the taming of the shrew

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the taming of the shrew

by fivehorizons

Summary

Maybe it’s the alcohol humming in their veins, or the adrenaline of having just squared off with the man set on making their first year of university boring as all hell. Maybe it’s the thrill of finally discussing the universal truth: their RA is hot beyond imagining. Literally, beyond imagining. Whenever Jaehyun has his hand around his dick, he finds his imagination lacking. Maybe Jaehyun’s lack of imagination is exactly what lead to this idea.

or, nct bet on who can sleep with their RA Taeyong first

Notes

i started this like my last week of summer hols and have let it sit and slowly grow on my computer. figured i might as well post it now while i have 20k worth of content, and hopefully i’m motivated to write more (esp if people enjoy it hehehe)

obviously the dreamies (minus mark, but he’s barely involved anyway) aren’t involved in this
See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

It’s just another Thursday night, and Taeyong is out to kill.

His targets: the entirety of D Floor.

He doesn’t understand why fate had to fuck him in the ass. Maybe it’s because there is no one else to do the job, but still, Taeyong is spiteful.

When he signed up to be an RA, all he expected was some horny freshmen he’d have to tear apart in the hallways so they didn’t have public sex, maybe sort out a few cat-fights, along with handling a generous amount of late-night counseling sessions as someone hurled their guts in the shared bathrooms.

And yes, all of that has happened within his first two months of his third year at uni, but there has also been an unexpected development.

What he wasn’t prepared for when he accepted his position as an RA for Rookie Hall was the monsters stockpiled onto the same floor, turning it into the seventh ring of hell: D Floor. The top floor of the residence hall, the bane of Taeyong’s existence, and his current destination as he mounts up the stairwell.

Rookie Hall is a five-story, co-ed dorm that is reserved for freshmen. The bottom floor is the basement, A and C floor are the girls’ floor, B and D are the guys’. You can smell the difference between the floors, even from the stairwell. Currently, Taeyong rushes past B Floor, but gets the familiar hit.

Sweat, spicy cologne, excretion, grease, other fluids he shouldn’t be thinking about right now. It’s a nauseating concoction, explicitly masculine.

As he’s forced to inhale, he wonders why he even prefers men, but he dealt with that question years ago and sweeps it under the rug as he moves onto the next floor, emerging from the cloud of manly stank to sensory heaven. Autumnal candles, floral perfumes, cleanliness.

What he’d do to live on these floors rather than in the basement all by himself. There, it’s just him, the washing machines, and the cockroaches that haunt his nightmares.

D Floor doesn’t smell as bad as B Floor. Less BO, more cologne that doesn’t burn his nostrils as much as the Axe of the lower boys’ floor. But what it lacks in stench, it makes up for with noise.

Taeyong can hear them before he even emerges from the stairwell. Whoever has provided the speaker tonight (since Taeyong has confiscated the previous two) has one with a solid bass. The pulsating music upsets the hallway Taeyong steps into, the air charged with an electric energy that has Taeyong sparking up like an exposed wire.

Trying to rival the music are their voices. At least speakers Taeyong can confiscate. He can’t do the same for their voices, which only know one volume.

LOUD.

Taeyong grinds his teeth, forgetting about his dentist’s warning about the bad habit that flares up when he’s stressed or angry or both, as he is now.
Things get worse, and he hasn’t even reached the room that hosts the cacophony.

As he walks by the other rooms, he notices his bulletin boards have already been ruined. He put them together just yesterday, and his heart crumples seeing the decimation of his hard work. He perused Pinterest for hours to find things fun and friendly for the entire hall.

He stares at one of his ruined boards. At the top, it reads the DOUGH-NOTS of FIRST YEAR. Beneath the block-printed words are his hand-drawn doughnuts that hold all sorts of tips he wishes he’d known his first year at uni. It’s stupid, yeah, but it’s not worth the violation it’s been through.

The DOUGH has been ripped off and the O in NOTS creatively changed to a U. About thirty dicks have been drawn into the board with Sharpie, a handful of them spurting an extra layer of frosting onto the doughnuts.

There is no reason to try and salvage the board, so he rips out the paper hosting the genital display and crumples it in an angry fist. He tries not to think of how good of a projectile it would be against the freshmen hellions.

He hunts down the room they’ve assembled in for the night. This Thursday it’s Yuta and Sicheng’s room. It’s one of the rooms they use most often, and Taeyong knows it’s because it has slightly more space than the other rooms, which isn’t saying much in Rookie Hall. How they manage to fit the whole collection of monsters in their rooms is part of the nightmare effect of nights like these, better known as their Thirsty Thursdays.

The D Floor boys party over the weekend too, but it’s Thirsty Thursdays that really sets Taeyong’s frustration alight.

Sunday through Thursdays the hall is supposed to be silent by 11 pm. Taeyong allows a fifteen-minute buffer, because he likes to think he’s a partly forgiving person.

He can’t be forgiving, though, when his phone blasts with complaints from other residents right after 11, pleading for him to shut off the sound, as if it’s as easy as wrenching out an aux cord.

Taeyong wishes it was. He has tried to make it that easy by warning the boys every week that he won’t tolerate another night like this.

But here he is, in front of a door on D Floor once again. Between the crevices of the door erupts music and merriment. Taeyong makes out 00s American hits because their maturity levels are still trapped in the previous decade.

Taeyong knows he is obligated to knock on their door in warning, but then the group of freshmen boys break out into raucous laughter, and before knowing what his body is doing, he shoves open the door.

“Turn it off,” he snaps, hiking his voice so it overrides everything else going on in the room: the drinking game clearly visible at the center of the room (King’s Cup by the looks of it), the conversations budding between the boys clustered together like weeds, the speaker perilously perched at the edge of a nightstand that hosts a variety of liquor bottles.

Eleven pairs of eyes land on Taeyong, yet he finds a way to glower at all of them at once.

Before they can make some smartass comment like usual, he charges on, “I’ve already had three complaints from downstairs. Just because you’re all keen on flunking out of school doesn’t mean everyone else is. So pack up the party and try cracking open a book rather than a beer for once.”
The boys have shut their mouths at his intrusion. It cuts the volume down by half, but it still isn’t enough.

Taeyong works his jaw, waiting for something.

It all begins when Johnny leans forward, placing his chin in the palm of his hand. “It’s good to see you, dearest RA.”

“Cut the bullshit, Seo.” Taeyong’s eyes flash over to the boy closest to the speaker: Lucas, whose perpetually big eyes (though not as big as his mouth) are stuck on Taeyong. “And cut the music, too. This song is shit.”

Ten gasps, a hand falling over his heart. “This is Lady Gaga, may I say.”

“You may, and I don’t care, so shut it off.”

Taeyong’s eyes don’t leave Lucas until he follows his order. Reluctantly, the younger boy plucks the speaker off from the nightstand and powers it off. It makes a sound that reminds Taeyong of Pacman dying in an arcade game before plunging the music into oblivion. Finally, Taeyong can hear himself think.

“Thank you,” he says gruffly. His hands come around his hips as he inspects the room. “I think this happens often enough for you to know what to do next.”

“You join us for drinks?” asks Jungwoo so sincerely, Taeyong almost thinks he isn’t kidding.

But he manages to remember these boys exist only to provoke him, and he rolls his eyes. “More like clean up your crap, go back to your own rooms and be quiet, or else you guys are going to be in trouble for real this time.”

Jaehyun smirks, reclining back into a languid position. “And how would you punish us, hyung?”

Taeyong’s cheeks go rash red at the sultry tone underlying his words, and the room bursts into laughter. His ears ring, and it has nothing to do with the residue of the overwhelming noise that dominated the room.

He’s tired of being disrespected by kids like this. They trample over him because they know they can, and then they laugh in his face. He has no power here. His position doesn’t mean anything, his age doesn’t mean anything. To these kids, he’s as good as the cockroaches in the basement.

Which means he isn’t ready to die just yet.

Taeyong draws out his cellphone and finds a contact he has only used once before, when one of his residents got alcohol poisoning during orientation week.

Sicheng, one of the more sensible boys of D Floor (but still an idiot since these are the guys he calls his friends), leaps up from his chair. “Wait, what are you doing?”

Taeyong holds out one hand, dismissing the question, and uses the other to bring the phone to his ear. As expected, it goes to voicemail since he doesn’t use the emergency number plugged into the contact.

“Mister Yoon? It’s Lee Taeyong, from Rookie Hall.” He pauses as all the boys in the room launch onto their feet. Taeyong has had a fair share of joints, but no high has ever been as great as the feeling he gets when he sees the fright blow-out their eyes. For the first time since the monsters have
moved in, he has the upper-hand.

“Don’t,” Yuta begs.

Taeyong tilts his head, as if in contemplation, before a smile cracks across his lips, breaking the boys’ hopes as soon as they rise.

Taeyong turns sideways so he stands partially out of the room as he continues his call. “I have an issue to talk to you about tomorrow, sir, so please let me know when you’re free. It’s been a persistent problem, one that won’t go away. I would go into detail now, but I think it’ll be best sort it out in person. Thank you, sir, and I look forward to talking with you soon!”

He ends the call with a smug look.

Little do the D Floor boys know that the concern he’s bringing up with the Residence Director is actually about a work order for the A Floor bathroom that hasn’t been fulfilled since orientation week. But Taeyong has no intention of telling them that. He’ll come up with a way to keep this lie going later. For now, he’s too busy relishing in their gaping mouths, which release nothing but strangled sounds.

They think he did it. He finally showed them who’s the boss around here.

“Dude!” Mark’s cry fractures the silence of the room. “What the hell?”

“You didn’t even give us a second warning,” Doyoung protests.

“Really?” asks Taeyong, incredulous. “You don’t think the past two months have been enough warnings for you?”

Lucas groans. “Man, this is so unfair.”

Taeyong thought he’d feel better making the phony call, but all their bitching has him going off like a firework.

“No, you know what’s unfair?” he begins, a vicious cut in his voice. “It’s unfair that every other person in this hall has the misfortune of sharing a living space with you idiots! What’s unfair is that every Thursday night, residents have to mentally prepare for the shitshow you guys host up here because you need an extra day in the week to party. What’s unfair is that you treat me and my work like garbage.” To emphasize his point, he chucks his ruined bulletin board at the center beer for King’s Cup. He is so thankful he doesn’t miss, because that would have ruined his whole rant.

But since he makes it, knocking the beer over like a bowling pin, he still holds their attention.

He’s too exhausted to go on. He has a paper due next Friday and a bunch of readings to somehow finish before his lectures tomorrow. And though the D Floor guys make him mad, he hates the feeling of being angry. It’s another reason why he despises them: for setting off an explosion in his heart and head that leaves behind a toxic waste that erodes his senses.

The weariness of his fury hits on top of everything else, and he scrubs his face with the heels of his palms. When he’s done, he casts a glance around the entire room.

“This better be your last Thirsty Thursday of the year or so help me…” I might just have a premature heart-attack. He keeps those words to himself, instead letting the rest of his sentence dangle in ambiguity. His threat is a mystery even to him; he played his bluff, but eventually he’ll have to find a new trick up his sleeve.
But those are problems of the future, and he’s always loved pushing his problems away.

With the firestorm he’s launched on D Floor tonight, he figures there is no better conclusion to their weekly ‘discussion’ than to step out of the room and slam the door close behind him.

“These kids are going to be the death of me,” he mutters, trudging his way back down to his lonely basement.

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When the door closes behind Taeyong, Taeil snorts. “He seriously needs to get laid.”

They all break out into laughter, secretly relieved that they can still manage the sound after the chewing-out of the lifetime they just got. Jaehyun is half-expecting another round to come with their bout of laughter. Nothing gets under Taeyong’s skin like some fun.

However, when they all quiet down, no one picks up the sound of footsteps thundering back towards Yuta and Sicheng’s room. Despite his petite, slender figure, Taeyong has heavy footsteps that slam against the wood floors. It’s almost like a warning to them, if only they cared about being caught.

With Taeyong’s disappearance assured, Jaehyun says, “I’ve been thinking about that.”

“We all have,” Ten bemoans. “He needs something other than a stick up his ass. What self-respecting gay doesn’t like Lady Gaga?”

“No that part. Well, not entirely.” Jaehyun leans forward, a conspiring grin spreading on his face. “Maybe we’re the ones who should fuck him.”

It’s the first time someone other than Taeyong has made the group collapse into silence.

Per usual, it’s Lucas who breaks it. “Excuse me, Jaehyun, but what the fuck?”

“You’re not interested?”

Lucas scoffs. “No.”

Right, Lucas has had his eyes on Jungwoo since move in but the pair have been too stupid to do anything about their mutual affection. Jaehyun keeps his eyes from rolling at their blindness by switching his stare over to the rest of the room.

“Well, I know I’m not the only one.” He stares pointedly at Johnny and Ten. “You two, you’d fuck Taeyong right?”

Ten doesn’t hesitate. “Hell yeah I would.”

Johnny takes longer but nods. In a dreamy sort of voice, he confesses, “He’s just so fucking pretty, dude.”

“Yeah,” says Yuta from his bed, “you’d have to be the biggest idiot to not want that ass.”

No one bothers to point out that he’s already acting like an idiot by not telling Jungwoo about his feelings; they’re all too absorbed in this new topic.

Maybe it’s the alcohol humming in their veins, or the adrenaline of having just squared off with the man set on making their first year of university boring as all hell. Maybe it’s the thrill of finally discussing the universal truth: their RA is hot beyond imagining. Literally, beyond imagining. Whenever Jaehyun has his hand around his dick, he finds his imagination lacking.

He could never quite figure out how Taeyong’s face would look like when aroused. Is it anything like the narrowed glares he sends the D Floor boys? Is it like the flush he gets the moment he grows annoyed?

The even bigger mystery is what would become of Taeyong’s too perfect face when he came.

Maybe Jaehyun’s lack of imagination is exactly what lead to this idea.

“So,” says Doyoung in a drawn-out voice, “most of us want to fuck our RA because we have a functioning pair of eyes, that’s out in the open. But what now?”

“Now, we turn this into a game. A bet.” Jaehyun smiles proudly as he announces his idea. “Whoever sleeps with Taeyong first wins.”

Kun crosses his hands over his chest. “What’s in it for the winner?”

“The sex?” Jaehyun offers, honestly thinking that the idea of having Taeyong underneath them, mewling and using that pretty mouth of his for something better than chastising them like some kind of mother, would be enough motivation for the group.

“The pride?” says Johnny.

“Bragging rights?” offers Mark.

Ten rolls his eyes like he’s the same age as his name. “How about something monetary? Something like…25,000 won from each of us. We cut back on the drinking money and put it to something a little more fun.”

“That’s too much!”

“Shut up, Johnny. We all know your parents wire big bucks into your account from Chicago. You’ll barely feel the blow.”

Johnny riles up, pushing back his ink-black hair so his sharp face is on full display. “Well, if that’s what you say, then I’m adding an extra 10,000 in. 35,000 won says I get in his pants and I do it before the end of the month!”

His words are a bomb, and the room turns into a battleground.

“That’s three weeks!”

“He hates your guts, Johnny. No way can you do it.”

Ten shoots up onto the bed so he’s no longer the shortest in the group, desperately bouncing around to get their attention. “I raise you another 5,000, same time period!”

“Oh my god,” Mark gasps, carding his fingers through his hair. “We’re really doing this.”
It isn’t a question, but confirmation.

Jaehyun seals the deal with a snap of his fingers.

“Yuta, Sicheng, can one of you pass me a paper? I’m going to draw all this up.”

Yuta scrambles around his desk, returning with a torn sheet from his lecture notebook and a pen with its top chewed. Jaehyun chooses to ignore it and clicks down on the pen. The sound has a pacifying effect on the room, all of them growing hush.

“Who’s all in?” asks Jaehyun.

So many of them speak at once, Jaehyun can’t sort through their voices.

“Hold up. Let’s restart this. Who doesn’t want in?” When Lucas opens his big mouth in protest, he adds, “Besides Lucas.”

As Lucas’s mouth shuts, another opens.

“I’m out.”

Jaehyun doesn’t have to look to know it’s Jungwoo. Stupid lovebirds indeed.

“Alright. Anyone else?”

His eyes narrow as he shifts his stare between Kun, Sicheng, and Mark. These are the three Jaehyun has reservations about.

This is confirmed when Kun asks tentatively, “Isn’t this a little bit fucked up?”

“It’s just a game,” Jaehyun says firmly. “Anyway, there’s going to be no emotions involved, besides the passionate hate he has for us. We aren’t going to hurt him.”

“Unless he’s into that kind of stuff,” Yuta whispers into Sicheng’s ear, but loud enough for everyone else to hear.

Sicheng goes red, covering the same ear with his palm. Jaehyun thinks he’s going to say no, but instead he turns over his own question. “What if he figures out?”

“He won’t, cause none of you are snitching, right?”

The whole room shake their head in unison in a way that would make the military proud.

“Then…” Sicheng swallows thickly. “I’m in.”

Jaehyun smiles, and it only grows wider and wider when Kun and Mark, who noticed Jaehyun’s skeptical looks directed at them, chorus, “I’m in, too.”

“Brilliant. We have a real competition.”

Lucas raises his hands like he’s in a classroom but speaks before anyone can point to him. “Can Jungwoo and I bet but on who we think is going to win?”

“Oh, that’ll be fun!” says Ten. The rest of them agree.

No one needs to ask who they’ll pick because Lucas is already talking. “My money is on Johnny.”
Johnny leaps up from the ground with a loud whoop. “That’s my boy.”

They embrace tightly, Johnny beaming with pride and Lucas flushed with the attention. Jaehyun is more than a little put out that he wasn’t Lucas’s first choice, but he turns to Jungwoo, hopeful.

Jungwoo has the grace to look bashful. “I’m going with Sicheng.”

“What!” Yuta exclaims at the same time as Jaehyun. Sicheng tries to hide his smile but fails, practically beaming at Jungwoo.

“Sicheng is nice and handsome,” says Jungwoo defensively. Out of his line of sight, Lucas bristles. “I don’t know much about Taeyong’s tastes, but I think whatever the rest of you have planned isn’t going to work. But Kun is a close second. I’ll add 5,000 for Kun, but the rest is on Sicheng, because everyone else is an idiot.”

Ten scrunches his nose at the insult and makes a disapproving sound.

Jaehyun just reaches his arms over his head, stretching out his body as if he’s about to begin a race. “Good thing I’ve always loved a challenge.”

Yuta kicks his stomach from the bed. “Stop showing off your abs and write the bets down. Save the strip show for Taeyong.”

“Oh, I will,” Jaehyun hums as he lowers his hands and continues writing the page.

They get a bit carried away, betting on various other things concerning Taeyong and sex. When they finally call it quits, the page is covered front to back, though Jaehyun’s big print may have helped spread out the sprawl.

Lucas shouts, “Let’s sign it!”

It is a real miracle that Taeyong hasn’t resurfaced with all the excited commotion happening in Yuta and Sicheng’s room.

“Why?” asks Sicheng. He makes an attempt to keep quiet, though there has been an edge in his voice since they started the betting pool.

“It makes it feel more real,” Lucas explains himself, “and then no one can back out.”

Taeil nods shallowly. “I like the sound of that.”

“Let’s sign it in blood,” Ten says, his sarcasm as sweet as his gaze.

In answer, Jaehyun Chucks the pen at Ten. “Everyone sign. I don’t care if it’s in piss, blood, tears, or ink. Whatever you use, you’re selling your soul to this bet.”

Thankfully, all of them stick to the ink of the pen.

When the paper reaches Sicheng, he pauses. “Wait, how do we get proof that we slept with Taeyong? Who is to say Yuta won’t fib just to win all the money?”

“Why am I your example?” Yuta whines.

Sicheng glares at him. “Pop quiz. Bio. Your eyes didn’t leave my quiz the entire time.”

“…fair point,” Yuta concedes, graceful enough to look ashamed.
“And fair question,” Mark pipes up. “We should have some kind of proof.”

“Like what?” asks Doyoung. “You want the condom so you can run a DNA test?”

The room strangles itself between a laugh and a gag at the thought of dealing with someone else’s cum. The bet isn’t worth that trauma.

“Maybe like a really specific hickey?” Kun glances around the room, a coloring high on his cheeks that is no longer just from the alcohol. “It can be high up his neck so he can’t hide it, so we’ll have physical proof.”

Jaehyun lets his fingers dance across his jaw as he contemplates the option. “Not bad, but theoretically one of us could do that without actually sleeping with him.”

“Then how about a photo?” asks Johnny.

Ten waggles his brows. “Kinky, but I’m not surprised since it’s you.”

Johnny elbows Ten in his ribs, effectively silencing him so he’s free to explain himself to the rest of their friends.

“I’m not saying get a pic of his dick or anything. Just like, a post-sex snap or something discreet. For example,” he begins, plucking his phone off from the bed, “afterwards, when he’s knocked out in the bed, ‘cause you know I’d fuck him so good he practically passes out the moment I pull out, I’d take a casual pic of him looking fucked out.” He pretends to snap a photo, pointing the camera towards Ten, who dramatically ruffles his hair in a humble attempt of stylizing it to take the shape it would after aggressively rubbing against a pillow and having greedy hands tug at the strands. It falls short, but Johnny takes the photo anyway.

At the camera’s click, he says, “And that’s it. You can’t recreate the image of post-sex bliss, so the photo is a guaranteed win.”

“Everything you just said works, except for the part where you think it’s you getting out of Taeyong’s bed and not me,” says Yuta with an assured smile.

Roars of disagreement rise across the room, but they quickly change into laughs as they realize all at once: they’re really doing this.

“It’s decided then,” Jaehyun announces. “Winner can only be claimed if he gets a photo of our beloved RA fucked out in bed. So all you freaks who wanted to get it on in a classroom or the laundry room have to sacrifice your desires for the sake of the jackpot.”

“And here I was, looking forward to bending Taeyong over the grease-covered counter in the communal kitchen,” Doyoung drawls with a blank face that crumbles the moment everyone else begins to laugh.

The paper finds its way back into Jaehyun’s hand. He surveys his own handwriting, then the ten other signatures that are squeezed around his own at the bottom of the page. The top reads: **Who’ll be the first to fuck Taeyong: betting pool.**

Signed, sealed, and Jaehyun can only hope that he gets to deliver.

“Let the games begin.”
Chapter Notes

we're not even one hour into Sunday here but Simon Says had me lit this week so here we go!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The D Floor group message has quickly turned into a strategy center.

D(ICK) FLOOR

mark [1:02 PM]
just spotted TY in the dining hall

lucas [1:02 PM]
OH SHIT

taeil [1:02 PM]
did you make a move?

mark [1:03 PM]
nah he was with his friends
they’re like all intimidatingly attractive??
are we sure one of them isn’t his bf

jaehyun [1:04 PM]
doesn’t matter, it’s not important to the game
jungwoo [1:06 PM]
maybe he only hangs out with other beautiful people?

lucas [1:06 PM]
nah because then he’d be our friend

kun [1:06 PM]
lol

johnny [1:10 PM]
the answer is no btw
none of them are his bf

jaehyun [1:11 PM]
how do you know?

johnny [1:14 PM]
one of my TAs is in their friend group
we’re pretty cool
he also talks a lot so I have all the group drama lol

jaehyun [1:14 PM]
um
excuse me

yuta [1:14 PM]
bitch!!!! you have an in with taeyong and didn’t tell any of us
wtf asshole
jaehyun [1:14 PM]

^^

ten [1:15 PM]

^^

doyoung [1:15 PM]

^^

taeil [1:15 PM]

^^

johnny [1:18 PM]

:--)

good luck losers

sicheng [4:00 PM]

I just got off work and on my way out I spotted Taeyong going into ISC

yuta [4:04 PM]

and??

are you guys going to have steamy sex in a lab?

sicheng [4:06 PM]

Okay ew

And no, I didn’t even talk to him

He looked like he was in a rush
ten [4:10 PM]
1 of u better talk to him when u see him
bc at this rate it won’t be a competition

sicheng [4:12 PM]
shut up you haven’t even seen him today

ten [4:13 PM]
i’ll see him tonight
in my dreams ;)

kun [4:21 PM]
please keep your wet dreams to yourself

lucas [5:09 PM]
speaking of tonight
since SOME OF US aren’t focused on seducing our RA, are we still planning on going out?
Jaehyun you mentioned something about your friends having a party this weekend

jaehyun [5:10 PM]
oh yeah, Bambam and Yugyeom invited me and told me to bring you guys around. it’s at Jackson’s place
knowing that squad it’s going to be fucking crazy
last party Bambam had a dance off with half the cheer team
and he won

doyoung [5:12 PM]
It sounds like a freshman kind of thing. I doubt Taeyong would be there
lucas [5:12 PM]

okay but why does that matter
if you guys start bailing on parties because of this bet I’M GOING TO END YOU
it’ll make me sad :


ten [5:13 PM]

i want 2 go!!

if i had been there last time i would’ve beaten bambam and those cheerleaders. i will not be upstaged again

anyway it’s the first night of the bet and i still have 3 weeks before my deadline to get extra winnings from all you bitches

lucas [5:14 PM]

GOOD

let’s make it easy then

like this message if you want to go to Yugbam’s rager later

ten [5:14 PM]

*liked ‘like this message if you want to go to Yugbam’s rager later’*

jaehyun [5:16 PM]

*liked ‘like this message if you want to go to Yugbam’s rager later’*

doyoung [5:16 PM]

*liked ‘like this message if you want to go to Yugbam’s rager later’*

jungwoo [5:20 PM]

*liked ‘like this message if you want to go to Yugbam’s rager later’*
They really do mean to go to the party. They do. But Jaehyun said people would start rolling in around 10, which means they can’t be seen there until 11 at the earliest.

Which leads to them killing time by pregaming, and since they’re freshmen still learning their limits, they go overboard, as expected.

Yuta is plastered. His face feels heavy, his cheeks increasing under the weight of his long-lasting smile, but the rest of him is light, as if the alcohol has thinned his blood and being. He wants to let
Ironically, that entitles him clinging to those around him. He currently has Sicheng clutched into his side. The other boy is too drunk to do anything about it other than laugh and poke Yuta’s side from time to time.

“What time is it?” Jungwoo asks.

“Almost midnight,” someone says. Voices have begun to blur alongside Yuta’s vision.

“Oh shit!” Lucas springs up from his seat. “We’re way late.”

“Mhmm.” Jaehyun is too high to care about their delay. Ten is too drunk to not.

“Oh my god!” he shouts. “If you guys make me miss another dance-off I’m not talking to you for a week. There’s only room for one hot Thai dancer and it’s going to be me.”

“Don’t you wish,” Mark says with a grin. He gets braver with the drinks, targeting the others with jabs that they’re too inebriated to dodge.

Ten just pouts, kicking the corner of the nearest bed like an upset kid.

Tonight pres are in Jaehyun’s and Doyoung’s room. The location has been strategically picked; it has the largest window of the rooms on D Floor, which gives Johnny and Jaehyun and whoever decides to indulge in their bowl for the night more space to exhale their smoke. Yuta still thinks the room smells faintly of weed, not that he minds. Though he’s only kept to alcohol for tonight, he has spent a fair amount of nights like these too high.

Which is exactly how Johnny and Jaehyun look. Their eyes are threaded with red, the pupils big but unfocused. Johnny almost fell asleep during Rage Cage, while Jaehyun keeps staring off into the corner of the room. Whenever Yuta catches them doing shit like that, he bursts out into a fit of laughter that recedes long after the moment’s passed.

Kun, who is wasted based on the number of shots he’s taken throughout pres, somehow manages to gather his caretaking instincts. He stumbles onto his feet, clapping his hands twice. Attention falls on him at once. On nights out, Kun is their beacon.

And now, he flashes them a warning. “Five minutes. Then we’re out.”

No one tries to barter for more time. There’s no use, and anyway, they do want to go to the party. The guest list promises a wild night ahead.

With Kun’s timestamp, the room bustles with movement. Yuta is content where he is, especially when Sicheng slips out of his grasp, saying, “You can stay here. I’ll get your stuff from the room.”

“I love you,” Yuta says messily, but Sicheng is already gone.

Half the room has cleared out just to use the bathrooms. If they can save themselves from having to use the bathrooms at other people’s places, they will. They’ve had too many encounters with clogged toilets covered in grime, turning the porcelain into slate, and bathrooms permanently closed off as someone spent the night vomiting into it.

With everyone filtering in and out of the room, running to the bathroom or racing back to their rooms for their wallets and keys, it isn’t surprising when the door bursts open.
What is surprising is who comes in.

Even with the drunken haze that crystalizes over Yuta’s eyesight, he knows it’s Taeyong the moment the older boy steps into the room. He can sense it from the drum of his heels on the ground, the haggard, exhausted breath that leaves his lungs, the tufts of disheveled hair that sits on his nice, angular head.

Such a nice head, with such a nice face, which looks very upset as it glances into the room.

“What are you doing?” Jungwoo asks Taeyong, more confused than angry over the fact their RA barged in for no apparent reason. “There’s no curfew on the weekends.”

“I know. I’m not here for the noise.” Taeyong breathes through his nose. “People called downstairs saying they smelled weed.”

“Fucking snitches,” Doyoung mutters, his words slurred enough to hide them from Taeyong’s ears.

Yuta scans around the room and almost releases a sigh. Thankfully Johnny and Jaehyun chose to disappear before Taeyong came in. He has no idea where they’ve wandered off to, but Yuta has enough braincells left in him to think of locking the door so they can’t return. If they’re so much as in the same room as Taeyong, they’ll be discovered. They smoked enough that their cologne for the night is weed.

While it’s legal to have out the alcohol that litters their dorm rooms, the same can’t be said for recreational drugs. Weed, the bottom of the drug bracket, applies to the school’s no-tolerance policy just as much as coke, molly, and acid, all of which are in heavy circulation at the parties like the ones they’re about to head to.

Taeyong’s chest swells like it always does when he’s about to go on a rant, probably now about how stupid it is to bring drugs into the dorm space, and though Yuta enjoys the sound of Taeyong’s voice, its steady cadence and unexpected depth, he’s not in the mood for another bitchfest after last night.

Yuta’s mouth pops off the top of his beer bottle with an audible sound. “Is that mouth of yours good for anything other than scolding, hyung?”

The room goes so quiet, everyone can hear Taeyong’s sharp intake of breath. His eyes flash over to Yuta, who is too drunk to see how big the other boy’s pupils get. “E-excuse me?” Taeyong tries to sound indignant, but his voice is a wispy thing Yuta struggles to grasp in his stupor.

“Such pretty lips,” Yuta muses thoughtfully, thumbing the rim of his beer. “They have to be good at other stuff too. It would be a waste if they weren’t.”

“Wh-what are you? I—” Taeyong, who is usually so composed and cool, structured into a veneer of adamant control, seems broken with Yuta’s observation. His mouth opens and closes, at loss of words. Those eyes he had set on Yuta now frantically turn towards his toes.

Taeyong’s face goes as pink as his lips. He struggles to say evenly, “Clear out, and if I catch any of you with weed in this building, I’m going to rip out your throat.”

“Kinky.”

Taeyong makes some strangled sound in his chest. It’s the last thing they hear before he sprints out of the room. His footsteps slam hard on the ground. Yuta thinks the ground is going to fracture one day with how often they have him thundering up and down their floor.
Mark turns his eyes over to Yuta, his mouth gaping wide. “Dude, could you be more obvious?”

Yuta lazily meets his stare. “More obvious about what?”

“The fact you want to fuck him!”

Oh, yeah, the bet. The one that they literally made yesterday and that Yuta already forgot about the moment he took in too much cherry-flavored vodka and Coke.

He pretends like this was his tactic: drunken compliments to disarm their RA. It’d definitely worked to fluster him, but Yuta isn’t so sure about the seducing factor. Taeyong probably broke a school track recorder with how fast he left the room.

Still, Yuta feels delighted, remembering the flush that ran high into Taeyong’s cheekbones, turning the canvas of his face into roses, wildfire, sunsets.

His thoughts are disrupted as the door crashes open once more. Like a dam breaking, bodies spill into the room, fanning out to surround those who never left their spot. Lucas shoves to the front of them. “I heard Taeyong come up!” He glances around to the group behind him. “I think we all did and hid until he disappeared.”

“And it’s good you did,” says Doyoung, turning a dark look over to Johnny and Jaehyun. “Someone snitched downstairs about the smell of your rank weed. You almost got us all in trouble because you headasses can’t just smoke outside in some desolate student lot or something.”

“It’s cold,” Johnny mutters.

Doyoung throws his hands in the air. “It’s only fall!”

“A crispy fall.”

Kun hushes the arguments by raising his hand to cover Doyoung’s chest. “Whatever. It doesn’t matter because Yuta scared Taeyong off. I doubt he’ll remember to call the resident director again.”

“Wait, what did Yuta do?”

Jungwoo snorts. “He was basically one minute away from shoving his tongue down Taeyong’s throat.”

“What!” screams everyone who had been out of the room for the exchange.

“I wasn’t that bad,” Yuta protests, his own cheeks now going bright. “Just some flirting, you know.”

“Your flirting is about as subtle as a sucker punch to the jaw.” Doyoung pitches his voice to mock Yuta’s. “Is that mouth of yours good for anything other than scolding, hyung?”

“You did not!” Ten squeals, delighting in the petrified look Yuta dons.

He hadn’t been aware of just how direct he’d been with Taeyong. Dear God, he won’t be able to look his RA in the eye for a week.

Or maybe he should. Throw in some eye-fucking, some well-timed glances down at those lips Yuta’s mind had wanted him to wax on about. Maybe this is his way in—into Taeyong’s pants, that is.

Though he has a plan now to tackle the bet, the rest of the room is still pissing themselves at his
expense. Doyoung finished his reenactment of Yuta’s babbling, and now Mark takes his turn while he has Jungwoo pose as Taeyong.

Yuta shoots up from his seat, waving his arms in a gesture that clearly screams LET’S LEAVE. “I bet you all that I won’t be the only one who embarrasses themselves tonight!” It’s more like a prayer, but with the group he calls his friends, he’d say the odds are in his favor.

“I’m not in the mood for another bet, but I believe it,” Jaehyun says. His voice is slower, stunted. He seems a second behind everyone else, late laughing and teasing. Yuta is grateful to the weed make his stupid friend even stupider, or else he’d be getting even more hell than he already is.

“All I know is that it won’t be me,” Ten says with a smile too sideways to be sober. “Now get moving you bitches. We have a party to upstage. Tonight, I’ll prove once and for all that I’m the hottest dancer this school has ever seen.”

//

D(ICK) FLOOR

sicheng [2:36 AM]
[video sent]
in case anyone wants the video of Ten faceplanting while trying to do the grind on me dance

Sicheng’s phone promptly freezes up as eight people love his message in what appears to be the same microsecond. He tries opening it up to clear out the messages, but his screen won’t respond. It’s probably petrified by the video he just sent out to his friends, if not frozen from the overload of information.

When his phone starts working a little bit later, he sees only one person responded to the video with something other than a loved message.

ten [2:50 AM]
SICHENG!!!!!
i h8 u
ur so mean :'(
it was an acident
im 2 drunk
IM THE BEST DANCER HERE
ten [3:00 AM]

can some1 grab me some ice?

my lip is still bleeding

sicheng [3:01 AM]

on my way

Chapter End Notes

thank you for all the kudos and especially comments! they've all been noted. I have interaction scenes for all the pairings, I'm still contemplating future happenings tho...you'll see ;)
also, I updated tags cause you guys made me aware that I should warn about the angst that this story will involve rip
One of the best things about being a morning person is an open laundry room.

Rookie Hall is the smallest dorm on campus, which means it has the least number of washers and dryers. The ratio is still terrible, leaving the residents in a scramble to try and wash their rank clothes before anyone else. Taeyong has had to sort through plenty of square-offs in the laundry room after an offender removed someone clothes from the dryer early or left sopping wet clothes on the floor.

He’s discovered the easiest way for him to personally avoid this problem is through two means.
One: wake up early.
Two: don’t leave the laundry room.

He copes with one easily considering he’s naturally an early riser. He works with two by bringing schoolwork with him when he’s feeling productive, his iPad to watch Netflix on when he’s not.

Today, he’s somewhere in between. Instead of his iPad, he has his phone. Netflix is replaced as he streams music rather than TV shows. He calls this research, studying, whatever academic term he has to apply to make himself accept the music benders he’s prone to going on. Problems of being a music composition major.

He has a paper coming up on the influence of Western media on Korea’s music culture, primarily asking to what extent has the landscape of Korean music been shaped by international artists and should the impact be reversed. What better way to ponder this than to listen to some music and maybe a couple podcasts discussing the issue while doing his laundry.

No one ever comes down to the laundry room this early on a Sunday, and since there is no one else on the floor, Taeyong doesn’t feel guilty when he pulls out his headphones and plays the music aloud. He hops onto the top of the washer, which he’s just emptied of his darks. Ever the lover of dark outfits as soon as summer crippled into fall, it’s his last and largest load to worry about for the rest of the week.

He’s made a playlist for the essay (yet another way to put it off but call it outlining anyway). It has an equal amount of Western songs and Korean songs. All of them are fairly mainstream. It’s already too much material to work with considering the different origins. Trying to factor in the vast array of genres apart of them would be an overload, maybe worthy of a thesis but not a single paper for MC 340: Korean Music’s Evolution and Essence.

The song switches from SHINee to Frank Ocean. Taeyong’s eyes naturally flutter close at the opening notes.

But suddenly, Frank Ocean has a new backup singer.

“My guy pretty like a girl, and he got fight stories to tell,” a familiar voice sings in a surprisingly nice voice.

Taeyong’s eyes snap open the same moment Ten spins away from the door he’d been backing into in order to open, his arms preoccupied by an overflowing laundry basket, so he faces the washing
room. Their eyes meet and suddenly there is a new hum in the air that has nothing to do with the music.

*It’s too early to deal with their shit,* Taeyong thinks, referring to Ten as if he’s with his whole unit. D Floor always seems to move in a pack, or pairs at the very least. Reflecting on it, Taeyong is pretty sure this is the first time he’s been with a member of D Floor one on one.

He doesn’t know how to feel about that.

“Sorry, I’ll turn off my music.” Taeyong leaps off the washing machine and takes up his station beside the dryer. Though Ten has no reason to be using the dryer right now, Taeyong wouldn’t put it past him to mess with his clothes just for the hell of it.

All of them have seemed to be keen on messing with him more than usual and through very strange methods. Taeyong has to simply think about Yuta’s drunken comments on Friday night and his skin goes rash red, itching at the memory of Yuta’s dark eyes that were heavy with *something.*

It was a joke, he reminds himself.

“Wait, no,” Ten rushes to say. “I love this song.”

“Oh, Okay.” Taeyong removes his thumb so it no longer hovers over the pause button. He gently sets his phone on top of the dryer.

He doesn’t know why he feels like he has to move in slow gestures in front of the other boy, as if Ten’s bright eyes are the barrel of a gun trained at his soul, and one misstep will obliterate him.

Ten is surprisingly quiet as he loads his laundry. Taeyong doesn’t know if it’s because of the early hour, or because he doesn’t have one of his friends to bounce off of.

His hesitation about being so close to one of the monsters wanes when he glances over at Ten’s face after he finishes putting his clothes into the open washers.

“What happened to your lip?” he gasps. Ever the caretaker, an attribute that easily landed him the RA position, he surges forward, closing the space he had moments ago set clearly between them.

Ten bristles at Taeyong’s attentive gaze. “Don’t want to talk about it.”

So he hurt it doing something stupid. No surprise there, but it still looks pretty nasty. His lower lip took the brunt of the impact, and it’s slightly swollen and red from irritation. A cut impresses itself across the lines of his lips. The bruises look a day old but are still colorful enough to catch Taeyong’s eyes.

“Okay, but can I look at it?”

Ten shrugs. “If you want.”

Taeyong regrets asking the question one second later as his eyes fall onto Ten’s lips. Suddenly, the space between them feels constricting even though there is a big enough gap to fit another body between them.

The tips of Taeyong’s ears prickle with heat. Taeyong wishes the younger boy had broken his nose rather than bust his lip.

He’s gone too long staring without saying anything, because Ten teases, “Like my lips, hm?”
“Shut up.” Taeyong flicks Ten across his forehead, where a clean-cut fringe sits in a style that is very suiting for the smaller, younger boy. “I actually want to know who punched you so I can thank them.”

“I wasn’t punched.”

Taeyong grins. “Ah, so you did this to yourself.”

Ten sputters, “No! I just—you know, it’s not important.” Ten tries to pout his lip but hisses at the movement. Taeyong stops his taunting, taking up his role as the mother hen of Rookie Hall.

“Did you get this checked out?”

Ten lifts his hand to cradle the side of his face. He works his jaw, as if testing how much it can move without causing pain through his face. Maybe that’s why he’s more quiet than usual; his injury makes speaking painful. Taeyong hopes the rest of his friends were involved in the self-induced accident that affects Ten’s mouth.

“If you mean by a doctor, no,” he says, barely opening his mouth.

“You should.”

“It’s not that bad. Really.”

“It doesn’t hurt?” Taeyong almost presses his thumb into Ten’s swollen lip to test his pain, but then remembers himself and how weird the energy has been between him and the D Floor boys. He reels back, quickly taking up his place by the dryer. Without looking back at Ten, he says, “Well, if you need any Motrin or ice, text me.”

“Okay,” Ten says, drawing out the word. When it breaks off, Taeyong thinks that will be the end of all discussions. Ten’s clothes are in the wash, Taeyong has effectively made things weird, and they will part as the enemies they are.

Then Ten moans, “Ah, you made me miss the song.”

Taeyong didn’t even notice that the song had changed over from Chanel to an old drama’s opening theme.

“You like Frank Ocean?” he asks, opening his phone to gaze through his playlist.

“I love him.”

Taeyong changes over from the playlist, leaving Frank’s discography on shuffle. He can think about his paper later. The potential of this moment is more important: talking with one of the D Floor monsters. Talking. Not scolding or arguing.

Talking.

The song changes back to Frank Ocean, and Ten starts singing again.

“A tornado flew around my room before you came, excuse the mess it made.” Something in Ten’s voice puts Taeyong at ease, unwinding the threads of anxiety that always seem to draw taut when he’s around the D Floor boys. He finds himself joining in.

“It usually doesn’t rain in southern California, much like Arizona, my eyes don’t shed tears…”
When it gets to the chorus, Taeyong lets Frank and Ten carry the song.

“You have a nice voice,” Taeyong muses, already wondering how he’d use it in songs.

Ten grins at him from over his shoulder. “Not too bad yourself, hyung, but I’m not surprised. You’re a music major, right?”

“Yeah, music composition,” he says, unable to keep the shock out of his voice. He had no idea how Ten knew that.

He strains his mind to remember Ten’s major, but since this is their first ever cordial conversation, it’s natural for him to draw a complete blank.

As if sensing Taeyong’s deliberation, Ten supplies, “I’m minoring in music, majoring in dance.”

“Oh, that’s great!” Taeyong says with nothing but sincerity. “I have a couple friends majoring in dance, if you ever want tips or have questions. I can just pass them on. They’d love to help.”

“I might need that for when I pick classes next semester. I have one professor right now who’s just a nutcase.”

“It’s really shitty that a professor can ruin a whole module. I can give you my blacklist of music professors if you want.”

“Seriously? That’d save my life.”

Taeyong goes on, counting off on his fingers all the professors he’d avoid. He factors in horror stories his friends have told him alongside his own so that by the time he’s finished, Ten has a comprehensive list of the worst professors at school.

He decides he needs to restore some integrity to the faculty, so he moves onto those who he’s loved.

“I’m in a class right now, though, and I absolutely love it. It’s Professor Kim. She only does upper division stuff, but it’s totally worth it. She’s super insightful and really knows what she’s talking about but without making you feel like an idiot.” Taeyong hefts up his phone. “That’s why I was listening to Frank earlier. I have a paper on Western media and its influence, so I made a playlist to compare the two.”

Ten has his elbows on top of the washing machine, chin perched in his palm. “Wow, that sounds pretty interesting.”

“It really is. I recommend it if you ever have the chance later on.” As the song changes again, Taeyong comes to realize how much he’s talked. Maybe he’s been too excited to share this information with someone, especially when that someone is a hellion currently acting like an attentive cherub.

He tries to steer the conversation towards Ten so he can take the wheel for a while. “You said you love Frank Ocean. How’d you get into him?”

“Hmm.” Ten wears a thoughtful expression, dancing his head from side to side. “It wasn’t until he dropped Chanel. It came up on my new releases, and I instantly fell in love. I went through everything he’s released after that, full on music-bender.”

Taeyong hums in understanding. “There isn’t nearly enough of his music out in the world.”
“He’s almost an enigma, but that makes me love him more.”

“Agreed, but for all he does to avoid the spotlight, his artistry is something rare. He isn’t afraid to share those vulnerabilities, those pains so many of us have been through.”

“He isn’t afraid to be who he is,” Ten says, and he smiles softly in a way that has Taeyong’s breath catch in his throat. He didn’t know any of the D Floor monsters could look like that. Human.

“You know, he helped me accept myself,” Ten confesses, his voice like the fabric softener he grips. “It’s weird. I feel like I need to thank him, like he needs to know that I’m proud of my bisexuality because he made me feel proud of it. ‘I see both sides like Chanel’. It sounds simple but those lyrics really helped me when I was trying to figure all that out.”

Taeyong’s heart feels swollen in his chest, but in a pleasant way, like after eating too much delicious food. He’s sated and happy. “That’s incredible, Ten. I’m happy for you.”

“Thank you.”

They say nothing for a long moment. The rumble of the machines around them harmonize alongside Frank’s vocals, spreading a hum through the dank air of the washing room.

Then Taeyong says, “Stuff like that, stories like that—it’s why I love music. Why I want to make it. If one person anywhere the world can hear something I wrote and feel, I’ll be content. If it makes them feel loved or happy, or it’s something that explains their pain so they know they’re not alone, I will be doing what I want in life.”

“I’m certain you can do that, hyung,” Ten says, his voice overwhelmingly warm.

But instead of panicking and running, Taeyong smiles back at Ten, completely unguarded. He doesn’t have to raise his claws at the other boy, because, maybe just for this moment, he’s stopped being a monster. “That’s the nicest thing I’ve heard in weeks.”

“Then maybe you should keep better company.”

“Unfortunately, I’m a little occupied by these bastards living on the top floor of my building.”

His words, only partly a joke, tackle Ten in a way he doesn’t expect. He blinks, long and hard, as if trying to snap out of a dream.

When his eyes come back, they seem further away, their gleam another galaxy away from Taeyong. But while his eyes go distant, his smile draws Taeyong closer. It spreads wide, gaining a new edge that has Taeyong’s stomach tumbling.

Ten goes to speak, but the dryer goes off. Both boys startle, bouncing in their shoes at the brash beep.

“Oh, um, that’s me.” Taeyong clears his throat as he throws open the dryer and dumps the clothes into his laundry basket.

“I should iron this right now,” he says. He always has to iron his clothes before hanging them. It’s part of his cleanliness routine. “But if you ever want to talk like this again, I’m around.”

“Sure thing, hyung.” Taeyong looks into Ten’s eyes—which have turned into blackholes that try to drag Taeyong into him—as he catches a change in his voice. Like a different note, Ten has altered his song into something more enticing and dark. “I think there are a lot of things you could teach
The monster is back, and Taeyong needs to get away. Now.

He drags his laundry basket towards the door, making an arch so he steers clear of Ten. “Um, yeah. Happy Sunday. Bye.”

His music is still playing out of his phone tucked into his back pocket as he leaves the laundry room. “The way is it, we’re on land/Still I’m someone to hold true.”

Chapter End Notes

Frank Ocean reminds me of taeten ever since they sang thinkin bout you on that vlive

find me on tumblr @neog0tmybaek
Chapter 4

The library has quickly become Taeyong’s refuge. Here, he doesn’t have to think about anything other than work. The stress is a pure kind: the one bundled between textbooks, the clack of his keyboard as he drafts a paper, the occasional cough that erupts from the silent section. There are no other factors other than work, which Taeyong can manage. He can control himself here.

That is until he walks through the bookshelves, searching for more support for his essay’s claim. He turns down one aisle and finds only one other person inhabiting it.

Taeyong’s eyes just need to gaze over the profile to know it’s one of the monsters.

Though he doesn’t make a sound, Doyoung senses him, head turning to glance down the row of books and find Taeyong paralyzed among them. He gives his RA a small wave, both a hello and a beckon to come closer.

Despite his mind’s better thinking, his feet listen to Doyoung’s call, and he approaches the younger boy. He tries to lighten his footfall, as if that will erase his presence here, next to Doyoung.

“Hi, hyung,” Doyoung whispers when Taeyong stops at his side. He acts like he’s perusing for a book, which is only partially true. However, the back of his mind isn’t sifting through the catalog of books but really he’s trying to gauge Doyoung.

Doyoung has been one of the hardest monsters for Taeyong to figure out. He isn’t the loudest or the rudest, but there is an edge held in the elegant curve of his eyes that keeps Taeyong on his toes. He’s handsome in an old-timey way, Taeyong thinks strangely. Clean-cut, neat edges, but sharp, like an ornamental dagger.

At least, Taeyong hopes it’s ornamental.

Because he tries hard to be a decent human being, Taeyong whispers, “Hey. All good?”

Doyoung nods. Taeyong thinks that will be that considering that this is a silent section of the library, but, to his upmost horror, Doyoung begins to speak in that steady voice of his. Speaking! Not whispering.

“I’m good, just trying to write this paper on—”

Instinct has Taeyong leaping forward, covering Doyoung’s mouth with a cupped palm so the rest of what he’s trying to is muffled. Both of their eyes widen at their sudden closeness and the heat fissuring between their bodies. Doyoung’s hot breaths spilling into Taeyong’s prickling palms, so that the rest of Taeyong feels like he’s on fire.

He wrenches away from the flame, letting his hand drop to his side. He brushes it against his jeans
and croaks out, “Do you even know how to whisper?”

And because Doyoung is a life-ruiner just like the rest of D Floor he shakes his head with a cheeky grin that ripples across the rest of his face. “Nah. Anyway, it’s funny seeing you this worried.”

Taeyong has to stuff his hand into his pocket to keep it from shooting out to Doyoung’s mouth once more. His foot anxiously taps the ground, and it won’t stop no matter how much he commands it to. They’re already making enough noise as it is.

“Then stop talking,” Taeyong hisses. “Just grab your book, walk away from me, go back to your seat, and study for once.”

Doyoung’s amusement slips off his face slowly, like ice melting under the winter sun. “Can you stop lecturing me? You’re not my mom.” A thoughtful pause, a deliberate gaze that rakes up and down Taeyong’s body, sending little daggers into his skin at the clear appraisal. “But maybe I can be your daddy.”

Taeyong chokes on air. Loudly. His lungs spasm, abandoning their job so he flounders for breath with rib-shaking coughs. Even if he could formulate words, they’d never escape, and he’s almost grateful for the fact.

“Are you into that?” Doyoung raises an eyebrow. The corner of his mouth inches upward along with the movement, creating an amused expression that has Taeyong backing away. His shoulder blades bury into the bookshelf.

But Doyoung doesn’t relent.

“Come on, hyung. What gets you going?”

“I—nothing. I mean, nothing you need to know about.”

Doyoung smirks at him. “You totally do.”

“I don’t!” His whisper threatens to break into a scream. “I seriously don’t!”

“Hm, then what do you like?”

Too many things I can’t have. “Like I said, it’s none of your business.” The last thing Doyoung needs to know in this moment is how this would be a turn-on for him: him against a wall, another body looming over his own, in complete control. Before he can let that thought spiral, he spits out, “Now be quiet and scram.”

“Can’t,” says Doyoung. “Remember, I’m looking for a book in this aisle.”

“Me too.” Taeyong huffs and spins away from Doyoung, making way to where the book should be. However, when he turns, he finds himself cornered.

The third floor’s librarian has appeared at the end of their aisle like a wraith, her all-black clothes bringing out a ghostly pallor to her skin. She brings up a bony finger to her lips and shushes them. Taeyong thinks that’s all they will get, but then she lowers her finger and rasps, “You two need to leave the library. Now.”

“But—”

“Now.” Her clipped tone offers no room for a further debate. For the first time in Taeyong’s college
career, he has been kicked out of the library.

Without glancing back at the cause of his downfall, he stalks towards the librarian.

She follows him like a shadow all the way back to his desk, watching as he backs up his bag in shame. He’s glad none of his friends joined him for his study session, or he’d never hear the end of this. But who knows, this story could easily get around campus based on the number of people staring at him. His face burns, and so do the back of his eyes.

“Sorry,” he whispers to her, head bowed and eyes trained on the floor as he rushes towards the stairwell. He shoved open the door with more force than necessary, and the slam of it hitting the back wall seems to be the perfect note to end this nightmarish study session on.

He winds his way down the stairs, breaths huffing out of him. His chest feels too tight, and a knot has looped itself around his throat.

He’s halfway down when a hand reaches over the railing and catches on the collar of his shirt. He’s wrenched to a halt, and reluctantly, he glances up to who he knows has a hold on him.

Doyoung has the good graces to look apologetic. He hands out a smile like a consolation prize. “Let me buy you something from the vending machine to apologize?”

Taeyong glares up at the other boy, silent for a long moment. He wishes he could yell and snap, but he’s already worn to the bone from the librarian’s glare and all his work and the text messages he’d woken up to from a certain someone this morning.

“One candy bar because you gave me a migraine, but that’s it.” He doesn’t know why he says it. Maybe because Doyoung’s eyes look as watery as his. Maybe it’s just because he needs a big sugar intake to deal with today.

Doyoung frees his shirt only to rush around the stairwell so he stands next to Taeyong. “I’m sorry about that,” he says as they continue their descent, his bag occasionally jostling Taeyong’s.

“You guys can never make my lives easy,” Taeyong huffs out. “Not even outside the dorm.”

Doyoung shrugs, unashamed. “We like to bring some fun into your life.”

“I already have plenty of fun, thank you very much. Anyway, your fun is a lot creepier. Like what the hell was that all about back there?”

“Like I said, just some fun.” Doyoung levels a heavy gaze on him. “If you’re interested.”

Taeyong sputters, and though the last thing he wants to do is touch a monster like Doyoung, he reaches out a hand to shove him away. “Why do you guys keep doing that?”

“What?”

He doesn’t want to say flirting, even though that’s what this clearly is. Instead, he evades the word by garbling out an incoherent stream. “Talking…saying stuff…inappropriate stuff.”

And though it’s a pure mess of words, they do something Taeyong has wanted to happen since move in: it shuts Doyoung up.

They don’t exchange a single word until they reach the vending machine on the first floor. Taeyong doesn’t wait for Doyoung to speak up, instead directing him with his finger. “I want that.”
Doyoung listens, feeding in his money and inputting the numbers to get out the Twix that makes Taeyong’s stomach grumble at the sight of.

Doyoung doesn’t break his silence until he’s slipping the candy bar into Taeyong’s waiting palm. “Fun or not, you have to know that you’re beautiful.”

It’s so unexpected, Taeyong drops his candy bar the moment it enters his grasp. He hears a crack, but he isn’t sure if it comes from the Twix now on the floor or his brain, broken at such a sincere, whole-hearted compliment.

Once his brain repairs itself, and it takes such a time that Doyoung is free to gaze across his stunned face, he reaches down and picks up the Twix. He rips it open, partly because his fingers aren’t quite obeying his brain.

Taeyong snaps the Twix viciously between his teeth, and though part of him wants to moan with instant relief at the taste of chocolate and caramel in his mouth, he forces out a growl. “I know you guys are up to something. I’m not totally sure, but if you guys keep this up, I’m reporting you to administration.”

Doyoung is shameful enough to look confused. “But we’re not messing around, hyung.”

“Yes, sure,” he snorts. “See you around. Unfortunately.”

Slinging his backpack up his shoulder, he sticks the rest of the Twix in his mouth and leaves the library without looking back, afraid that if he glances back, he’ll summon Doyoung to his side once more.

But Doyoung stays put, and Taeyong is free to exit the library with no further harassment. He doesn’t know when he’ll be brave enough to reenter one of his most treasured spots at school now that it’s been compromised by the D Floor fiends, not to mention his public embarrassment at the hands of the librarian.

Taeyong finishes the Twix, and with no one around now, he’s free to groan at his delight. It really did hit the spot. Though it was the least Doyoung could do after all that.

_We’re not messing around_, he’d said. What kind of garbage was that?

But…in the slim chance they aren’t, then what does it mean?

Well, only one thing is certain. The library is no longer safe from the monsters, which means Taeyong now has to find a new safe space, and he has a couple in mind.

Unfortunately, they seem to allude his memory, which is too busy wrapping those words around a thousand neurons so it’s all he can feel.

_You have to know you’re beautiful._

Taeyong forces himself to laugh cynically. Of course, they’re up to something. He just needs to figure out what so he can beat them at their own game.

//
For the first time since school has started, Thirsty Thursday has been cancelled. In its place is a much-needed movie night in the common room.

The D Floor boys booked the room the day before, so it’s reserved explicitly for them. A couple girls barged in wanting to play a board game but were turned away before they could even step past the doorframe.

After all, the movie night was a thinly veiled excuse to get together and talk about Taeyong sober, as if that would make their plan any more rational.

The title screen just begins to roll when Doyoung confesses, “I think Taeyong is onto us.”

Jungwoo, who has been following the bet as closely as possible for his own amusement, snorts. “I can understand why. None of you have been subtle about it.”

“We’ve all wanted to get into his pants, but only now are we actually trying to do something about it at the same exact time,” says Sicheng. “It is kind of weird.”

“Not all of us,” Lucas chimes in.

“Right. Sans Lucas and Jungwoo, we’ve all wanted to dick down Taeyong since orientation probably. He might think it’s weird because of how quickly we’ve changed. Last week, we wanted nothing more than to bug the crap out of him. Now, Yuta practically says he wants to fuck Taeyong’s mouth and the rest of you are lined up to say something along the same lines.”

“Come on, you can’t compare the rest of us to Yuta,” Taeil bemoans. “We’re not all that bad.”

Yuta protests. “I was drunk!”

“That’s never an excuse!” several of the boys chorus, and Yuta folds his arms across his chest to sulk.

“Look,” says Kun in an even tone, “there’s a weird power dynamic here.”

Johnny rolls his eyes. “It’s not that weird. He’ll bottom, I top. Done deal.”

There is a handful of sniggers, but Sicheng joins in Kun’s rationale.

“Stop being idiots,” he snaps. “At this rate, it seems like Kun and I are the only ones who know how to do this without being an asshat because we understand how strange this will be for Taeyong. Even if this wasn’t a bet, even if he did have a resident genuinely interested in him, it’s a complex situation. He’s supposed to be a leader for us, a figure we can turn to for help. Changing from that into something else isn’t easy.”

“Especially when we’re all coming onto him at once,” Kun adds.

Jaehyun reaches for the remote and silences the movie. “What are you saying then?” he asks, turning away from the screen so he can eye both Kun and Sicheng. “That we draw straws and let everyone have a week reserved for them to get at Taeyong?”

Both boys shake their head, and Sicheng answers firmly, “No. We just need to change tactics.”

“Clearly, because mission flirt with him until he falls into bed with one of us is a bust so far,” Doyoung mutters.

“So we try something else,” Kun says.
“Like?”

“Like…actually trying to connect with him.”

The boys stare blankly at him.

“See,” he says with a heavy sigh, eyes cast upward for the divine help these boys need to grow up, “this is why we’re all single.”

An uproar is about to break out, full of defensive statements to justify their lack of partners or flings, the typical bullshit about being too young for commitment or focusing on studies (as if).

But then Jungwoo suddenly pipes up from the common room couch. “Kun and Sicheng are right,” he says, and the room falls quiet. “You guys need to change your tactics. You’re never going to woo him with your bad pick-up lines.”

“They’re not bad,” Ten mutters, though he does make a fair point.

“How would you want a guy to woo you, Jungwoo?” asks Lucas, and the rest of the room has to resist the urge to snort. They should’ve made a bet on when these two are going to get together. At least it’s guaranteed, though the timeframe is shaky. As of now, there is no certainty in any of the boy’s succeeding in their mission of seducing Taeyong.

“Well,” Jungwoo begins, eyes flickering across the room but skittering over Lucas. “I guess, um, I’d want to make sure that it’s not a joke. Obviously, with you guys acting really forward and flirty, it can come off as insincere. For me, and I think for Taeyong too, he wants to know that he’s different than the other people. That you want him for more than just his body.”

Yuta snorts loudly. “I think you missed the whole point of this bet, Jungwoo. We’re trying to fuck Taeyong, not win his heart. You’ve been reading too much Jane Austen for class.”

“No, I think he’s onto something,” Ten confesses, and everyone trades shocked expressions at his words. If anyone was an advocate for excessive flirting, it was Ten.

But he explains to the surprised room, “I had…I guess I’ll call it a moment with Taeyong a couple days ago. I found him doing laundry downstairs and he was listening to Frank Ocean. We talked about his music and other stuff.” Stuff he usually doesn’t find himself sharing with others easily. At first, he chalked it up to Frank Ocean making him simp, but it felt like something more. That look Taeyong gave him, that promise of a beautiful smile tucked between pink lips, it had different Frank lyrics popping into his head.

This is the blood, the body, the life right now/The hype right now/Might be what I need

Ten is only supposed to want Taeyong’s body, but in that moment he wanted his life too.

Now, he realizes it’s just the power of what Jungwoo explained. Simple courting, like out of a damn romance novel. That’s how he wins this bet.

And he’s already one step ahead of the rest of the boys.

He points this out with a smirk. “Good luck catching up.”

So that’s his plan now. Keep playing the game he set in the laundry that early Sunday morning, and he wins. From now on, the only Frank lyrics he should associate with Taeyong are from Novacane.
Fuck me good, fuck me long, fuck me numb

That’s the goal, after all. That’s it.

“Maybe you guys are right,” Yuta admits, sulking into his spot on the couch. “He barely even looks at me after what I said before Yugbam’s party.”

If he was baiting for sympathy, none is found among the D Floor boys. They break out in raucous laughter, the walls quaking with their amusement.

“Such pretty lips,” Lucas mocks. He’s heard the story enough times that, though he wasn’t in the room at the time of Yuta’s downfall, he can recount it word for word, pitch for pitch.

Yuta shoves a pillow into his face, toppling back and kicking his legs out. Ten isn’t sure if it’s to throw a tantrum or to pretend he’s suffocating himself. Either way, he breaks out into a laugh.

And that’s how the rest of the night goes. Laughter, broken up by sharp quips and stories about things unrelated to Taeyong. Not because they have suddenly lost interest in their challenge. Not at all. Instead, all participants in the bet dedicate their short-lasting peace to ruminate on their plans for the future.

Chapter End Notes

thank you all for your comments!! they motivate me so much and give me drive towards a future for this fic. pls keep it up, and i promise if your ship hasn't shown up yet it will!! a lot of stuff is just flirting/building rn but the update i'm really looking forward to is only a couple chapters away heh

side note, i dare y'all to guess my nct bias lmao
hey everyone i’m sorry about the delay. not only did i have exams sat and today--my keyboard broke on my laptop. I wanted to give you all a longer update but this is all i can manage until im home and able to fix my laptop :( i have a 20+ travel day tomorrow so maybe i can keep writing on my phone

Sicheng swirls his mostly empty coffee cup between his palms, watching the dregs dance in endless circles. He wonders if maybe he can use them to divine one of the greatest questions he’s been asking himself recently.

Am I a bad person?

Not long ago, he’d feel assured that the answer is no, but now that he’s signed onto a bet concerning someone’s sexual activity, someone in a position of power above him, he has his doubts. To make matters worse, he doesn’t necessarily regret entering the bet. If anything, he wants to win.

But the thing about Sicheng, the thing missing from most of his friends from the dorm, is that he has a conscious that exceeds those typically found in freshmen boys.

Which is why he struggles from time to time when he thinks on the bet. It’s also why he hasn’t made his move yet, though some of the others have (if Yuta’s drunken flirting could even be considered a move, he thinks with an internal roll of his eyes). He doesn’t know if any of them have pulled ahead in the race; Taeyong hasn’t showed any favoritism yet, but Sicheng likes to think that he’s hated a little less than the rest.

He’s still staring absently into his cup when a voice calls his name. “Oh, Sicheng! Hello.”

Sicheng’s eyes shoot up, confirming that it is indeed his RA standing in front of the line. Maybe Sicheng is some kind of oracle after all. All he has to do is swirl some coffee grounds, and he can summon the handsome man in front of him.

How does he look this good in the morning? Sicheng thinks to himself, subtly eyeing Taeyong’s brushed back hair and angular cheeks. The howling wind outside has whipped his cheeks to life.

It seems that Taeyong made the first move for him. Maybe that’s the edge he’ll have over the rest of them.

“Good morning, hyung!” he greets cheerily, setting down his coffee cup and walking over to the register. He places his hand on his coworker’s shoulder. “I’ll serve him.”

His coworker doesn’t need any more convincing and spins off to pour herself another house coffee. It’s the only one they get for free throughout the day, and with both of them being allocated opening shifts on a Friday, they’re desperate for the caffeine boost.

Taeyong anxiously rubs the arm of his backpack. “I didn’t know you worked here.”
“Yup. I guess you only stop by when I’m off.” Sicheng glances down at his watch. “You’re up awfully early.”

“I have a paper due today and had to finish and print it out at the library,” Taeyong says with a grimace.

“A little last minute, isn’t it?”

“That’s how I like to work.”

“I wouldn’t expect that. Aren’t you supposed to be a good role model for your residents?”

“Hush,” Taeyong tuts. “Do as I say, not as I do.”

“Yes, hyung.” Sicheng bites his smile between his lips, and a little thrill electrifies his skin when Taeyong glances down at them. It’s a bare glance, almost accidental, but Sicheng saw. “Now, what can I get you?”

Taeyong tilts his head in a gesture that reminds Sicheng of a bird. “You wouldn’t poison me if I asked you to surprise me, right?” he asks.

Sicheng smiles kindly. “Definitely not.”

“Then by all means, give me whatever you think I need to recover from this paper.”

“We don’t have any Baileys or Kahlua on hand, but I think I can manage.”

Taeyong laughs, actually laughs, without that dry, sardonic pitch it gets when he mocks the boys’ humor. This is real, and warm, with a scrunched-up nose and glimmering eyes.

Sicheng wonders how many more he can possibly bait out of the RA.

“I’ll brew something special up for you right now.”

“Brilliant.” Taeyong slings his backpack around and begins to fish around for his wallet. “How much does a Sicheng special cost?”

Sicheng reaches across the counter and grabs Taeyong’s wrist lightly. The other boy startles, eyes flashing up in a moment of panic. Sicheng quickly soothes it by saying, “It’s on the house, hyung.”

Taeyong blinks, and it drains away all the concern. “Sicheng—”

“I’m serious.” Sicheng lets go of Taeyong. “It’s the least I owe you for all the shit I’ve put you through this year.”

“It’s not just you,” says Taeyong, biting the inside of his lip. “But you know, you have a point. One coffee for one of your many sloppy nights on D Floor.”

“If you keep coming back on my shifts, I’ll make sure you’re repaid in full.”

“That’s tempting. Really tempting. I need all the caffeine I can to survive the rest of this semester.”

“So you want something strong,” Sicheng notes with a smile. He pats his hand on the counter in a reassuring gesture. “I’ll get right on that.”

As Sicheng turns to the coffee machine, Taeyong calls out, “Thank you!”
“You’re welcome,” he answers as the other boy walks off to dig something out of his backpack. There isn’t a queue behind the RA, so Sicheng takes his time assembling Taeyong’s drink. He needs it to be perfect, but he can’t go about asking what Taeyong likes or not. Sugary or whole-bodied and dark?

Something tells Sicheng the boy has a sweet-tooth, so he reaches for the syrups and froths some milk. By the time he finishes the concoction, he has a secondhand sugar high. He thinks maybe he’s made a mistake, that he should start over and tame down the recipe, but Taeyong spots him moving for the counter for pickup and he shoots forward.

“Ah, this smells great!” Taeyong groans as he lifts the cup from Sicheng’s hand. “Is that vanilla?”

Sicheng nods. “With cinnamon. And lots of milk. I hope you like it.”

“I’d try it right now if it wouldn’t burn my tongue, but I already know I’ll love it. All the more so because it’s free.”

Though Taeyong happily takes his coffee, he lingers close by the counter. Sicheng can see a furrow in his brow replace his light expression, and it grows deeper until he finally speaks up. “Sicheng,” he says, “you can be honest with me, right?”

“I can.” There is no hesitation in his answer, but Taeyong holds onto his doubts, uneasily worrying at his lips. Sicheng continues to ease his concerns, whatever they may be. “I’m serious, hyung. This is just between me and you. Whatever you want to say, I’m here, and I’m yours.”

If only Taeyong knew how deep the words ran true.

Taeyong’s throat bobs, and he is able to regurgitate whatever words sit trapped in his chest. “Is there anything…weird going on with you guys? D Floor, that is.”

Sicheng trains his face into perfect stillness, giving nothing away. Not even a twitch. “What do you mean?”

“All of you…have been acting different. Some of you are being really fucking weird. The rest of you are being nice, which is almost weirder.” Taeyong runs his thumb along the lid of his coffee, eyes not lifting. “I just feel like there is something going on. Something bad.”

Sicheng keeps a steady face, but in his mind, a whirlwind of memories spirals out of control. The bet, their talks, their group message.

Somehow, Taeyong knows the exact question Sicheng is struggling with. Is this something bad? Is Sicheng bad?

But standing behind the counter, only a few feet away from the beautiful RA that helped him carry his bags up the stairs on move-in day since Sicheng’s parents couldn’t sacrifice the money to fly themselves out to help him settle into university abroad, Sicheng can’t think that this is bad—not entirely. The principle of the bet may be, sure. However, if the bet is what motivates him to act on the kindling Taeyong laid in his chest on that first day, to warm a match to his feelings, then maybe there is some good in it after all.

“I don’t know about the others,” Sicheng says with a sweet smile, “but you can trust me.”

And maybe that’s Sicheng’s real edge…

He doesn’t play nice.
if i made a kofi would anyone donate to my coffee addiction? that way i save money for my laptop repair
happy holidays everyone! family drama has already started up since I've been home, but hey, my laptop fixed itself and I'm back to eating my favorite foods I can't have while away at uni. hope you all stay safe and happy through the holiday season!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

D(ICK) FLOOR

yuta [9:07 PM]

hey look what I just found in the bin between the laundry room and Taeyong’s room

guess whose name was on the other side

hey sicheng guess

sicheng

that handwriting looks awfully familiar doesn’t it huh sicheng

do young [9:09 PM]

why the hell are you blowing up our phones over a used cup

and if you have to sort out issues with your roommate do it in a private message not here
mark [9:10 PM]
LOL you really went dumpster diving

lucas [9:10 PM]
he’s probably looking for his will to live after the mark he got on his global history paper

mark [9:10 PM]
*laughed at ‘he’s probably looking for his will to live after the mark he got on his global history paper*

yuta [9:11 PM]
look who’s talking Mr. I Haven’t Passed a Chemistry Exam since kindergarten
but stay focused everyone
Sicheng
Sicheng
the cup

yuta [9:15 PM]
Sicheng

sicheng [9:16 PM]
yes

yuta [9:16 PM]
you bastard
admit it

sicheng [9:17 PM]
??
yuta [9:17 PM]
confess that that is your handwriting

sicheng [9:19 PM]
wow you’re so observant
that is in fact my handwriting
thanks for noticing roomie

yuta [9:19 PM]
that’s not the fucking point!!!

ten [9:20 PM]
sure seems like it was based on your previous texts

yuta [9:21 PM]
*disliked ‘sure seems like it was based on your previous texts’*
no the point is that he wrote a note for taeyong
that’s taeyong’s cup

jaehyun [9:21 PM]
wait what?

yuta [9:22 PM]
have your attention now HUH???
and yeah, name on the front and everything
there’s another smiley face

ten [9:23 PM]
a bit excessive, huh

johnny [9:23 PM]

yo sicheng when did you guys start becoming chummy?

sicheng [9:24 PM]

Taeyong comes for coffee every other day or so. It just started this week
He’s been really stressed :/

lucas [9:24 PM]

I bet coffee isn’t the only way you can relieve him of some stress 😊

johnny [9:25 PM]

dude I thought you were on my side for this thing wtf

lucas [9:25 PM]

at this point I’m just here for the entertainment
though I’d like a return on my investment
always in my heart bro

jungwoo [9:27 PM]

just want to say I’m right
Taeyong wants the sweet guys, not you gross freshman

ten [9:27 PM]

we’re all gross freshman
that includes you @jungwoo

lucas [9:28 PM]
hey jungwoo is like the nicest person ever
the rest of you are tools

jungwoo [9:28 PM]
aw thanks Lucas 😊

ten [9:29 PM]
what else is jungwoo, lucas?

lucas [9:29 PM]
probably a better dancer than you based on recent events

ten [9:30 PM]
shut THE FUCK UP
we’ve moved on from that
not funny

yuta [9:36 PM]
while the bet is our main subject (and sicheng our main snake) just a reminder for the idiots who added money to the pool to pull lol: you have twelve days to get into Taeyong’s pants or you take an L on the extra bets

johnny [9:37 PM]
*disliked ‘while the bet is our main subject (and sicheng our main snake!!) just a reminder for the idiots who added money to the pool to pull lol: you have twelve days to get into Taeyong’s pants or you take an L on the extra bets’

jaehyun [9:40 PM]
*disliked ‘while the bet is our main subject (and sicheng our main snake!!) just a reminder for the idiots who added money to the pool to pull lol: you have twelve days to get into Taeyong’s pants or you take an L on the extra bets’
Wait yuta why are you even doing your laundry rn? You’re just gonna vom on whatever shirt you wear out tonight

also JK is hosting tonight so bring your A game everyone

//

Mark snorts at the latest message dump from his floormates. He probably shouldn’t find it as funny as he does; he’s supposed to be in the running for this bet. Though there is no way to gauge who is winning or losing, he has a feeling he’s somewhere at the bottom. He doesn’t even think he’s found a way onto Taeyong’s radar—or a radar that doesn’t include a noise complaint.

No matter how shameless the others can be, they are at least getting the point across: they want to sleep with Taeyong.

But Mark—he has no idea how he’d even go about trying to win over Taeyong. He doesn’t have the swagger of Johnny, the confidence of Ten or Jaehyun, the coolness of Doyoung. He’s a bit awkward, a bit goofy. A too loud laugh and a too square face. How could he have ever expected to win?

He tries to remind himself that the bet is far from over.

There is a knock on the passenger door, and Mark quickly tosses his phone into a cupholder. He unlocks the door and gestures for the next round of drunk students to come in. It’s too dark out to see how many there are, but the van holds (by law) ten others besides himself but can manage several more, as has been proven by protesting students, because Mark is a bit of a push-over when people ask him for favors.

Some weekends, Mark picks up shifts with the school’s shuttle system. Free of charge, he carts around drunks from party to party or to their home by van. While the drive is free for students, the student drivers get paid. It’s honestly one of the best things the university has to offer, and it’s absolutely heaving on nights like these. Mark is sure he’ll end up seeing his floormates later tonight since they can never miss a Friday night out.

Mark needs whatever extra money he can. If that means missing some nights out with his friends, that’s fine.

What would be even better is if he could cash in on the bet. Not only all that won, but a night (or more) with Taeyong.

Mark opens his mouth to greet his new passengers, but instead, his jaw drops so hard it pops.

The last person he expects to drunkenly clamber into the passenger seat of the car is the subject of their group message.

Taeyong drops into the peeling leather seat with a relieved huff—until his eyes dart over to his driver. Those dark, sparkling eyes nearly pop out of their sockets when they see who is escorting him around campus tonight.

“You!” he exclaims, and Mark already knows he’s drunk. There’s a little slur in his voice, but for some reason the one having a dizzying effect is Mark, who gazes at his RA’s flushed face.
“Hey,” Mark says, his voice breaking off.

“You know him?” comes a voice from the backseat, appearing so suddenly Mark jolts in his seat. He was so distracted by Taeyong he didn’t realize a bunch of other boys had piled into the back.

Mark’s eyes go to the rearview mirror and *fuck*, Taeyong is with his friends. The hot ones.

Seriously, how can one friend group be composed entirely out of attractive guys? Is that how they bonded? “Oh, you have a chiseled jawline and lush lips too? Let’s be friends.” It’s honestly ridiculous.

“He’s one of my residents,” Taeyong says. All around Mark, there is an understanding sigh.

“Oh,” says one of the boys, “one of your hellions.”

Both Taeyong and Mark color at this. Taeyong, for having his rants to his friends exposed. Mark, for feeding into the endless amount of things Taeyong has to bitch about.

“That’s me,” he says weakly. Despite the overwhelming beauty around him, Mark’s eyes focus back on Taeyong. “Where are you guys headed?”

When Taeyong remains silent, one of his friends in the back supplies. “We can crash at my place. Moon Complex.”

That’s about a seven-minute drive from the club Mark is currently parked in front of. He can survive that long of a journey with his attractive RA and his friends all piled into his van. At least, he hopes he can.

“No problem.” Mark nods shallowly as he starts the car. “So…how has your night been?”

“Good!” comes a chorus from the back. When Taeyong doesn’t join in, one his friends drapes himself over the passenger seat. A pair of hands rub Taeyong’s shoulders in a way that seems a little more than friendly.

“Taeyong was about to pull but chickened out.”

“I’m not in the mood,” Taeyong huffs.

“When are you ever?” The hands slap his shoulders before slipping into the back.

Conversations begin in the back, but Taeyong makes no attempt to join in. His eyes have fluttered shut. Mark probably shouldn’t be paying too close of attention to his passenger, but it’s hard not to.

“You alright?” he asks Taeyong.

Taeyong eyes slowly open. “Yeah,” he says, too slowly to be sober, too steady to be blackout. That means he’ll remember this—he’ll remember Mark. “It’s just been a heavy night.”

“I should’ve guessed,” Mark jests easily, hoping he can make Taeyong settle in his seat, take a breath —*relax.* “I did pick you up from a club after all.”

“God,” Taeyong huffs. “You did. Lion’s Heat is going to be the death of me one day.”

Mark secretly hopes he sees him through to that death, if he means he looks or acts like anything now. Taeyong has on a mesh top, the thin fabric unfortunately masked for the most part by an overlaying leather jacket. His jeans are just as dark as the rest of the outfit, and just as sinful with
how it fits his body.

“What did you think of Lion’s Heart?”

“I mean, I go there every Friday night, so I figured I know what to think of it at this point. It’s sweaty, and loud, and a lot of fun.”

Mark tucks the information in the back of his head. He’s never gone to Lion’s Heat before, but he knows all about the club near campus from notorious stories. The fact that it’s a weekly haunt for Taeyong is enough of a story for the D Floor boys to be in an uprorar.

“Well, it’s a little early to be calling it quits.” Mark checks the clock. It reads ten. “How are you all already smashed this early on a Friday night?” he asks with a laugh. "Is the club even open this early?"

Sometimes the D Floor boys are bad as this, but he’d thought Taeyong, besides his typical level of control and cool, would know better than to be shitfaced this early. People are just starting right now. Hell, all of Mark’s friends have probably just moved onto shot number two (out of how many—that depends on their level of stupidity).

Taeyong snorts loudly. “We finished a bunch of deadlines due at noon. Decided to celebrate as soon as they were done. Vodka shots were handed out the moment we hit submit on the electronic copies of our papers.”

Mark has forgotten about the boys in the back seat, but at the mention of a round of celebratory shots, the masses cry out in support.

“Fuck Dr. Jung. That paper was so hard, it could have fucked my ass.”

To Mark’s surprise, Taeyong enters the banter as he gets onto his knees in the passenger seat and spins around. “Too bad you have Chanyeol to do the job.”

A roar of laughter arises from the backseat, so rambunctious and intoxicating, Mark has no choice but to drink it in and let it bubble in his lungs. He laughs and laughs, so that he’s still in a fit when Taeyong sinks back into a properly seated position.

Once Mark has a grip on his hysterics, he asks, “So this is what you’re like nine hours of drinking later?”

Taeyong shoots him a probing glance. “Do as I say not as I do.”

Mark laughs all over again. For once, he isn’t self-conscious of how quick he is to laugh—how loud it is when it bursts out of his lungs. “Yes, hyung.”

Before Taeyong can respond, someone from the backseat moans, “I want chicken.”

A scoff. “Fuck off, Jongin.”

“Wait, no.” There is some shifting among the mass of bodies in the back. “He’s right. Chicken sounds fucking great.”

“Chicken!” the instigator, Jongin, cries out. “Chic-ken.”

A chant rises from the backseat, revolving around those two syllables. “Chic-ken. Chic-ken. CHIC-KEN.”
“Oh my god,” Taeyong sighs, exasperated. He shares with Mark a small smile, meant only for him. Its intimacy leaves Mark’s heart in shock, so that it stutters for its next beat. “I’m sorry about them.”

Taeyong goes to shift in his seat, and from the movement alone, Mark knows what’s going to happen next: a scolding. It makes Mark snort, knowing that Taeyong is ever the caretaker. Even with his friends, even when he’s drunk, even when he just made a joke about his friend taking it up the ass.

However, seeing Taeyong like this, without his edges, without his armor—Mark wants to hold onto this a little longer. The confines on the car have never seemed more flimsy than now, when it’s the only thing keeping Taeyong in his presence. A happy Taeyong, a free Taeyong, one who doesn’t look at Mark like he’s a predator, ready to rip out his throat and the laugh that’s able to be summoned by it.

“We can swing by the takeout place,” Mark says before Taeyong can tell his friends to shut up. “I’m kinda hungry too.”

An applause resounds from the backseat as if someone is holding up a cue-card for the them to do so. At the unanimous sound of joy, Taeyong eases back in his seat. “Are you sure?” he asks, looking so deeply into Mark, the younger boy half expects the look to strip away a layer of his skin.

“Totally,” Mark says, before thinking better. “But I don’t have any cash on me. You guys have money, right?”

“Junmyeon!” several voices call out. Someone adds on with a sardonic tone, “Sugar daddy!”

Mark rolls his eyes, knowing he’s just as hopeless as the rest of these guys craving a meal but not having the money to spot it. Thankfully, there is someone with the parents and flippancy with money to support them, just as Mark has been treated by Johnny or Lucas too many times to count.

“You guys are absolutely useless,” Junmyeon mutters, but a card is passed onto Mark with surprising ease. Am Ex. Of course.

Mark marvels over the feel of the cool card in his hand after a semester of being so spend-thrift with his own debit card. “Um…how much can I charge on this?”

“Whatever anyone wants,” Junmyeon says from the backseat. “I owe some of these guys drinks anyways.” As if that makes up for however much fried chicken a bunch of college-aged boys are about to order. Mark has been out for drunk food enough times with his friends to know that the closest thing to a human black hole is a college guy’s stomach after a six-pack and a joint. Mark’s card would go into overdraft with the order being compiled among the crazed shouts in the backseat.

Taeyong only asks for some Cajun fries.

By the time Mark pulls into the queue for the drive-thru, Junmyeon has his notes app open and is rereading the order to make sure everything is included. Mark can’t begin to imagine how many typos there are.

“Can I get a milkshake?” someone with a deep, rumbly voice asks.

“All those arm days are gonna go down the drain,” Taeyong taunts.

Mark is thankful he’s stopped because next thing he knows, there’s a massive body bursting into the front seat. An arm that is rather impressive, if Mark can say so himself, wraps around Taeyong’s throat.
“Wanna say that again?” the voice asks in a gravely, low voice that would have terrified Mark when matched with the arms constricting around Taeyong, but the terror leaves as the giant bursts out into a raucous laugh that Taeyong joins in. Mark is enticed to smile alongside them as the giant slides his hands away, so Taeyong can groan, “God, Chanyeol.”

“Just wanted to show you that these guns aren’t going away anytime soon,” Chanyeol laughs. He’s still laughing when they pull up to order.

“What can I get you?” the modulated voice asks. Mark glances down at the list he’s been handed from Junmyeon's phone and begins to read it off. Thankfully, the boys in the back are shushed and maintain silence so no noise can override his voice.

He’s only interrupted on the last item.

“Hey driver!” Junmyeon shouts.

“His name’s Mark,” Taeyong says defensively, and Mark fights a flush.

“Okay, Mark. You better order something. You said you’re hungry.”

“Are you sure?”

“You deserve the food more than these bastards.” Noisy protests that barely dull as Junmyeon continues to speak. “Don’t worry about it.”

Mark is flattered, really, but he can’t help but feel a little self-conscious. This guy is so nonchalant with money in a way Mark can’t imagine, and to make matters worse that’s definitely the heat of Taeyong’s eyes on him as he perches out the window. “Uh, can I have some fries?”

“And?” Junmyeon eggs on from the back.

“Sugar daddy Junmyeon at it again.”

Junmyeon tsk at them, before urging Mark, “Come on, you need more than that. You’re a growing boy.”

“He’s like two years younger than you.”

“Mark,” Junmyeon insists, and that must be his TA voice, because Mark finds no power to resist.

“Can I also get a three-piece combo?”

“Anything else?”

“I think that’s it.”

The worker reads back the order, their voice sounding dead through the speaker. Mark wonders how many more drunken orders they’re getting inside with all the people catching Lyfts to the eatery. He feels sorry for them, all too familiar with some of the worse interactions between someone totally sober and someone totally not.

Though he expects it, Mark still startles at the total. He blearily turns over the card at the window. Only a few people in the back release loud thank yous to Junmyeon as the transaction is completed. Mark isn’t even sure if there’s enough money in his checking account to pay for the order—not with his paycheck still a week away.
As they wait for the food, the entire van chats. Everyone but Mark. He can only listen and study this ethereal group of juniors. All attractive, all fun, all so much. No wonder Taeyong fits snugly with the rest of them, both literally and metaphorically as a different body comes to drape himself over the RA.

“Taeyongie, you should get your nipples pierced,” the cuddler proclaims.

Mark sputters at the same time as Taeyong. “Shut the fuck up, Baek,” Taeyong strains to yell.

The cuddler, Baekhyun, giggles mischievously. “Come on. Yixing has a hook-up, don’t you?”

A strange strangled sound is summoned from the backseat, and Baekhyun cackles into Taeyong’s ear. “I think he took one too many hits.”

“Doesn’t he always?” Taeyong jokes, and Mark knows he’s trying to deflect and change the topic. He’s not the only one who can see right through his strategy.

Baekhyun tilts his head so his round cheek rests on the back of the passenger seat. His warm eyes bend into crescent shapes as he stares at Mark. “Hey, Mark, wouldn’t Taeyongie look good with nipple piercings?”

“Uh…” He sounds like a broken television, only producing static. The grains of his vision black out on the thought of a bare-chested Taeyong, a pierced Taeyong, just Taeyong.

Taeyong fixes his momentary lapse with a scoff, the same he’s used to hearing in the hall. It’s so familiar and so pronounced, Mark blinks back to life. “I mean it’s his choice.”

“See!” Taeyong exclaims. “Even my hellish resident is nicer than you.”

Baekhyun sticks out his tongue before receding into the back.

*His hellish resident*. That’s all Mark is worth to Taeyong, and he deserves it. This is the nicest thing he’s done for the RA that only wants peace and control, and it’s only because it’s his job. Hellish might mean fun times with his friends, but if it also means earning a permanent place in Taeyong’s world of disdain and stress, could it really be so worth it?

It’s not long after that bags upon bags of food are passed into the van from the drive-thru window, cutting off Mark’s thoughts. He pushes the foods towards the back with Taeyong’s help. The RA says, “Would you mind pulling over so we could divvy out the food? If we don’t they’ll start overturning the bags for their food.”

“Yeah, no problem,” Mark says as he trains the final bag in his lap.

As they park in the lot to sort out everyone’s food (Mark is definitely breaking the van’s no eating policy), Taeyong says softly while handing back an order of fries, “You really didn’t have to cater to these idiots’ demands.”

“It sounded good.” Mark takes a bite out of a chicken wing to prove his point. Juice runs down the sides of his mouth, and he scrambles to wipe it away with the pile of napkins strewn around the van. He’s a mess, and embarrassing, and flimsy and weird.

Despite all this, Taeyong smiles back at him. “No, really. It was sweet of you. I didn’t even know you did this for a job.”

Mark shrugs bashfully. “My parents are a little tight on money. Tuition isn’t exactly cheap, and I hate
making them struggle because of me.”

A thoughtful look settles on Taeyong’s face. It isn’t fleeting like so many of his expressions, like the flicker of a light that still has the power to blind you. This rests deep, tugging his lips into a contemplative line.

“I get that, Mark. Seriously. I’m an RA because the school pays for your housing if you do it.”

Mark doesn’t know how to handle his sincerity, so he upchucks a joke. “You mean it’s not because you want to deal with all this bullshit?”

Taeyong scrunches his nose. “Don’t act like you’re not part of the bullshit. And what can I say, I’m a bit of a masochist.” As soon as the words are out, his cheeks singe red. “That’s a joke,” he adds quickly. Clearly, Mark’s floor-mates have scarred Taeyong with their taunts and come-ons.

“I know, hyung.” Why does Mark feel the urge to comfort him? He’s not the hyung, he’s not the mature one. Still, there is something about Taeyong, a kind of goodness, Mark wants to preserve. Crystallize it in honey, lave in liquor. Mark wants to hold onto this Taeyong, and all the sides of Taeyong he ever gets to see.

With all the food sorted between the members of the van, Mark starts to drive. It usually feels like a long ass ride between any destination around the university when it’s accompanied by drunk college students, but Mark all but blinks, and he’s in front of their destination. Moon Complex.

The back begins to pour out from both doors. With Taeyong, he counts ten in total. He’ll try to remember who is who when he’s back home and left to replay the night over and over again in his head, as if that will create some kind of new meaning between him and Taeyong.

“Thank you!” the drunkards chorus. Funny they say it now, but not to Junmyeon when he was paying for their meal. Maybe it attests to how close they are, that there are less words needed to maintain an irreplaceable closeness.

Taeyong is the last to leave the car. He spares his resident a final glance. Mark notices he still looks different than when he’s in the hall. Even when it’s just the two of them, one on one, staring at each other across the front seat of a van that now smells like spices and grease, Taeyong gazes at him like he’s human.

Am I not a monster anymore? Mark wonders. He hopes the answer is yes.

But all Taeyong gives him is a thankful smile. “See you around, Mark. Please be safe.”

“You too, hyung.”

Then Taeyong is gone with a gentle slam of the door. Mark stays parked in front of the building until they ramble inside. Before he steps in, Taeyong looks back, and Mark ducks his head and frantically pulls back onto the street. Of course Taeyong would catch him staring.

But why would he feel the need to look back?

Questions, questions, and more questions. That’s all he ever seems to have, so Mark leaves them on the road and runs them over with his tires. Instead, he simply thinks.

About Taeyong’s friends and what they say about the RA. About Taeyong’s smile, his voice, his eyes when they’re not burning with fury.
By the time he pulls up in front of a popular location for students to get smashed at, he remembers what Taeyong told him.

*I go there every Friday night.* Lion’s Heart. Notorious club, with cheap drinks and a slippery dance floor that someone broke their leg on at least once a semester.

Before the next round of drunken students can bang on his door, Mark draws out his phone.

**D(ICK) FLOOR**

**Mark [10:34 PM]**

hey guys

we’re going clubbing next week

Chapter End Notes

cue NCT 127’s My Van
I had to include my ult group into this story haha
if you want to feed into my caffeine addiction and productivity maybe pass a coffee onto me at ko-fi.com/offisar
Jaehyun doesn’t expect to woo Taeyong the way he does. He doesn’t even plan for them to see each other where they do.

The shock in Taeyong’s eyes is paralleled in Jaehyun’s when the older boy steps into the bar to find Jaehyun crowded around a table with a bunch of his classmates. He tenses up, the delicate curve of his shoulders bunching together, but they loosen the slightest bit when he realizes the kids crowded next to Jaehyun don’t belong to D Floor. Instead, Jaehyun is surrounded by friends from his public speaking class. Half of them are here for the same thing as him, the rest for support.

Jaehyun’s stomach clenches at the thought of Taeyong joining the already sizable crowd of the bar, all assembled for the open mic night. Someone is performing right now, singing mediocrely but with enough beat to have people swaying in their seats. Jaehyun hopes that he can do better when it’s his turn to go on stage.

He has to perform a song on stage for extra credit for his public speaking class. He didn’t tell any of his friends from Rookie Hall about it, knowing too well that they’d use the opportunity to embarrass him. He knows it’s their own stupidly endearing way of supporting him, but he wanted tonight to be peaceful. He’s nervous enough as it is.

So of course Taeyong has to show up, looking beautiful as ever. He’s wearing a black denim jacket over a fitted plain white t-shirt. His jeans are washed out but fit his body at every right edge and curve. It’s a simple look, but somehow Taeyong looks extravagant as ever.

Taeyong doesn’t approach Jaehyun or his table. He goes over to a friend waiting for him at the bar, and he’s welcomed with a firm smack on his back and a glass of whisky pushed his way. Taeyong grabs it, taking a long drink before setting it down.

Jaehyun has been staring this whole time, and his classmates have noticed.

“Is that your new piece?”

Jaehyun tears his eyes away from Taeyong but pins his location in his head. Sitting at the bar, prettiest person in the whole bar, standing next to a tall guy with an old band t-shirt.

He says to the group, “He’s my RA.”

“He’s hot.”

Jaehyun makes some kind of ambiguous sounds he lets the others try to decipher, which is interesting since even he doesn’t know what it’s supposed to be. If anyone wants to call him on it and press for details, they’re too late.
“And now we’ll be having Jung Jaehyun on stage. Let’s give him a warm welcome.”

Wow, he really had been staring at Taeyong for too long.

His classmates drop the topic to applaud for his entrance. Jaehyun’s hands shake as they reach down for his guitar case and lug it up with him to the stage, where the bar’s reserve band waits attentively, taking sips from their drinks and joking with one another. Most of the members are way older than him, townies who do this all for fun. The ease in which they sit on stage helps calm Jaehyun down. A bit.

He clears his throat, and the mic catches it so the room fixates on him, far too soon.

“I’ll be playing Eric Clapton’s Layla,” he says, his voice a little shaky, just as the rest of his body. Maybe it’s the spasms that reorient his brain and allow him to add, “But tonight, it’s dedicated to someone special.” Jaehyun finds Taeyong’s eyes in the crowd. They’re blown-out so they look more animated than ever. Jaehyun is reminded of onyxes, wild midnight skies, the soothing blanket of sleep. Unending peace.

His heart beats solidly in his chest, no longer erratic and wracking.

With steady fingers, he strums the guitar.

The bar’s band joins him faster than he expects. He’d only revealed his song choice when he first got to the bar and signed up twenty minutes ago, but then again, it’s Layla. Even in a different language, it’s a heartfelt song beloved by many musicians.

Jaehyun first heard it in Connecticut. To try and practice her English, his mom, a long-time music lover, purchased some CDs to stick into the CD player in the kitchen. Every night as she made dinner, she’d sway to some older English-speaking artist. Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Bruce Springsteen, older stuff that didn’t make Jaehyun any more popular at school for knowing.

He loves this music because of her, and he thought he’d play Layla tonight thinking of her. Instead, his mind strays back to a certain doe-eyed boy.

He begins to sing, and applause welcomes him. He expects it to comfort his nerves, but he finds that he has nothing left to fear. Not when he’s looking into Taeyong’s eyes.

“What will you do when you get lonely
And no one waiting by your side?
You've been running and hiding much too long.
You know it's just your foolish pride.”

Without thinking twice, he changes the lyrics as he reaches the chorus.

“Taeyong, you've got me on my knees.
Taeyong, I'm begging, darling please.
Taeyong, darling won't you ease my worried mind.”

The crowd hoots at the name change, and the group around Taeyong nudges him with massive grins plastered on their face. He bats their hands away and breaks his intense eye contact with Jaehyun for a long moment. Jaehyun doesn’t look away, though. Just as the bar is entranced with the song, he’s
entranced by Taeyong.

The older boy flushes brightly as he tries to settle down his friends, making him look more luminescent than ever. Jaehyun could color the entire world with Taeyong’s blush.

The sudden thought has Jaehyun stumble over his next note. He recovers so quickly only those with a musically-inclined ear would catch it. Taeyong, of course, does, and his eyes flash back to Jaehyun. This time Jaehyun has to look away, a panic rising in him that has nothing to do with his performance.

He thinks about his startling thought, verging on something romantic, something Clapton would have written. Then he thinks about the bet.

It isn’t about feelings. They’ve known that from the start, and it’s still the truth.

Jaehyun is just scrambling his own brains in his determination to win. He’s mixing up feelings with fucking. Like his subtle change in the song, the mindless alteration he made—it wasn’t because Taeyong is the only thing on his mind nowadays. It’s because he wants to get into Taeyong’s pants.

Thousands of musicians have used this same tactic.

And it works for Jaehyun tonight.

At the end of the song, after the audience loudly applauds his performance and the band pats his back and his public speaking professor gives him a thumbs up that lets him know he got the extra credit, Jaehyun finds a place back at the table with his classmates. They applaud him, dramatic in a way that has him all the more grateful that he didn’t invite the D Floor boys. The bar would be a riot if they showed their faces and opened their big mouths.

They’d be even louder if they saw what happens after he takes a seat.

As the next performer takes the stage, Taeyong approaches him, and his next words have Jaehyun’s eyes bursting out of their sockets. “That was really impressive, Jaehyun. Could I buy you a drink to celebrate?”

Jaehyun’s throat is painfully dry. He swallows loudly as he gets up. “Uh, sure.”

Thankfully, Taeyong doesn’t lead Jaehyun back to where the RA was sitting with his friends. He can’t handle meeting the group of men that have surely been the listeners of Taeyong’s complaints about Jaehyun and the others. It might explain why a couple of them shoot Jaehyun suspicious glances, then concerned ones at Taeyong as the older seats them in some empty seats at the bar.

“What do you want?” asks Taeyong. Unarmed by how easy this is going, Jaehyun shrugs. “Whatever you’re getting.”

And that’s how Jaehyun ends up with a cider, swallowing down the fruity beverage and fighting a gag. Last time he had cider was for a drinking game, when he made a joke about how this shit was like apple juice. That’s until you chug five pints in an hour, and the bubbles revolt against your digestive system.

Jaehyun is putting down the glass onto a coaster when Taeyong says, “I want you to tell me why you guys why you’re doing all of this.”

Ah. So that’s what this is about.
“Doing what?” Jaehyun asks, mocking innocent confusion.

Taeyong snorts. “Half of you are being weird. Well, weirder than usual.” Jaehyun takes it that weird means sexually forward. “The rest of you keep trying to be…nice?”

“You said it like a question.”

“Because it is! You guys have been nothing but terrible since move in.”

“Gee, thanks.”

“It’s the truth and you know it. You’re all nightmares for residents, but all of the sudden, you guys are trying to get chummy with me.”

Jaehyun nearly laughs. They want to get more than just chummy with him, but he can’t risk voicing that aloud.

“Can you believe that we just want to try being more decent to you?” he asks instead. “Maybe we’re tired of being the bad guys and causing you all these problems you moan and groan about.”

“If that’s true—if!—what caused the change of heart? That couldn’t have just happened out of the blue for all of you.”

Jaehyun shrugs as he takes a deep sip. “What can I say? Your lectures finally sunk in. We talked about it and thought it was time to change.” Curious now, Jaehyun leans towards him. “Is it working? Do you like us better than before?”

“I…” Taeyong’s words trail off, as uncertainty spreads across his face. “I don’t know what to think. I don’t trust any of you. Like what the hell was with that lyric change up there? It was weird.” There is that blush again, and Jaehyun’s fingers itch with the desire to run his hand across its spread.

“It was just some fun,” Jaehyun says. “But you’re worthy of it, you know. I can’t imagine how many other people would be happy to dedicate a song to you. This was the least I could think to do.”

“Stop that,” Taeyong hisses. “You don’t mean anything you say.”

“It’s the truth. I can tell you that much.” The words fall out of Jaehyun’s mouth before he can think to lie. Is that what it is? A lie? The blur he’d felt on that stage, that conversion between feelings and fucking, takes over his vision once again, as he meets Taeyong’s large eyes.

“Why do you all make it so hard to believe in you?” the RA asks in a small voice.

“Why are you so afraid to accept that we’re being honest?” Jaehyun counters. He sprawls out the hand he has on the bar so that his pinkie bumps against Taeyong’s hand. The RA balls his hand into a fist at the contact, his eyes flashing down to where their skin meet.

Instead of answering, Taeyong removes his hand to grab his drink and drowns the rest of it. Jaehyun’s eyes go wide as he watches the cider disappear with just a few guzzles. Thanks to Mark, he knows their beloved RA likes to party, but seeing him chug a cider with no issue right before his eyes is something else entirely.

Taeyong slams the empty glass down on the bar before standing. “You’re a good singer, Jaehyun. And I think you’re a good liar, too.”

“I’m going to show you,” Jaehyun promises. “I’m going to show you that I’m earnest. I don’t care
how long it takes, but this isn’t a running joke. You’re not a punchline. You’re someone I want to become close with.” How close…well that’s up to Taeyong and Jaehyun’s own ability to convince.

And for a bare second, that’s how he looks: convinced. Like he wants to believe in Jaehyun. There is longing etched on Taeyong’s face. Jaehyun knows it’s not lust, not hunger. Just a desire for what Jaehyun promises. Truth.

Then, Taeyong builds his walls, so when his eyes fall back on Jaehyun, a wall has built them into a barrier of darkness.

“Try as hard as you want, but I’m not making any promises of my own. I don’t trust whatever is going on with you and the others.”

“Don’t be afraid, hyung,” Jaehyun says.

“Then don’t be a dick,” Taeyong scoffs back. “See you later, Jaehyun.”

Before Jaehyun can say anything else, Taeyong storms back over to his friends. Fearful of what Taeyong’s friends will do when they see his distresses expression, Jaehyun quickly gets up and walks out of the bar, not even bothering with his classmates.

Fists shoved into his coat as he walks back to the dorm, Jaehyun thinks about their short conversation.

He must have struck a nerve, but which one exactly, he’s trying to figure out. He understands why Taeyong could start off hating them, but they’re changing. They’re likeable and fun and good, underneath that veneer of freshman stupidity. They have big hearts soaked in booze and laughter.

There’s something more to Taeyong’s mistrust, then. Some kind of defense mechanism. It’s not innate in the RA, but an adaptation.

Which makes Jaehyun wonder who hurt Taeyong so badly he had to cover himself in armor, in disbelief and suspicion.

Maybe he’s just jumping to conclusions. Maybe Taeyong made his decision about them and is sticking with it, despite all their attempts to change their relationships.

There are too many maybes, too many uncertainties. Not just for Jaehyun, but for Taeyong too, with all of his questions and the similar ones he’s directed at the other D Floor boys.

Taeyong has asked his questions and casted his doubts, but Jaehyun has Friday night to prove a point.

Chapter End Notes

lol sorry for the delay updates. holidays, family, friends, didn't have any finished updates. so we're all done with completed updates now, so updates will be a little more scattered from here on out! it's my holiday so I'm spending a lot of time with loved ones and I'm also working on my own fiction. but I still have a lot written for the future so I hope you can look forward to it!
The problem with being friends with Byun Baekhyun is that more often than not, you find yourself in strange situations. Tonight, it happens to be dancing in the middle of a popular club with Taeyong’s shirt partially ripped down the front.

Baekhyun worries at the tear he created even more. “Tits out for the boys!”

“Stop!” Taeyong cries, trying to salvage the tatters of thin cloth flapping down from his shoulders.

“But you have to show off Taeyongie. We need to get you laid.”

Baekhyun has been rallying for his sex life to pick up ever since his messy breakup last year, with good intentions of course. But not everyone could have a dutiful boyfriend like Chanyeol who could deal with his insatiable boyfriend.

Baekhyun and Taeyong hooked up freshman year. Just some messy hand-jobs in the bathroom of a frat house, no big deal. It had hardly been worth the effort. That night, both boys had realized that they actually enjoyed each other’s company in a purely unphysical way. Well, not unphysical, not when it came to being friends with Baekhyun. Unsexual is the better word.

Sophomore year, Chanyeol and Baekhyun finally sorted through the shitshow that was their hopeless pining and flirting and angst-ing and started dating. They’ve been unbearably in love ever since.

Chanyeol is here tonight, placing a hand down on his boyfriend’s shoulder. In his deep, rumbly voice, he tells Baekhyun, “You tell Taeyong this every week.”

“And he’s still in a dry spell.”

“By choice!” Taeyong protests. “God, you’re starting to sound as bad as my residents.”

“Your residents!” Baekhyun laughs brashly. “They know how little action you get?”

“They want to make everything I do their business. They’re horrible.”

“Then why are you smiling?”

“I am not!”

“Oho, does Taeyongie have a crush on a resident?” Baekhyun’s smile is radiant yet sinister. “How scandalous.”

“I do not!” Taeyong fumes.

On his other side, Junmyeon asks, “Oh, your residents? Johnny Seo is in your hall, right?”

“Unfortunately.” Taeyong is already aware that Junmyeon knows Johnny. He TAs for the freshman, and strangely enough they get on really well. Too bad Junmyeon doesn’t know how hellish Johnny is once he has a few friends around and a couple drinks in his bloodstream.

“He’s a good kid. Really smart.”
“Honestly, Junmyeon,” Baekhyun snorts, “you talk like you’re already a decrepit professor.”

“Old man at heart,” Taeyong adds, just to watch Junmyeon fluster for a response.

“I am not—I’m here with you guys! Clubbing! Dancing!”

“And you’re sober. Boring!”

Junmyeon rolls his eyes, but the movement has him catching something out of the corner of his vision.

“Oh.” He taps Taeyong’s shoulder and directs his gaze away from the dance floor. “Speaking of the devil…s.”

Taeyong’s stomach drops before he turns, already knowing what he’s going to find.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me,” he hisses as his eyes land on a long line of freshman boys crowded around a bunch of the bar tables, drinks both empty and full filling the space.

“Is that them?” Baekhyun gasps. He drapes his head on Taeyong’s shoulder to get a better look. “Holy hell, they’re hot. Like all of them.”

Chanyeol whines, and without looking away from the freshmen, Baekhyun punches his boyfriend in the arm. “Don’t be a baby. I’m just looking.”

“Well, I’m right here!”

Chanyeol doesn’t look at the freshmen in protest, but the rest of their group does, making various sounds of appraisal. Jongdae whistles his approval, and Taeyong is close to smacking him if he wasn’t already pouring all of his bloodlust into the D floor boys.

“Hey,” says Yixing, cocking his head to the side, “didn’t that one drive us home last week?”

Oh. That answers the question of how the hell do they even know he’s here? Mark picked them up last week, and at some point, one of them, maybe even himself, must have drunkenly confessed that they come here every Friday.

And that’s what tonight is supposed to be. Just another Friday with his friends, getting trashed to lament their losses and praise their victories of the week. It’s supposed to relieve stress, not intensify it.

“They’re going to give me an ulcer,” he mutters to himself.

“Shit, they’ve spotted you, Taeyong.”

Sure enough, multiple pairs of eyes have landed on him. He spins away, but the pressure of their stare weighs heavy on his shoulders.

“Aaw, they have a crush,” Sehun taunts. “Don’t know what for.”

“Neither do I.”

“Oh, don’t be like that, Taeyong,” Baekhyun whines, finally turning away from Taeyong’s personal hellions. “You’re hot and sweet and smart. The full package. No wonder they’ve been trying to get with you. If our freshman RA was half as good-looking as you, I would’ve tried to get into his pants, too.”
“True,” Taeyong says with a smile, thinking that this is the reason he’s kept Baekhyun around, even after he tore his shirt open and flung him towards so many different guys tonight. He’s willing to diss himself, make a fool of himself, all to make someone else feel better. Comfortable.

They all go back to dancing, some in more compromising positions than others. Taeyong keeps closed in on himself at the center of the group, using his friends as a barricade against unwanted advances.

Even through their circle, he can still feel his residents staring at him from the bar. He wants to scream. No matter how much he throws his body into the beat, how many conversations he yells his way into, he can’t erase their presence at the back of his mind.

When his hands card through his hair, it’s to tug at his scalp rather than make a seductive move. He refuses to look at them. Refuses to acknowledge them. He won’t give them that satisfaction.

They have been taunting him, teasing him, pressing his buttons. They’ve pushed him to some proverbial edge, and the thought of falling is dizzying enough that an idea jumps into his head, almost as suddenly as the beat drops around them.

Maybe it’s time to show them who is really in power.

“Hey, Baek.”

Baekhyun comes up for a breath of fresh air, Chanyeol looking more than a little put out. Taeyong knows he’s only going to make it worse with what he says next, but Chanyeol is sure to forgive him after the show he’s about to put on with his boyfriend.

Baekhyun bats his eyes at him. “Yes, Taeyongie.”

“I have a favor to ask of you,” Taeyong says with a grin.

Baekhyun disentangles himself from his boyfriend in a second, returning Taeyong’s grin with double the luminance. “I’m already interested.”

//

“Where did he go?”

Like a pack of lost ducklings, the D floor boys squawk as they pivot their heads around, desperately searching for their RA among the large crowd that fills the club.

“How did we lose him?” asks Kun. “I thought we were using the freakishly tall dude as a reference point?”

Johnny frowns as his gaze finds Chanyeol in the crowd. “Okay, I’m only like a little shorter than him.”

“Like I said, freakishly tall dude.”

“Who happens to be standing alone by the looks of it,” Taeil notes.

It’s only then that Johnny notices that for the first time since Johnny has known the older boys,
Baekhyun isn’t at Chanyeol’s side.

That can’t be good, he muses. The couple is almost disgustingly inseparably. However, if they’re indication of what a couple looks like, Johnny wouldn’t mind that—wouldn’t mind the constant presence of Taeyong at his side to support and dote and laugh.

However, there is no sign of Taeyong in the club.

Lion’s Heart is heaving with the official start to the weekend. Drinks are cheap, the bass is heavy, and neon lights pulsate through the heavy stream of darkness, coating everyone in a spectrum of color so the place is kaleidoscope of bodies. Somehow, though, they had no problem of tracking down Taeyong when they first settled into the club. He glows like a diamond, refracting all the light and energy but still retaining his gleam.

Somehow, he’s gone dark. Johnny’s eyes scour the dance floor, desperately trying to find the RA.

“I can check the bar,” says Taeil, jumping off his seat to turn this into a physical hunt, but he’s stilled by a tight grip collapsing around his arm.

“Found him,” Doyoung gasps.

All of their eyes follow his too-wide ones.

When they land on their destination, their jaws collectively drop.

Taeyong has managed to fit himself onto the stage. With two really hot guys. With no shirt on.

Well, he kind of has a shirt on, but it hardly counts. The cotton has been torn at the collar, a fissure that runs deep and wide so that his chest is on full display. The divots of vaguely defined abs, beads of sweat the capture the flickering stream of lights above him, the buds of his nipples.

For all he’s drunk tonight, Johnny’s throat goes dry.

He recognizes the guys he’s climbed onto stage with: Baekhyun and Jongin. He wants to call the latter a traitor since they’re friends, but the older man doesn’t know about the bet. No one does beside the D Floor boys.

But it sure feels like the trio are clued into something because they begin to dance right as the song ends, as if this is a tease to show the boys exactly what they’re not getting at.

The track that comes on next makes Johnny feel like he’s back in Chicago, the beat tunneling him right into his elementary school. He hasn’t heard it in forever, and probably could have gone the rest of his life without hearing it again, but here is Taeyong shaking everything up in the most unexpected way.

“Stacks on deck, Patron on ice

We can pop bottles all night

Baby, you could have whatever you like

I said, you could have whatever you like”

Under any other circumstance, the song would make Johnny burst out in laughter, maybe joke about his childhood back in Chicago with the rest of the boys. But then the track keeps running.
“Late night sex

So wet, it's so tight.”

Taeyong throws his head back obscenely, and Johnny can see the perfect O his mouth makes as he moans. Johnny would set fire to the sound system of the club if he could hear what it sounded like. If he could bother to tear his eyes away from the stage, he’d see similar looks of desire on the rest of the boys.

Taeyong’s love for music shows in his dance. Passion radiates in every note, every movement. His limbs play Johnny like an instrument, tuning him so the only chords he knows is Taeyong’s body: his eyes, his face, his arms that raise over his head, inching up his ruined shirt to expose the low-hanging fabric of his jeans and the underwear peeping out from it.

Baekhyun loops his fingers around Taeyong’s exposed belt and uses it to slowly tug him forward by his waist, going along with the lyrics.

“Yeah, I want your body

Need your body

Long as you got me you won’t need nobody”

Taeyong twines his arms around the other’s neck and uses it leverage as he grinds into Baekhyun with a private smile gracing his lips. The sway of Taeyong’s hips is practiced, methodic, sensual. He has his bottom lip trapped between his teeth, sucking on it like its candy. Johnny wonders how sweet he tastes, running his own tongue across the seam of his mouth.

Baekhyun releases Taeyong, allowing Johnny a steady breath that is swiftly stolen as Taeyong is spun so now he faces Jongin. Tall Jongin, handsome Jongin, shy sweetheart Jongin, school-wide sex god Jongin.

Though Junmyeon recently told Johnny that Jongin might be settling down soon, Jongin dances like there is no one in his life except for Taeyong. Their bodies brush closely, meeting at every plane between the beat. Jongin’s hand finds a place at the square of Taeyong’s back, thumb stroking so it dips beneath his pants. Taeyong moves his hands up to Jongin’s hair and cards through the tawny locks, his fingers running in movements as mesmerizing as the ones he makes with the rest of his body.

Though the guys Taeyong dance with are attractive, no one can compare to Taeyong in this moment. He is too alluring, too entrancing. Baekhyun and Jongin have their own appeal, but Taeyong is otherworldly, a kind of beauty that belongs in myths, where a smile and batting set of eyelashes can entrance a god.

But Taeyong is giving them a lot more than that, and they are a lot less than gods.

They are helpless as a curse befalls the group in one blow as Taeyong is manhandled by Jongin, large hands clasped around his narrow hips to spin him around wrench him back, so his ass is grinding into the other man’s crotch. Taeyong goes with it like a pro, throwing his head back as he slides himself down the front of the other man, swirling his hips in tantalizing circles. His movements are like the epicenter of an earthquake, and Johnny is shaken to his core.

“Shit,” Taeil mutters.

It gets worse long before it gets better.
Taeyong stretches back up but doesn’t last long in one position. With a firm palm at Taeyong’s back, Jongin bends him over like he’s made of fucking putty. Taeyong practically mewls at the forceful move based on the pleased expression he wears. Johnny can only see it for a moment, because the next thing he knows Taeyong’s nose is practically shoved into the ground as Jongin rolls his hips against Taeyong.

The temperature of the club seems to raise ten degrees.

Mark squawks in his seat. “Is that allowed?”

“Of course it fucking is,” Doyoung says, though the look on his face makes it obvious he wishes it wasn’t or that if it was, it was a private show just for him.

Taeyong is moved upright once more, but this time by Baekhyun’s grip. Its softer than Jongin’s, but infinitely more teasing. His fingers graze over every inch of exposed flesh on Taeyong’s body, wandering lazily, like he has all the time in the world with Taeyong on display like this. His touch dances over skin dusted with glitter, a body writhing to the music and the attention he receives from both men.

Then Baekhyun takes a large step forward, and Taeyong is compressed between the two bodies, both of the other men grinding into him with unparalleled passion. Baekhyun wears a joyous, exuberant look while Jongin is sensuous and lustful. The gaze he rakes down Taeyong’s figure sets Johnny’s jaw in a permanent lock.

Until Taeyong’s own eyes sweep across the club and land directly on their tables. A smirk splays across his lips, reddened from how he keeps playing with them. He glows like a deity, his sheen of sweat like oil meant to anoint sinners into saints.

But Taeyong only makes Johnny want to sin.

He snaps up from his seat, so fast the barstool tumbles to the ground. “Come on.”

The group startles hard enough to break their unwavering stares. “What?” asks Ten, his voice reminding Johnny of when he first wakes up in the morning, wispy and fragile.

“I want to get closer.”

“Is that a good idea?” Kun asks warily.

“He knows what he’s doing,” Johnny says between his teeth. Before anyone can speak, he thunders down the steps leading from the bar to the dancefloor and begins to weave his way forward. In the shadow of the tall, broad-shouldered boy, the rest of D Floor find an easy path to follow.

And follow they have to as the song grows closer to its end.

By the time they’ve managed to burst through the crowd and near the stage, all three of the dancers have swayed down to their knees and roll their hips into the air. Johnny is grateful their groins are no longer glued to each other, but this honestly isn’t any better. The way Taeyong shifts his body is highlighted by the ruined shirt that exposes more and more the longer the song goes on. His stomach constricts with each wave he sweeps across his body.

As the song nears its end, the three men sway their way back onto their feet.

“I’m talking big boy rides
And big boy ice

*Let me put this big boy in your life*

With no warning, Jongin scoops Taeyong up like he weighs nothing, grappling his ass firmly in his hands. Taeyong curls into him for support, frantically clawing at Jongin’s back, as taken by surprise by the move as the residents. Johnny wonders how blunt his nails are, how deep they’d dig into his own skin if he did the same thing.

Once he balances himself in Jongin’s grip, Taeyong finds the beat again.

Even without his feet to move, he manages to sway his torso and hips in erotic motions, their undulating waves pushing Jongin to steady his twists and turns. Jongin just rocks side to side, back and forth, his knees bent so their movements are smooth and secure. Taeyong swings with him, letting his head fall back as those lyrics resurface.

*“Late night sex*

*So wet, it’s so tight”*

Taeyong leans forward so that his back is curved. His brow rests firmly on Jongin’s. And though Johnny has seen them touch pretty much every body party tonight, this is somehow the worst. This small intimacy, where the inches between their faces draw closer, so that Taeyong’s eyes are no longer some distant orbs, always too far out of reach. Jongin has the privilege of meeting the stare of an entire universe.

He seems to know this, because with the pressure of Taeyong’s brow on his own, Jongin’s eyes fixate on him. He looks deeply into Taeyong’s eyes, and Johnny wonders what he sees, what hides in the light of those dark, dark eyes.

The two men seem to share a feeling, a thought.

Then their lips crash together with the force of a tornado, hot and cold meeting to create a storm. It’s just as destructive, open-mouthed, messy, a pure wreck that forces a loud moan out of Taeyong.

The air spills out of Johnny’s lungs, as if someone has punched him in the gut. Someone clutches onto his arm, another boy says something, but all Johnny can understand right now is Jongin. Kissing. Taeyong. Jongin kissing Taeyong. Kissing.

It’s hotter than any porn Johnny has ever watched, and he absolutely hates it. Hates the way their lips seem to slide in tandem, how a flash of tongue licks into Taeyong’s mouth.

*“Get a room!”* Baekhyun shouts beside them, knocking his shoulder into their sides. They stumble, and it’s enough to get them to shake apart. They turn, so that Johnny can’t see either of their faces. Can’t tell if they’re still kissing (he wants to say no because Jongin’s hands are at his side, and Johnny can’t imagine anyone resisting the need to run their fingers through Taeyong’s hair with their lips locked) or if they’re just talking or staring. Johnny is just afraid that he’s missing something between the two, something that he will never have with the RA.

Johnny didn’t even notice the song has ended. All he hears is a heated pool of blood rushing to his ears (and to somewhere else).

Once Jongin sets Taeyong down, their RA glances down at the crowd. His moment of fearlessness is gone, a sheepish expression crossing his face as he meets the whistles and catcalls below.
Then, his eyes find his residents. He jars, hand flying up to Jongin’s shoulder for support as he stumbles. Clearly he wasn’t expecting to see them so close. Johnny doesn’t know if it’s the lights, dyed now to a red lacquer, that makes Taeyong’s cheeks red, or if it’s the alcohol and the attention he receives from below.

Flushed with so much life, Johnny is helpless to how his heartstrings twang in longing as Taeyong spins away dismissively, looping his arms with Baekhyun and Jongin before fleeing the stage.

Though the club teems with noise, the boys are silent for a long moment as their RA slips into oblivion.

“Should we go back to the table?” Jungwoo asks.

Johnny scuffs his hands through his hair. “You guys can. I’m stepping out for a smoke.” He eyes his friends expectantly. “Anyone wanna join?”

No one takes him up, so he fists his hand around the pack in his jacket and stomps off for the smoking section. His feet are uncertain beneath him, stumbling aimlessly as he tries to find where to go.

He’s drunker off Taeyong’s dance, his lips moving against Jongin’s, than he is off any drink he’s had tonight (albeit it has been a light night). His blood races, lancing through his heart so it thuds ruggedly against his chest.

He thinks he’s about to go into cardiac arrest when he sees a familiar figure slink down the hallway marked for the toilets. Taeyong has put on another layer, covering up his ruined shirt, but Johnny could recognize him anywhere. On campus, in the halls, in his dreams.

Without thinking, without worry and fear, Johnny rushes after his RA. The lights are dimmed here, neon replaced by dusky bulbs that threaten to blink out of existence. Their hazy glow makes this feel like a dream, so that when he stretches his hand out towards Taeyong, he doesn’t know if it will catch.

“Hey.”

Chapter End Notes

may or may not have been inspired by a club night out for myself hehe
sorry for such a long wait, and I can't promise there won't be more ahead but please have faith. this semester might kill me, but i'll try to get in good writing seshes whenever possible.
thank you for your support!!

End Notes

until i run out of updates, i'll post a new chapter every sunday!!
pls leave a comment if u liked (but none if u hated pls)
also interact with the story cause some things are up in the air, so lmk your fav taeyong ships
and i'll make sure to give them a good spotlight

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!