” Johnny trailed off, cheeks pink.

“And what?” Ten asked, sidling up to him.

Johnny purposefully avoided his gaze. “And, I don’t know, do couple stuff, I guess.”

“What kind of couple stuff?” Ten asked, smiling openly now.

Johnny let out a strangled noise. “Teeen.”

“What? I’m genuinely curious. Can I get a demonstration if it’s difficult to explain?” Ten said, looking all innocent when inside, his heart was thumping loudly while his mind was screaming at him for daring so much.

Johnny leaned forward and kissed his cheek, pulling back in a matter of seconds while blushing madly. He rubbed the back of his head, shyly. “Something like that?”

Ten’s eyes were wide. His mind was clouding over with a hundred thoughts, that was so quick, like his lips? How am I supposed to be content with that? Because they’re so soft and I want to feel them against mine now? But he voiced the thought that was most important to him. “So, does this mean you still like me?”

“I know, I’m a loser, but god, yes, I love you so much.” Johnny covered his mouth. “I mean…”
Ten smiled at him. “Good, because I fucking love you so much. Since forever. I mean, I was so homesick when I first came here you know? I was so sure I would chicken out. Then, I met you and you were just so understanding and supportive. I wanted to be you but soon I realized I just wanted you. You became my home here. Like, you’re where I want to be at the end of a day. You make everything worthwhile and I want to make you happy too. I really do.”

“You already do. I’m the happiest when I’m with you,” Johnny whispered. “Sometimes, I just can’t you know find it in me to ease up and face the day. I want to lay in bed and wallow in everything that doesn’t work out or doesn’t make sense. The pressure is so much—to look happy, to smile, to laugh and I am happy and grateful but sometimes I don’t know where I am going. Everything seems out of control but I can’t say it aloud. Everyone has enough problems already and I got to be the positive one, you know? But with you, I don’t need to cover up. When I smile around you, I can feel the calm spreading through me. I’ve been told it’s noticeable, that I tend to forget everyone else as soon as I see you. I can’t help it. You’re Ten, you’re you. You’re my own sunshine and I was only wandering until I met you. You’re my home. I—I didn’t…I wouldn’t know where to go without you.”

Ten was embarrassed that he was sniffling but to hell with emotional floods. Johnny had already seen him crying tears and snot into his t-shirt. He took Johnny’s hand and intertwined his fingers with his. “I’m not going anywhere. Know that even when we fought I knew for sure, I would always stay. It hurt to admit it before because I didn’t know how you felt but it’s true. I want to spend every moment I can with you because when you’re not there, it feels empty. I love how your eyes crinkle just the right way when you smile. I love the sound of your laughter. I love how excited you get when you talk about singing and dancing, and photography and yes, even those books you like. You collect a lot of junk for no reason but I like that too. You’re so soft and homely and so damn intelligent. If I wasn’t in love with you, I would have a huge inferiority complex but thankfully, I love myself a lot too so that’s okay.”

Johnny laughed. “I can relate. You’re very loveable.”

“If that’s the case, then why don’t you kiss me?”

“Hey, don’t I get to tell you all the things I love about you too?”

“Hmm, maybe kiss me first?”

Johnny leaned forward and did just that.

Ten felt like he would die when he felt Johnny’s lips on his own. He could feel that Johnny was hesitant at first but when Ten didn’t pull away, he smiled against his lips, mumbling, “I love you, Tennie.”

Which seriously didn’t help with all the butterflies in his stomach because sure, Ten had fantasized about this but oh, he had been so wrong because this was way better. Johnny’s lips were soft against his and the way Johnny held him with care, one hand cupping his check and the other ghosting over the small of his back, Ten felt like he was drowning in ecstasy. Warmth spread through him as every inch of his body tingled with excitement. Ten tiptoed against him and deepened the kiss, pulling him closer. The sense of lost time, of being aware of the others’ feelings, the proximity of their bodies and heat radiating off them, lent an urgency to their kiss. Ten’s fingers found themselves under Johnny’s shirt, running along his abdomen and chest, revelling in the way Johnny shivered under his touch.

“Ten hyung, I brought you a blanket—”

Johnny and Ten jumped apart, blushing furiously.
Mark stood on the stairs with a blanket on his arm. “I-I didn’t know Johnny hyung already came. I thought Ten hyung would be cold so I brought him my blanket but I see you’re here and he doesn’t need a blanket. Oh shit, I am so sorry. Please, um, continue. Pretend I never came here. I will, uh, get going now. Should I leave the blanket here? No? Uh, okay, happy kissing. I mean, good luck. What am I saying? Okay, bye.” He ran down the stairs, muttering to himself, face red from embarrassment.

Johnny groaned. “I can’t believe we traumatized him like that.”

“Johnny, you do know he’s not a kid, right?” Ten laughed. “Besides, he already saw Taeyong and Jaehyun kiss so yeah, let your Dad complex chill.”

“You have such a pretty laugh,” he replied, in awe.

Ten blushed deeper. “John, why do you…ugh, dirty talk I can handle but if you’re going to attack me with all this cute shit, I’m going to be a mess, okay? I’ll start kissing you again and again.”

“And the way your nose scrunches when you laugh,” Johnny added.

“Johns, this isn’t helping, you know?”

“And how your eyes twinkle? Well, I am whipped for you.”

Ten narrowed his eyes. “Hey, you’re doing it on purpose, right?”

Johnny shrugged but there was a mischievous glint in his eyes. “And I just found out that not only are your hands the prettiest in the whole universe, they feel amazing on my skin.”

“Fuck you,” Ten said, and crashed his lips against Johnny’s who was laughing but held him firmly against himself. Ten tugged Johnny’s lower lip with his teeth and made an exasperated noise. Johnny grinned and kissed him back, allowing Ten to explore his mouth. Ten was eager for all of Johnny. His lips traced along Johnny’s jaw and then, trailed down his neck and the way he kept on repeating, “I love you, John. I love you, John. I love you, John” rang against the taller guy’s heart. Johnny had never felt happier. He hadn’t known it was possible to feel this light-headed, slightly dizzy with a buzzing joy and completely over the moon, to feel held and cherished and treasured this way. He didn’t want this feeling to ever stop. And so, when Ten began to pull away finally, Johnny couldn’t help but cupping his face and kissing him deeply, putting all of his love and passion into one swift but deep moment before letting go. He smiled and gave Ten’s nose a peck before stepping back. Both of them were breathing deeply.

“I love you, John,” Ten said, giggling shyly, tracing Johnny’s swollen, pink lips with his thumb.

Johnny grabbed his hand and kissed it. “I love you, Ten.”

And to both of them, it felt just right and only natural to say the words they had always meant to say.

They went downstairs, hand-in-hand.

“You want to grab something to eat. We can go to the café down the street?” Johnny asked as they descended.

“I will come along if you say it’s a date.”

“It’s a date, of course, but date zero because I want our first date to be way better.”

“Okay.” Ten smiled. They walked out of the building, down the street. “To think I tried to make you
jealous so you would date me when I could have just kissed you for it.”

“You tried to make me jealous?” Johnny raised an eyebrow. “When?”

“When we went out with Kun and Doyoung?”

“You tried to make me jealous of Kun? That guy is probably celibate.”

Ten gasped. “Oh, Johnny, you don’t know right?”

“What?”

“I have the tea but let’s order something first. You’re going to be shook.”

“I am famished, to be honest. What do you want, babe?”

Ten clutched at his chest. “Johns, I’m going to die if you do that unannounced.”

Johnny fluttered his eyelashes innocently. “What, babe?”

“Don’t make me do something that’s going to make it to headlines tomorrow.”

“Okay, babe.”

“Johnnnns.”

WinkWink: So…

NotPeaches: While we were getting worried about you

You have been kissing Johnny

WinkWink: I was going to say congrats

But wtf I’m the only single one in this gc now

NotPeaches: Single? I thought it was complicated?

Anyway, TEN

Taeyong is mad that you guys left without coming down for his ‘JOHNTEN FINALLY SAILS’ breakfast

WinkWink: I ate your share, don’t worry

NotPeaches: Winwin isn’t admitting it but when Mark came down and told us, Winwin bust an uwu and even cried saying how happy he was for you

Meanwhile, I like a true man, squealed and then, cried

WinkWink: I thought we were going to be all cool and high and mighty in front of him?

But since he already said it

CONGRATULATIONS, TEN, COME HOME SO I CAN HUG YOU
NotPeaches: We’re preparing the party already SO YEAH, HOW MUCH BLING IS TOO MUCH BLING?

Because, damn, my boy got himself a boyfriend, we gotta celebrate :’)

WinkWink: He isn’t replying

NotPeaches: Let’s have the party without him

ElevenMinusOne: GUYS, I’M IN LOVE

AND HE LOVES ME BACK

Brb gotta cry some more

Chapter End Notes

YESSSSS JOHNTEN IS OFFICIAL LET'S HAPPY DANCE OUR BABIES FINALLY GOT TOGETHER :) this was so emotional to write hopefully you all enjoyed it as much as we did. and sorry for the delay in updating, we were having exams ugh. thank you to all those who inquired about the new chapter!

and what do you think is up with yuwin?

please tell us what are your feelings and thoughts. we would love to hear them. also only one chapter is left now, do look forward to it! <3

thank you so much for reading and supporting this fic, you all are the best.

ps: mark really has the best timing hehe
If Ten could choose a month that was going to remain in his memories till the end of his life, it was December. He hadn’t ever thought much about December before. December was cold in Korea and he had always looked forward to January, to New Year’s, to exciting new things, rather than think of dreary, gloomy December but it was now his favourite time of the year.

He looked at Johnny walking beside him and smiled. They were at the airport, flanked by hundreds of fans, camera shots blinding against the blurring, jostling crowd. His face was still burning hot from when Johnny had booped his cheeks out of the blue while they were waiting. He liked this Johnny who giggled and laughed and did impulsive things. This was his Johnny, the one he had always known and he was happy to have him back.

Johnny caught his smile and raised his eyebrows slightly, giving him a crooked, playful smile and Ten nearly stopped in his tracks. He was still in awe of their relationship some times. Johnny Seo… liked him? And it wasn’t a dream? He smiled to himself. They had only been dating a few days but it already felt comfortable. It was similar to being best friends but there was also a lot of open flirting and kissing. It was tough finding times when they were both free because Ten had endless practices and Johnny was promoting non-stop with 127 but when they did find the time—which was more often than not because they were both stubborn people—every second was special.

Ten stiffened as he felt Johnny nudge him and curl his pinky finger around his.

“You alright?” Johnny whispered, almost imperceptibly.

Ten flashed him a huge smile. “I’m perfect.”

Johnny was already being rushed forward for immigration check but he turned to mouth something that was definitely, “Yes, you are.”

“So, I take it that the floor is really beautiful?” Jaehyun said, sidling up to Ten.

“What!”

Winwin flanked his other side. “There has to be a reason why you’re just smiling in adoration while looking at the ground.”

“I hate you guys.” Ten groaned.

“You teased Taeyong and I to no end but let me tell you your DLCB is worse,” Jaehyun said, laughing and referring to Ten’s acronym for Jaeyong’s disgustingly-loud-couple-behaviour. He walked ahead for the check.

Ten looked at Winwin who had suddenly quietened down. “Hey, you okay?”

Winwin broke out of his thoughts. “Of course, I am.”

“Yuta and Taeil pestering you again?” Ten asked, sympathetically.

Winwin rolled his eyes. “Just Yuta today, thankfully.”
“Should I talk to him?”

“Like you have the courage.” Winwin smirked and walked ahead.

“Eh, I can ask Johnny to talk to him about him,” Ten called after him.

Practicing and performing for the Maya festival was one long blur but Ten loved the fact that he was in Thailand again. The weather was perfect and he liked traveling with the other members. There was always so much to catch up on, jokes to share, stories to retell and of course, the Thai fans were special to him. He went all out for his performances and he was glad when he saw the audience was enjoying itself.

This was also the first time he saw 127 perform “Simon Says” and it was amazing. He screamed himself hoarse, cheering for them. Okay, so yes, he missed out a ton of their choreo because he saw Johnny with curly hair and ever since then, his eyes never left him. Johnny shined onstage, the curls falling across his forehead shone against the sun; his moves were smooth and his voice was clear. He was more beautiful than any art Ten could ever hope to see.

When the performance got over and everyone was scrambling backstage for the ending ment, Johnny self-consciously patted his hair. “Is there something in my hair?”

Ten reached up and twirled a curl. “It’s so pretty.”

Yes, that was incredibly cheesy but it was true and he got to see Johnny blush which always made his day.

Johnny looked around furtively before pressing his lips to Ten’s cheek in a quick kiss. He played it off as a whisper. “Lies. You’re the pretty one.”

Johnny had always felt lonelier around December. It reminded him of all he was missing out at home. The dorm was his home, of course, but right before Christmas when there was light snow and people were out and about with their families, he missed his family and friends back home. He had preferred to find himself some hobby to bury himself into until the year-end party came along which never failed to lift up everyone’s spirits.

But this December was different.

This December, he was dating Ten. There was something very comforting in the way Ten would cuddle into his side, rest his head on his shoulder and play with his fingers as they watched a movie together. They had started a Marvel marathon with a lot of shouting and cheering and speaking along of the dialogues until Taeyong and Yuta had jointly decided to throw them out.

This didn’t really deter them as they just moved themselves to Ten’s dorm where they managed to create an even louder ruckus with the Dreamies.

The Dreamies liked them together. Chenle had very ceremoniously told Johnny that they all shipped them.

“I love the kids. They’re angels,” Johnny said.

Ten threw them a look full of loathing. “They made me buy them a piglet because I lost the Kun bet —” he gave Kun a particularly withering scowl, “—and then named him Pigeon.”
Jisung petted the piglet which grunted happily. “She’s so cute though.”

“I still don’t get why you didn’t tell me you have a boyfriend.” Ten said to Kun. “I mean, think of all the things we could have made the dreamies do if I had won the bet.”

Kun blushed.

When Ten went to get a popcorn refill, Jeno told Johnny. “He’s nicer with you.”

Renjun nodded. “He smiles so much these days and even lets most of our pranks slide. We need someone new to prank now.”

Jisung said, “Well, there’s always Lucas.”

They turned to look at Lucas who was engrossed in reading *Crime and Punishment*.

“Hey,” Jungwoo said, “don’t mess with him.”

“Oi,” Ten said, coming from the kitchen, “get away from my boyfriend, you demons.”

Johnny noticed that Ten liked referring to him as ‘boyfriend’, a fact that Ten stressed throughout their short Maya festival trip with the other members. They had just finished their post-performance V LIVE and everyone was heading off to bed.

“Hey, boyfriend!”

Johnny looked up from his phone. He had been waiting for Ten in the hotel corridor instead of going to bed. They were planning to sneak out for a late-night coffee run. He grinned at the smaller guy. “I thought we were going to be inconspicuous.”

Ten was wearing a studded black jacket over a floral shirt, a hundred earrings and ripped, skinny jeans over boots that glittered with sequins. He raised an eyebrow and took out a cap and face-mask, putting them on. “See? No one can recognise me now.”

“Yeah, right.”

Ten nudged Johnny as they walked out onto the streets. “You dressed up too.”

Johnny looked at his light denim jacket thrown over a white tee and black pants and gave Ten a look.

“Okay, okay.” Ten rambled on. “You *are* wearing your favourite earring. Besides, this is our first date. I had to look my best.”

Johnny scoffed. “This isn’t our first date. I’m going to make that first date special.”

Ten stopped in his tracks dramatically, letting him walk ahead. “John, that means I have to find a new outfit!”

Johnny turned to look at him, eyes twinkling. “You could be naked and you’d still look perfect.”

“Wouldn’t you like that?” Ten smirked.

The taller guy was speechless. “Uh—that’s not—I mean—”

Ten laughed his lilting laugh and ran to him snuggling into his chest letting his denim jacket envelope
him. “Fine, you owe me a first date.”

Johnny mumbled something like, “Teeeen, you enjoy doing this to me” but he hugged him tightly. “You’re lucky I like you.”

“You love me.” Ten breathed happily, inhaling Johnny’s warm scent.

“Damn right,” he said, as they walked on, putting an arm around him, holding him close.

They felt right together and in a fateful sort of way, they would always find themselves running to each other. They were inseparable like that. In the coming time, they would find out time and time again that they were strong enough to bear whatever came their way because they helped each other through.

When Johnny dropped off Ten to his room later, Ten seemed to have something on the tip of his tongue but he opted to tiptoe and press a kiss on Johnny’s lips, cherishing the soft, careful way he kissed him back. “Good night, darling,” he whispered, winking as he stepped into his room.

He would say it the next day, when they were sitting together on the plane back home. “Hey, Johnny?”

He hummed in response.

“I’m sorry,” Ten said, looking at his hands, fidgeting with the seatbelt, “for messing up. You had to suffer so much and yet you still…Thank you, Johnny, and I’m really sorry.”

Johnny tilted his chin. “Hey, look at me. Can I ask you a question?”

Ten nodded, still looking miserable.

“How many times are you going to apologize for something I need no apology for? I told you, I love you, and thankfully, you like me back, and that’s all that should matter.” Only yesterday Ten had apologized once again for not making it to the terrace date which he regretted missing so much. Johnny kept on telling him it was okay. This time he looked at him with determination. “Ten, I swear if you apologize once again, I’m going to change seats with Haechan.”

Ten smiled softly. “Okay.” I am lucky to have him.

“Good.” Because I am lucky to have you.

“Can I ask a question too?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you have a message timer app or something?”

“Huh?” Johnny looked bewildered.

Ten took out his phone and pointed to Johnny’s morning message—Good morning to my handsome boyfriend! We leave in an hour so wakie wakie. He tapped at the timestamp, 6:10. “You always message me at ten past six.”

“Oh, that. It’s not an app, idiot.” He took out his phone and showed Ten the alarm. “My morning alarm goes off at six. I take around five to seven minutes to actually wake up and then I think of you and message you. Just, you know, checking up on you. Over time, I guess, it just became a habit. I didn’t know it always goes at ten past six. Wow, I really need to break my life out of routine.”
Ten’s heart was racing. So, that was the story. He looked at Johnny in awe. His first thought in the morning was Ten. “Don’t you dare stop messaging me in the morning,” he said, strongly.

“I thought it disturbed your sleep?” Johnny teased.

“Oh my god, you’re so annoying, John. Maybe you should swap with Haechan.”

“You sure?” Johnny made as if to get up prompting Ten to clutch at his arm.

“No, no, I’m just kidding.”

Ten tried to keep up his smile as he waved the other members goodbye before they began walking to their separate car which would take them to their dorm. He really didn’t like the idea of spending time away from him but knowing that it was hard for him too, he didn’t create a fuss. He shouldered his backpack and walked behind his manager as they sat in the car that would take him to Dream dorm.

He jumped slightly as the car door opened from the other side and Johnny clambered in, exclaiming loudly, slightly out of breath, “Did you miss me?”

Ten gaped. “Did you just…?” He craned his neck to look at the other car which was driving away.

“I believe I owe you a date.”

They got off at the Dream dorm for lunch after which Johnny promptly abandoned Ten at his room. “Gotta do some stuff. See you at seven?”

“What is happening?” Ten peeped out a few minutes later only to be handed Pigeon.

“Take care of her, hyung,” Jaemin said, running away. “And don’t step outside unless we say so.”

He tried to put his ear to the door and listen but all he could hear was running feet and the doorbell rang twice but that was it. He decided he might as well plan his outfit for the date but he couldn’t figure out anything. “I guess, I’ll have to call up some help.”

And so, six o’clock found Jaehyun and Winwin in Ten’s bedroom sneaking in with clothes and make-up.

“What news of Johnny’s whereabouts?” Ten asked them.

Winwin told him, “He’s been here the whole day. You would know better.”

“I have been under bedroom arrest,” Ten said. “Ooh, you got clothes for me?”

“Yeah, we just brought a bunch of whatever was best in our closets,” Jaehyun said, proudly. He kneeled down to say hello to the little ball of sunshine which was galloping around the room. “Aww, your pet is so cute, Ten.”

“I know,” Ten admitted now that none of the dreamies were around. “Say hi to your uncles, Pigeon.”

“Why is a piglet called Pigeon?” Winwin asked.

“The kids think they’re funny,” Ten shrugged. “Okay, let’s see.” He looked at the clothes. “I can totally see which of these are yours, Jae. You wear such Dad clothes.”
“Hey, that’s my aesthetic you’re slandering.” Jaehyun covered his sweaters protectively.

“And Winwinnie, do you seriously plan on wearing these to a date? Remind me to dress you up when you go on a date because sis needs an upgrade.”

Winwin made a face. “Okay, Jaehyun and I are going to join Johnny’s team then.”

Ten stopped them, smiling cutely. “Fine, fine. You guys pick an outfit.”

At fifteen minutes to the date, Ten looked at himself in the mirror and gasped. His hair was styled in a mid-parting. He was wearing a button-down, suede sweater over jeans and sneakers.

Jaehyun and Winwin gave each other proud thumbs-up.

“We did it!” Jaehyun cheered.

“You’re welcome.” Winwin clapped.

Jaehyun pulled out his phone. “Let me send a pic to Taeyong. He would be so proud of our work.”

Ten gave them an awkward look. “Thank you, guys. I look perfect.”

For picking up my kids from school, maybe.

Jaehyun frowned at his phone. “Why is Taeyong saying he’s coming over?”

Taeyong did come over in record time, clutching a small bag. “Here, change quickly.” He handed over an embroidered white, linen shirt and a slim, black overcoat with magenta lining. “Top it with your black jeans and you can have my golden boots.”

“Why?” Jaehyun and Winwin chorused.

Taeyong sighed. “I know what Johnny is wearing. I wasn’t going to do anything but Ten needs to be at his best too, right?” He looked at Ten who was looking appreciatively in the mirror this time. “Come here, we got to do your make-up. Jaehyun, Winwin, here’s what you got to do.”

It wasn’t even two minutes when Ten’s phone dinged with a message. “Hey, come to the terrace?”

He looked up at his friends. “Shit, I’m going to be late.”

“No, you’re fine,” Taeyong said, stepping back. “You look amazing.”

Winwin nodded. “Just don’t mess up your nail paint. It’s still a bit wet.”

Jaehyun hugged him. “Have an awesome date.”

Ten gave himself a last look in the mirror and smiled. His hair was styled up from his forehead, piled messily in a side parting. He was wearing a simple chain and cuff earring on his right ear. His eyes were lined with just the right amount of dark and glitter. He fixed his shirt over his slightly exposed chest and put his hands in his coat pockets. The golden ankle-length boots glittered with movement. “Well, fuck, I look sexy. I owe you, Taeyong.”

Taeyong sniffled. “I’m a proud mom. Now, go.”

Ten was too excited to saunter up to the terrace so he basically ran all the way and reached it out of breath and panting. He stopped at the sight.

The terrace was decorated with golden fairylights that glowed against the plants. In the center, there
was a small table, lit with twinkling candles and laid with—Ten was amazed—all of his favourite food.

Johnny stepped out from the shadows. “I’m glad you came.”

Ten blinked. *Thank god for Taeyong*. Because Johnny looked hot. He was wearing a red dress shirt topped with a chic black jacket, over black, ripped jeans. When Johnny smiled at him, his eyes twinkling, he saw the way his eyelids shined with gold glitter. *Shit, I’m dating the hottest guy in the universe.*

He was about to say it but Johnny beat him to it. “You are so beautiful.”

Ten punched his shoulder playfully. “Have you seen yourself? You’re making my knees go we—”

Johnny leaned forward and kissed him, thumb grazing his jawline. Ten smiled, closing his eyes and pulled on the lapels of his jacket to keep him close. One of Johnny’s arm held Ten’s waist tightly, holding him in place. Ten opened his mouth and let him in and Johnny deepened the kiss, while Ten’s fingers undid Johnny’s shirt buttons, seeking the warmth his skin always brought to him. Johnny always kissed him with care, softly, like every moment was an articulation of the sincerity of his feelings but tonight, it was different. Johnny’s hands roamed over Ten’s body and he kissed with a passionate fire, his lips burning in a trail from Ten’s lips to his jaw to his neck to his collarbones and it was only when Ten shivered that Johnny stepped back in a daze.

He ran a hand over his face, mumbling. “That was supposed to happen after dinner.”

Ten pulled down his hand and peered at him. His face was as red as his shirt, his ears tinged too. “Really?” he teased.

Johnny blushed deeper when he saw Ten’s cheeks blushing aflame and his lips pink and swollen. “I swear. But you look so...” he looked away, “sexy.”

Ten nudged him. “Okay, let’s wait till after dinner as long as you let me unbutton more of those buttons.” He laughed at the way Johnny realized the state of his shirt, buttoning up the three buttons Ten had managed to deftly undo. Ten pulled him to the table.

Johnny sprang to action pulling out a chair for him and putting on a soft piano composition on his phone.

Ten looked around, eyes lit up with wonder. “You did all this?”

Johnny sat across him. “Kun and Doyoung helped but I cooked all the food.”

“How do you know what stuff I like? This is wow.”

“Go on. Try it.” Johnny watched Ten try out some of the pad thai, smiling when he saw Ten’s eyebrows shoot up in appreciation.

Soon, they were eating happily, Johnny relaying how the Dreamies had done their best to help too and how they were the world’s best kids. There was laughter and love and that was all they would ever need.

“Wanna come to my dorm?” Johnny asked afterwards.

“Let’s go.”
They walked around, finding and taking the longest route, holding hands and talking and never tiring so that when they reached the dorm and found Jaehyun asleep in Johnny’s bed, they didn’t mind crashing on the couch.

“Want to watch *10 Things I Hate About You*?” Johnny asked, throwing a blanket at Ten.

“This is why I love you.” Ten settled down comfortably, latching himself to Johnny’s arm as the movie started. They were well past the half-way point of the movie, having whispered out the dialogues to each other when Ten said, sleepily, “How am I ever going to top this date?”

Johnny kissed the top of Ten’s head. “Maybe you could cook me some pasta.”

“And risk poisoning you? I’d rather ask Kun to make something and pretend like I made it.”

Johnny laughed and Ten frowned before realizing and laughing too. “Pretend you didn’t hear that.”

“Okay, I didn’t hear that.”

Yuta found the two of them sleeping uncomfortably on the couch in the morning—Ten hugging a shirtless Johnny with contentment in his sleep—and he mumbled darkly. “Why are all couples so loud? And when is Winwin going to be loud for me?”

Taeil was the next one to see them and he groaned. “Why are all couples so loud? And when is Winwin going to be loud for me?”

Johnny woke up slowly. “*You two* are being so loud. Let Ten sleep.”

Yuta and Taeil looked at each other and scowled when they echoed. “They’re so perfect, ugh.”

But it was true, Johnten were perfect in the most beautifully, adorable ways, complementing each other in a manner only soulmates could. This was only December and the start of many, many more moments of bliss and they would meet it all together, with warm smiles, and flowers, correctly self-delivered love letters, 6:10 am messages, kisses and everything else to swear by.

Chapter End Notes

this chapter is huge omg BUT LET'S ADMIT IT JOHNTEN ARE SO ADORABLE :) really hope they managed to put a smile on your faces because it was so heart-warming to write about them. i'm so soft, i love them <3

how was the date, though!? please tell us your thoughts, we really want to know. and do tell us your views of the chapter as a whole as well :D

remember when we said this will be the last chapter? yeah we lied, there's more. please look forward to the epilogue since it will contain lots of important developments regarding our Empathy series overall, various side-ships, and a taste of what’s to come in the next fic in the series. are you looking forward to it?

today also marks 5 years with johnten and yuta!! let's keep on supporting and loving these amazing people.

thank you so much for reading and enjoying!
love, positive vibes and merry christmas~~
“I can’t believe we’re finally having the hotpot party,” Jisung said, happily. “Think of all the good food, all the games—it’s going to be amazing.”

“I know right? I have waited the whole year for it. Kun-ge, what are you cooking for the party tonight?” Chenle called out to the guy who was working quietly in the kitchen.

“Please let it be those pizza filling buns you learnt how to make from YouTube,” Renjun said.

There was a crash from the kitchen and the dreamies rushed inside, wondering what had happened. Kun didn’t even look up from the sink where he had emptied all the contents of the frying pan. There was a faint smell of burning.

Jaemin asked, “Hyung, is everything okay?”

Jeno and Lucas passed a look. Kun had never burnt any food. He took extreme care with everything.

Kun took out a clean pan and wordlessly began preparing the dish again. The stove wouldn’t light up and he cried out in frustration. “Why won’t anything work!?”

“Kun-ge.” Chenle reached for Kun’s sleeve, sensing that the older guy was going through something. “Let it be.”

Kun looked at them all, as if suddenly realizing they were there. “I’m sorry. I just can’t seem to get the dish right. You all go finish your breakfast, I’ll fix it.” He gave them a watery smile. “Please,” he said, his tone polite but clearly dismissive.

Lucas spoke up as soon as they were out of earshot. “Something is wrong.”

“Is he nervous for today’s Gayo?” Jeno said. “He’s never been nervous before.”

“Maybe it’s the upcoming debut?” Jaemin mused. “We should ask Ten hyung to talk to him.”

Lucas said, “But Ten hyung already left for some last minute practice. He was kind of nervous too, I guess.”

Renjun stood up. “As the acting adult, I will go and talk to him.”

They stared after him as he made his way to the kitchen with determination. He returned within seconds. “Okay, I’m scared. It’s something serious. He’s crying. What do I do? I feel like we might end up making it worse. But we have to do something, he’s hurt.”

Jeno took a deep breath. “I guess it’s time to call my dad.” He dialled a number on his phone. “Hello, Doyoungie hyung?”

Doyoung turned up within twenty minutes, in a practice outfit with hair windswept, looking worried. “Hi, kids. Where is he?”

He was met with a crew of worried faces and his expression softened. “It’s okay. He’s probably just
stressed for the debut. You all shouldn’t worry so much. How about you all go and get some sushi? My treat.” He gave Jeno his wallet.

When they left, he made his way over to the kitchen where Kun was struggling over the pan for the third time, sniffling over it.

“Hey, Kun.”

Kun looked at him with slightly red eyes before turning over to the stove, banging the ladle against the pan with vehemence.

“Want to talk about it?” Doyoung asked, leaning against the door frame.

Kun continued to struggle over the stove. “Everything is wrong. I can do nothing right and I hate everything. Okay? Now go.”

“Let it be, Kun. Let’s get out of this stuffy kitchen. C’mon.”

When Kun did not budge, Doyoung walked to him and put an arm round his waist, pulling him away from the stove, using his other hand to take away the ladle from Kun’s hands. For a second, it seemed like Kun would struggle but he tensed against Doyoung only to give up and slump forward, sobbing.

Doyoung placed the ladle in the sink and held Kun in the back-hug, letting him cry. “It’s okay, it’s okay,” he whispered, comfortingly. “I’m here. It’s okay.”

Later on, when Kun had calmed down a bit and was sitting on the couch, sipping the tea Doyoung had made for him, he looked at him. “I’m sorry for you being dragged here.”

Doyoung shushed him. “If I wasn’t called, I would have been upset. The resident agony aunt is at your service.”

Kun pushed him. “Hey, I already apologized for calling you an agony aunt. Plus, it was just one time.” He set the cup down. “I suppose I owe you an explanation.”

“Don’t feel pressured. Besides, I kind of understood what you were crying about.”

“Well, yeah. Jun-Ki and I…we broke up. It was ugly and I messed up too. I knew it would happen one day but I always thought it would end on a friendly note, you know?”

Doyoung nodded, sadly. “I’m sorry, Kun. Should—should I get you some chocolate ice-cream?”

Kun laughed. “What k-drama have you been watching?”

Doyoung reddened. “I’m sorry. I thought that’s what best friends provide when someone is crying over heartbreak. Or is this more of a ‘let’s get revenge’ kind of heartbreak? I’m not very experienced so you have to give me a few hints. Don’t laugh!”

Kun studied his hands. “You remember how I said I would ask him to tell the media that the whole dating news was just a rumour, right? We got into a huge argument because of it because he just didn’t seem to understand my situation. I’m a private person. I don’t like being in the limelight and this was just when things were starting to look up for my career. I just asked for a little bit of understanding.”

Doyoung remembered the last time they had talked about it. It was when Kun had told everyone
about Jun-Ki at the 127 dorm and Doyoung had lied for him to the management.

Kun dragged Doyoung to the latter’s room. “Are you crazy? Why did you do it? This could have affected your career!”

“You’re happy with him and you no doubt kept it a secret because you value your privacy. Congratulations, by the way,” Doyoung said, smiling at him. “He’s really lucky that you love him.”

Kun laughed nervously. “It’s really not as serious as that, Doyoungie.”

Doyoung stopped. “What!? It better be as serious as that because I nearly died for you in that interrogation I underwent today.”

“I’m sorry you had to go through that. We’re still figuring things. We met at a cooking class. We were both lonely and he was dorky and cute. He knew Chinese and we became friends so quickly. We were both aware that dating was the obvious next step and so it happened.”

“So? That means its serious enough,” Doyoung said.

“We haven’t ever said that we love each other and to be honest, we’re both relieved for that.”

Doyoung tried to hide his frown. After all, who was he, forever single Kim Dongyoung, to judge other people’s relationships? “Well, I’m happy if you’re happy.”

“You’re a good friend.”

“The best.”

“—was right. I do mess up everything. I knew this already that I’m difficult to love but it hurt to be told from the person one is dating. I hate this so much. Why am I so affected? It’s not even as if I had planned my whole future with him. I fucking knew this would happen but it hurts, it hurts so much.”

Doyoung sat beside him and rubbed his back soothingly. “It hurts because you cared. You cared because you’re a kind and wonderful person who deserves to be loved and to be happy and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. I swear, if I see Jun-Ki anywhere, I’m going to punch him into oblivion.”

Kun rested his head on his shoulder. “I’m so mean. I would love to see that.”

“I’ll get you front row tickets.”

“Were you practicing?” Kun gestured to his outfit.

Doyoung knew he was just changing the subject but he let him. “Yeah.”

“The others will want to know what happened too then. Mayhaps I am a loser.”

“You’re not. And I was practicing the Queen collab stage performance for today’s Gayo so I wasn’t with the members, so you can decide whether or not you want to tell them.”

Kun sat up, looking at him in shock. “You missed your collab stage practice for me!? How could you? You were so stressed about it. Can you still go?”

Doyoung smiled at him lazily, settling down comfortably. “Kun, just chill.”
The Gayo performances went well and the ot18 Vlive was total chaos which basically meant everyone was in high spirits by the time they reached the Dream dorm for the hotpot party.

“We have the best hyungs in the world. I can’t believe they actually brought the party to us because we can’t be out after ten,” Renjun said.

Jeno looked at him, scandalized. “Our Renjinnie being soft and emotional? What is the world coming to?”

“Ew, what is this NoJam creature beside me? I’m finding Sicheng-ge to latch on to, bye.”

Jaemin comforted a heartbroken Jeno. “Mark, quick, tell Jeno he’s not NoJam.”

Mark sighed. “I wonder what Haechannie is up to.”

Across the room, a very scared Taeyong was being forced to listen to Chenle rapping his Boss lines while Jisung beatboxed in support.

Jaehyun separated from Winwin and Ten, walking over to Taeyong. “You okay?” he whispered under the pretext of sitting beside him.

Taeyong nodded, relaxing against Jaehyun’s warmth. “You two are really good. You should cover ‘Simon Says’ next.”

Chensung cheered. “We’ve already practiced that one. Want to hear?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“They love you,” Jaehyun told him, after the duo left.

Taeyong blushed. “They’re all growing up so soon.” He looked at all the members around the room. They were twenty-one in all now. “I’m always scared if I’m a good leader for our group. When the kids come to me, I feel like I must protect them but am I good enough? The world can be so cruel and I just hope I can shield them. I want you all to be happy.”

“Is that why you were looking anxious? Taeyongie, please, stop stressing. You’re the best leader we could ever hope for.” He leaned in closer, his lips touching Taeyong’s ears, “And between you and me, you’re the most beautiful and sexiest boyfriend in the world.”

Taeyong felt his face heating up. He whined, “Jaeee.”

“What?” Jaehyun smiled, devilishly before pressing his lips against Taeyong’s jaw. “I love you.”

Ten walked past them, exclaiming annoyingly. “Ew, the disgustingly-loud-couple-behaviour jumped out.”

Jaehyun rolled his eyes at him. “Why don’t you go bother Johnny?”

Ten winked at them. “Already on it.” He screamed loudly and jumped on to Johnny’s back. “Give me a piggy-back ride, minion.”

Johnny groaned and, for a second, it seemed like he would push Ten off but he complied. “Oh the things I do for love.”

Of course, the dreamies had to squeal at that because Johnten was their ship. They laughed as they saw the duo trip and fall.
“Ow,” Johnny said, rubbing his knee.

Ten pushed his hands away and inspected his knee worryingly. “Does it hurt a lot? Should I call an ambulance?”

“Teeeen, it’s just a small bump. I’m fine. You alright?”

Ten smiled cheerfully. “You cushioned my fall. I’m okay.”

“I’m always there to cushion all your falls,” Johnny said, pulling him up. They sat beside Doyoung who was animatedly telling Yuta about some horror story he had heard back in middle school.

Ten swept back Johnny’s hair and kissed his forehead.

“What was that for?” Johnny asked, touching his forehead as he smiled widely.

“Nothing, you’re just cute,” Ten said, shyly. He felt Johnny still staring at him and tried to distract him, “We should see what Pigeon is doing.”

Johnny took his hand and pressed his lips to his knuckles. “You’re literally the cutest. I still can’t believe you’re mine.”

“Oh look Pigeon ate Hendery’s sandwich!” Ten said, trying his best to calm his breathing because well, Johnny was so close to him and was staring at him in that warm, admiring way that always made Ten giddy with happiness.

Johnny said, “I’m seeing you and you know how difficult it is to take my eyes off you.”

“Oh my god, that was so bad. Please take this ‘disgustingly-loud-couple-behaviour’ away from me. My ears, my poor ears,” Doyoung cried from beside them.

They ignored him, going so far as to laugh at him. “We’ve just got started, Doyoungie,” Ten said, mischievously.

Doyoung said, “Okay, I’m going to my kids now. Jeno-ya, help me!”

“Wait, wait,” Johnny said, suddenly remembering something. He looked around for the paper bag he had brought with him. “This is for you.”

“What is it?” Doyoung asked, suspiciously.

“It’s a thank-you gift for being a great wingman.” He watched him open the bag. “I know your mic broke so I brought you a new wireless one. Do you like it?”

Doyoung looked surprised. “But I didn’t do much.”

“You did so much. Really, thank you for being there,” Johnny said.

Doyoung inspected the mic, switching it on. “I love it. Everyone, King Doyoung has a mic again.”

Taeyong groaned from somewhere in the room.

Ten asked Doyoung in a low voice. “Dare I ask why Yuta is looking mournful? Is it your bad horror story?”

“No! Ten, why are we even friends? Yuta and Taeil had one of those bickering arguments like a few
minutes ago and Winwin then had a small fight with both of them so now the three of them aren’t talking. I, on the other hand, am trying to cheer him up."

“Doyoung hyung!” Jeno called him.

“Oh,” Ten said, narrowing his eyes at Winwin who was animatedly talking with Kun, Xiaojun and Lucas, and then towards Taeil who was nodding his head absent-mindedly while Jungwoo was explaining something to him and Yangyang. “Do you think they’ll sort it out? I’m worried for Winwin.”

“I’m worried too,” Johnny sighed. “But Yuta promised he’s going to talk to him so, let’s trust them on this, yeah?”

Ten nodded and turned to him. “I’m glad we’re okay.”

“I’m glad too. I would be miserable without you,” Johnny said. “Thank you for liking me.”

“Pfft, I love you. Say it right,” Ten corrected him, pecking his lips.

Yuta smiled at them. He was happy for them. He looked at Winwin who seemed totally oblivious to the fact that Yuta was dying to talk to him. He knew that Winwin was ignoring him on purpose, irritated by Yuta and Taeil’s constant bickering. They weren’t even serious about it anymore, to be honest. But apparently it was affecting Winwin. He didn’t want Winwin to feel upset.

He poured out a glass of Pepsi and quietly set it beside Winwin, his own way of subtly saying that he didn’t like arguing with him. He was already walking back when Winwin caught hold of his hand softly.

“Come sit. We’re playing slapjack,” Winwin said.

He didn’t know how to play slapjack. “Oh, that’s my favourite. I’ll play too,” he said, understanding that Winwin understood what his gesture had meant.

Across the room, Taeil looked at the glass of Pepsi he had poured out for Winwin and sighed. “Here, have some Pepsi,” he said, offering the glass to Yangyang who was telling him all about his morning walk and how he had got lost on the way. He and Jungwoo laughed at the anecdote.

“Oi, Jungwoo, we’re playing slapjack. Come along,” Lucas shouted excitedly.

“Let’s go,” Jungwoo told the two of them.

In the end, everyone joined the game, somehow squeezing together.

Taeil was about to excuse himself from the game but he saw Winwin shifting to make space for him and he wondered if this meant that they weren’t fighting anymore. He sat down beside him and smiled, relieved, when Winwin handed him his cards. He popped his finger guns making Winwin laugh. Soon, they were all laughing, squabbling over the cards, accusing each other of cheating, teaming up and overall, enjoying themselves.

Because they were a happy family when they were together.

“To 2019!” Taeyong said, slapping his card.

“To 2019!” They cheered.
and here ends ten past six! we hope you all enjoyed this johnten journey with us and nct. thank you for supporting this fic and the empathy series overall. you all have been so kind and nice to us <3

please let us know what you thought of this epilogue and what you think is going to happen next in the series, or what you would like to see.

the next fic in the series is going to be a *drum roll* yuwin one!! but of course there will be lots of side drama which we are sure will be very amusing and enjoyable. please look forward to it and we hope we meet you there as well.

also the first chapter of this fic was written when nct china was in talks of having it's debut in november, mid way it felt like it would never happen but voila! wayv is finally here! we are so happy to include the new nct family members - xiaojun, hendery and yangyang in this as well. let's support and love wayv. we wish them luck, warmth and happiness (kunnnnn finally, we are so proud of you T_T). let's hype them, everyone!!

we will meet soon.

love, positive vibes and hotpot parties~~

Thank you for reading Ten Past Six. Please support this story, Johnten and NCT. Love and positive vibes~~

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