Cruising for a bruising

by TheArtificialDane, tip_of_the_Q

Summary

10 days in the Caribbean might sound like a dream, but reality hits hard for our boys as they realise new relationships are not always easy.

/  

“Drag ain’t paying you enough?”

“.. What?”

“Cause we’re on the same contract right? And I’m getting coin for being here.”

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Chapter 1

Brooke was rinsing his shirt out, wringing the thin fabric in his hands, making sure it was completely clean before he hung it up.

It was their fourth day on the Atlantis cruise, he and Vanjie booked alongside a whole parade of Drag Race girls to spend 10 days in the Caribbean entertaining, dancing and getting drunk on board the world’s premiere gay cruise experience. Brooke had been hesitant to accept at first glance when the email had ticked in from his manager - as current reigning Drag Race winner he was asked for more things than he had ever been able to imagine, not even Miss Continental giving him any idea of the number of obligations he had landed himself in - but Vanjie had seen the contract line of ‘free drinks available for the duration of your stay’ in his own papers, and Brooke had known they were going, whether he wanted to spend 10 days on a boat or not.

So far they had spent time by the pool, thrown dollars at A’keria who had performed a stunning Nicki Minaj medley, hosted a cupcake class, seen Detox destroy the dancefloor, gone to a Raja Drawja, experienced Cracker’s comedy (though Brooke thought of it more like surviving) and gone to a cocktail hour in full drag. During the cocktail hour, Vanjie and Brooke had made out in a dark corner behind the bar like naughty school girls the moment they had a chance to get away. Vanjie body was so fucking sensual and hot as she insisted Brooke carried her, and she loved doing it. Brooke’s hand had been on her ass, their lipsticks smearing while they dry humped, neither able to truly come because of their tucks, but it had been the best kind of torture, Brooke still finding specs of glitter on his hands days afterwards.

“Watcha doing?”

Brooke looked over his shoulder, Vanjie standing in the door to the bathroom they shared, leaning against it like a fucking movie star. Vanjie’s red shirt was unbuttoned all the way down to the bottom of his sternum and showing his chest, his hair impeccably styled, the little bandana loosely tied around his neck the same color as his shirt.

“Just washing up. I’ll be there in a sec.” Brooke rinsed his socks, quickly throwing them on the towel rack. “You can just leave without me babe.”

“Drag ain’t paying you enough?”

“.. What?” Brooke turned around.

“Cause we’re on the same contract right? And I’m getting coin for being here.”

Vanjie smiled, and Brooke felt his heart flutter. Vanjie was so ridiculously attractive and Brooke couldn’t believe how he had gotten so lucky with his first actual boyfriend, the word still sounding weird in his mind, but Vanjie was worth it. He was the first person Brooke had met that he had even considered putting over his career, what he had called the true love of his life for as long as he had been an adult, but Vanjie was giving it a race for it’s money, and Brooke couldn’t pretend not to love it.

“Since you starting this laundry shit on the side.”

Vanjie gestured, and Brooke blushed, looking around the bathroom. He had hung up his t-shirts, all three of them drip drying from the shower rod, except the one he was wearing, his third pair of shorts and his bathing suit in the sink, his one hoodie still unused in his backpack.
“… No?”

“Just checking.” Vajie laughed, grabbing the band of his shorts and pulling him away. “Now come on, those cocktails ain’t gonna drink themselves, and I’m not waitin’ on you bitch!”

Brooke hadn’t spared the boy clothes he’d brought on board with him a single thought when he had thrown it all into a backpack, but if there was one fact he had learned from everything that had gone wrong in his adult life it was this very simple sentence. If he didn’t think of something as a problem - it usually was. That, and the growing uneasiness in his stomach, was the exact reason he was sure he was spiraling, and spiraling hard at that.

Brooke had never paid much attention to his boy wardrobe. He had never thought of his outfits for Brock as an artistic expression, had never related to any of the other reasons he had heard of why people cared so fiercely about what they wore. It was like he had known in the back of his mind that he would need all that energy and effort for Brooke one day. He could spend hours shopping online, looking at gowns and sketching things out either to make himself or to pay someone to construct without any trouble. Brooke was a work of art, each detail on her body placed there with care, precision and attention. Brock on the other hand?

Brock was happy as long as his boy self was covered and comfortable. That body was no more than a machine, carrying him where he needed to go, a container for his brain so he could make his sack of bones do the things he needed them to, whether that was doing a Grand Jete, dropping into a full split, walking en pointe, lip syncing on his head or spending an entire day in heels.

Brooke was watching Vajie rehearse, Kameron next to him. They passed a two liter bottle of gatorade between them, taking swigs by the turn. He had struck up an unlikely friendship with Kameron, though it seemed like no one was surprised but himself. Kameron was a fellow Nashville queen, and while they had known of each other and even worked together, they had never gotten to know if each other this trip. Brooke found that it was easy to talk to the other queen, Kameron’s calm personality and their shared interest of bettering their workout routines giving them near endless supplies for conversations that could last hours if no one dragged them away. At times, much to their annoyance, they were forced apart by their respective significant others, Cracker often pulling Kameron aside when he was bored and left on his own. Vajie was no better.

He spent so much time in drag, uncomfortable but gorgeous. So when he was just Brock, he preferred materials that allowed him to breathe, and allowed him to feel relaxed. He liked his shirts so worn in that they turned paper thin, shorts so used the material felt like butter, shoes practically walked to shreds. Sure, he was aware that he didn’t always look the most put together, but they were his clothes, and he knew they did the job.

Vajie was doing a number, a remix with his infamous catchphrases scattered over the track. It was one of their fans who had made the track, and it had appeared in Brooke’s DM’s on Twitter one fateful day. Vajie had been so excited he had practically bounced off the walls of their room the first time he heard it. He had FaceTimed his drag mother Alexis before he had even managed to listen all the way through, just so that she could hear it too, the two of them launching into the creation of choreography to go with it straight away. That had turned into a long night for Brooke, who had laid on their shared bed, the track playing on repeat for hours on end as Vajie got all of his creative juices flowing. For days after he was haunted by the throbbing bass and “get those cookies,” bouncing of the walls within his head.

The beat of Vajie’s song was loud and fast, fitting with his erratic movements. His moves were forceful, powerful, at once elegant and a testament to the unlimited energy that coursed within him.
He looked amazing, the only piece of drag on him so far the heels. And the attitude, of course. There was always a particular attitude shift when he became her, and Brooke loved it nearly as much as he loved watching the reverse take place.

“She’s good.”

Kameron handed him the bottle of gatorade.

“She’s the best.”

Kameron smiled, and Brooke couldn’t help but notice what Kameron was wearing - a smart button up and black denim shorts. An actual outfit instead of the pregame comfort clothes Brooke preferred. Kameron looked nice.

In contrast, Brooke was wearing his grey shirt, a hole under the armpit that he had meant to get fixed suddenly embarrassingly obvious so he kept his arm close to his side, not wanting Kameron to see it. He loved the shirt he was wearing. He had had it on the first time he kissed Vanjie, and it was special to him, and a few holes couldn’t change that, though maybe it should have.

Brooke wasn’t used to feeling uncomfortable as a guy, even though he didn’t consider himself some great catch. He was true to himself, and that had turned out to be enough for the most part. As he sat watching Vanjie prance around stage, he let a long, frustrated sigh escape him. He sat squarely between people who made an effort, and even though he was a reigning queen, he had never felt more like a bum.

Slipping into Brooke Lynn’s skin after a day of anxiety itching under his skin felt like a blessing.

The majority of their season 11 sisters were backstage, getting ready for their gig that night. Ariel sitting next to Brooke as she put the final touches on her lashes. Brooke looked in the mirror when she was done, batting her eyes playfully and framing her face with her hands. Ariel rolling her eyes at her antics.

“When you feel your oats so hard you forget there are other oats there,” she said in a sing-song voice, and Brooke laughed vividly, red lips opening in a wide grin. She slapped the vanity table in front of them, the bottle of tequila that was placed there shaking slightly.

She was a few drinks in already, and they’d been passing that bottle around the dressing room since they had begun getting ready half an hour ago. The bottle was decorated with four or so different colours of lipstick, mixing into a unappetizing brown as they’d dried, and Brooke briefly wondered if making out with all of her sisters would produce the same nauseating color on her lips.

When Silky walked by, phone in hand, the camera pointed towards herself, Brooke grabbed her own. Brooke had never been hugely into social media, ballet taking up too much of her time, but after Drag Race, she had almost been forced online by VH1s staff of young hip interns. The key to an active fanbase was interaction with viewers, being accessible, and Brooke had never been one to turn down advice on success. She had taken to it like a fish to water, using both Instagram and Twitter like it was her second job, and in many ways, it was. Vanjie would sometimes help her out with getting the hang of everything, her boyfriend never more than two steps away from her phone.

Brooke picked up her phone as her laughter grew quiet, shooting Ariel a questioning look. A nod was all Brooke got and all she needed to know that Ariel was onboard. She opened Instagram and launched a live, focusing the camera on her. She looked fucking good, stunning honey-blonde wig.
red lips and her favourite red hoodie, bare chest underneath because of the heat, but mostly because she didn’t want the struggle of getting into full drag yet if she could avoid it.

“Hi guys!” Brooked grinned, waving her fingers and watching the viewer count rose steadily. She felt a surge of pride, her fans truly the best.

“Hiil!” Ariel smiled brightly beside her, leaning into the frame. “No one is going to be watching this. Not when the Silky show is on.”

“I know.” Brooke laughed, eyes fluttering to the queen on the other side the small space. “So I’m checking in for the day, we’re still on a boat, still floating around the-”

“We floating around Paradise!” Silky’s voice was loud as she abruptly entered Brooke’s frame, her own phone still firmly in hand. Silky’s eyes shifted between her phone and Brooke’s, before settling on her own as she continued to speak. “So I got three dicks and-”

“You got three dicks?” Brooke roared with laughter, Ariel close to tears next to her.

“I got three dicks in my inbox!” Silky continued undisturbed, kicking the leg of Brooke’s chair as she passed by. “They ready for a taste of this ganache!”

“Better with three dicks in the inbox than six on the dancefloor!” Ariel chimed in, sticking her tongue out as she tried to apply the last of her eyeshadow without being shoved over by Silky who was loudly telling her story of a Grindr hookup. “Just saying.”

“You would know.” Brooke elbowed Ariel, the other queen cursing her out loudly when the tiniest flicker of eyeshadow fell on her cheek at the action.

Brooke loved shooting these behind the scenes moments with her sisters, as she so rarely got the opportunity to really spend time with them. Her post Drag Race schedule was often so busy she barely even felt like she saw her cats. Sometimes she even felt like she barely saw Vanjie. Not that she got away with it; Vanjie was a lot louder than the cats when she was unhappy about something. The cruise, although she hadn’t been onboard - all puns intended - at the beginning, had turned out to be a true blessing in disguise.

“Who’s talking about dick?!”

Brooke would know that voice anywhere. The loud sound coming from the vanity that Silky has recently vacated on the other side of the room, Vanjie whipping around to look at the others. She was nearly done with her makeup, her lips a dark purple finishing off her look. Vanjie tapped her lips, a smile on her face, and Brooke felt it like a siren song to which she couldn’t help but reply.

“No one.”

Brooke rose from her seat, quickly heading towards her boyfriend. Brooke grabbed the bottle of tequila on the way, adding an extra sway to her hips as Vanjie watched her make her approach.

“You a lying slut.” Vanjie rolled her eyes at her. Brooke raising her brows and taking a swig from the bottle, nose scrunching at the horrible taste, but hey, she was on a cruise. She had to be at least a little drunk at all times. It was sea love.

“Hi Papi.” Brooke laughed, leaning over Vanjie’s shoulder so she was included in the shot, and gave her a peck on the lips.

“Mmh.” Vanjie deepened the kiss, Brooke giving a playful lick to Vanjie’s upper lip, which made
Vanjie slapped her on the shoulder.

“No!” Vanjie looked in the mirror, her lipstick ruined. “You bitch!”

Brooke spared a glance to her phone, the messages coming faster and faster. The fans loved whenever she included Vanjie on her stream.

“Sorry babe.” Brooke leaned her head against Vanjie.

“Girl, I just did this.” Vanjie was complaining, adorable grumps coming from her, but she was smiling so Brooke knew she hadn’t actually fucked up. Vanjie gestured to her own face, a patch of purple smeared above her cupid’s bow. “I can’t believe you doing me dirty with this fucked up light and ruining my look.”

Vanjie took her lipstick off, Brooke giving her another color she accepted right away.

“I think you look perfect.” Brooke ran a hand through Vanjie’s boy hair, a move she would never have dared if she hadn’t known that Vanjie would be covering it with a wig cap in a matter of minutes. Brooke had messed with Vanjie’s hair once, and the dressing down he had gotten from one very angry tiny Puerto Rican made sure he had never even considered attempting it again. “Doesn’t she look absolutely perfect?”

“Who you talking to?” Vanjie looked up, smacking her lips. “This Instagram live?”

“Yes.”

“Follow me! Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, real life, at the grocery store who gives a shit, it’s all at VanessaVanjie!”

Brooke cracked up, Vanjie of course taking the chance to promote herself. She was the best PR manager Brooke had ever met, Vanjie launching herself into stardom, her boyfriend breaking 1 million followers before Brooke had, even though she was the one who had won Drag Race.

“You heard the lady!” Brooke gave Vanjie another kiss at her temple, leaving Vanjie behind as she answered a few comments, saying hi to fans and giving shoutouts to whatever country they came from, telling everyone that both she and Vanjie would love to go if they could get a local booker to fly them out.

“You all like my lipstick? Thanks! It’s Nyx Soft Matte Lip Cream in the shade Amsterdam - you could blow a man with this and still have perfect lips!” Brooke smiled. “And believe me…” she winked. “…I’ve done that bit of research myself.” The chat went insane, eggplant emojis and peaches getting thrown at her at an alarming rate, so Brooke launched onto the only comment that didn’t seem dangerously sexual.

“Yes it does match my hoodie!” Brooke smiled, pulling at the collar of her hoodie as she playfully poked out her tongue. “Thank you for noticing.”

Brooke was truly one of the luckier queens, her live streams usually free of drama and spectacle. Vanjie liked to tell her they were too pure and sweet, that she needs to ‘dirty’ it up. Lord knows Vanjie had tried her best to make it happen, making semi-clothed sneak appearances whenever she felt frisky, Brooke having to close her stream in a panic once or twice just to make sure her boyfriend’s dick didn’t end up online.

Brooke’s eye caught on a comment, her eyes narrowing as she read it. Thank god for her full-coverage foundation, as it almost hid her frown lines.
“Did I wear this hoodie on my last live?” She wondered out loud. Her eyes traveled the front of her body in a flash. She was wearing her favourite hoodie, the inside so soft and comfortable with how much she had worn it.

“And the one before that,” Silky breezed past her, lifting one hand to flick the zipper of Brooke’s hoodie. She turned to face the camera briefly, winking. Brooke huffed.

Brooke rolled her eyes at the camera, hoping her attitude transferred efficiently through the lens. She read the comments, her fans discussing loudly. It was amazing, really, how a single comment about her clothes evolved into an entire audience asking about her closet. And she had just been in such a good mood, too. “Of course I own other clothes!”

“Then why don’t you wear them?” Ariel muttered, and it was pure luck that Brooke even heard it. Now if she was really lucky, none of her audience caught that particular dig, but it went without saying that her life was not destined to be that easy, and soon she was flooded with comments along the lines of “shadeee” and one user even begging for a wardrobe tour. Brooke’s mind flickered to the t-shirts still drying on the shower rod, what a wonderful youtube video that would be. Brooke stuck her tongue out at Ariel, the camera catching her from the side as she extended her neck.

“I change my clothes every single day, thank you very much.”

“Does it count if you only have three shirts to switch between?” Ariel was smiling, her entire face lit up in obvious delight.

“Oh you wanna start bitch?” Vanjie cut in, and Brooke felt a second of dread, before Vanjie continued speaking. “Don’t you dare come for my man. I’m the only one who’s allowed to talk about his terrible wardrobe, besides, he still looking like a snack so who the fuck cares if he wears the same thing.”

“Obviously you don’t!”

The room erupted in laughter, and Brooke joined it, but it wasn’t quite the rambunctious laughter that she wanted it to be, the claws of anxiety sinking into her.

Brooke knew she was a late bloomer, that she took extra time to pick up on things, that he was often the last to get on a trend. It usually didn’t bother her. She knew who she was, but as everyone laughed at her, Vanjie even joining in she couldn’t help but feel like maybe, just maybe, she actually had a problem. That she was somehow not worthy.

/  

Brooke was staring into his closet. Looking at everything he owned.

He had lain awake all night, listening to the sounds of the ocean. Vanjie’s soft snores kept him from spiraling completely, the only reason he hadn’t flipped out on the man in his arms, Vanjie even more of a handful when drunk. Brooke had helped him out of his makeup and outfit before they collapsed into bed together, Vanjie loudly declaring himself queen of the world after she had premiered her new remix for the first time, everyone chanting “VAN-JIE VAN-JIE! VAAAN-JIE!” as she left the stage.

“Brock! Come on. Breakfast is waiting!”

“Just give me a second!”

Brooke sighed. His choice not getting any easier with a loud and demanding boyfriend growing
bored on the bed, Vanjie getting dressed so fast Brooke wasn’t even sure he had ever been naked.

“How did you get here Brock Hayhoe? You’re 33, and you have no idea how to dress yourself.”

Brooke had no idea what to put on, but he ended up slipping on his white shirt, at least somewhat confident in what he saw in the mirror when he turned back to Vanjie who had obviously been filming him, his boyfriend laying in bed.

“Put the black one on.”

“Why?”

“I want some photos of us on this boat, and if my fans see you in one more white shirt they’re gonna think I murdered you or some shit and you’re just copy pasted into my feed.”

Brooke laughed, the sound short and harsh to his own ears. A laugh of defense.

“Sure babe. No problem.”

/

Brooke made a beeline for Nina at breakfast, leaving Vanjie behind at the pancake station the moment they stepped into the cafeteria. He didn’t turn around, knowing that Vanjie would be looking confused, and he could not try to explain what was going on right now. He was hungry, but more desperate than anything else, and Nina was the beacon that he was going to steer his boat to.

“Nina, I need your help.” Brooke dumped down, startling Nina while A’keria barely even looked up from her bowl of breakfast.

“What happened to Good Morning honey?”

“I don’t have time.” Brooke almost grabbing the croissant out of Nina’s mouth to get his attention, A’keria snorting. Nina had been his friend for more than 10 years, and he trusted him more than most, if not all the people in his life.

“Unless it has something to do with sex, I don’t want to hear it.” Nina said resolutely, picking the dropped croissant back up and taking a large bite.

“I need new clothes.”

Nina choked, coughing around his mouthful of pastry.

“Excuse me?” he said as soon as he had cleared out his airway.

“Don’t give me that look.” Brooke crossed his arms, watching his friend.

“You kinda asking for the look, besides, where’s your man at? I haven’t had anyone yell at me yet and you’ve been here for an entire five minutes. Has Vanjie died?” A’keria took a sip of his coffee, watching the entire thing with amusement in his eyes.

“A’keria, you’re not helping.” Brooke turned to Nina. “Listen, I really need your help.”

“You, Brock Hayhoe, want new clothes?”

“Is it that out of character for me?” Brooke wrinkled his nose.
“Kinda is, babes.” Brooke looked over to A’keria, who was stirring around the sad remains of cereal in her bowl.

Brooke couldn’t believe it had taken him this long to realize just how desperate of a situation his boy self was in fashion-wise. Everyone else apparently already knew, and Brooke felt like an awkward teenager, once again forgotten when common sense had been handed out.

“Oh, come on sweetheart.” A’keria fixed him with a knowing stare. “You’re not that stupid.” She put her bowl aside, leaning in, as if she was telling Brooke a secret. “Now I ain’t opposed to a man strut ting his stuff if he got it, and honey, you do, but what you’re going for is anything but planned. You’re very pirate chic, very cruise appropriate.” Brooke nodded, listening along with his full attention. “But fashionable baby? Hell nah.”

Brooke knew A’keria was right, and he wanted to change it. Wanted to change it for Vanjie who obviously cared so much about it.

“I’ll help you Brooky Poo. Don’t you worry. Auntie Nina will be at your service as soon as she finishes her croissant.”
Brooke had imagined there wouldn’t be an ocean of options on board the cruise, and boy had he been wrong. The entire deck was littered with stores, and Brooke felt overwhelmed right away, not even sure where they would start, but thankfully he had Nina with him, and if there was one thing his friend always had - it was a plan. Nina picking a smaller shop, properly for Brooke’s benefit, the space filled with graphic t-shirts, drag queens and slogans littered across oceans of fabric.

Nina’s brows was set in a determined half-frown as he surveyed the options before them, biting his lip in concentration as he pulled Brooke from rack to rack, humming a jazzy tune to himself.

“Hmm.”

Every now and then Nina took a shirt from the racks, holding it up against Brooke’s body, Brooke holding out his arms like he used to do with his mom as a kid.

“No. I think you need a little more pizazz. How do you feel about blue?”

“As long as I’m comfy.”

“Wrong answer.”

Brooke laughed, and he knew he had picked right, Nina’s easy joy and the warm glow that always surrounded him keeping Brooke’s anxiety in check.

They made their way through the store, some the shirts ending back on the rack, but most made it to the ever growing pile on Nina’s arm, his sister holding onto them for safe keeping.

Brooke kept an eye out for anything plain. He knew Nina would force him out of his comfort zone, his friend dressing like a Disney Channel uncle, the fun cookiness of her style something Brooke was sure he could make work. At least until they were back on land. If all went wrong, he would just call it cruise craziness, and attempt to forget all about it just like the time he figured he’d try growing out his hair.

“Here.”

It’s was simple, a black piece, with Atlantis in tiny white lettering square on the chest. Brooke looked it over, pulling at it to test the elasticity. The fabric was nice. Surely cotton, maybe a little polyester. Brooke turned it inside out, searching for the label.

“You’re not getting married to it Brooke.”

“Give me a minute.” Brooke found the label, turning it into the light so he could read it.

“You took less time checking out Vanjie!”

“I know true quality when I see it.”

Nina rolled his eyes, a fond smile on his face before he made a beeline for the shorts, Brooke briefly considering if he should have given Nina a budget.

“Can I help you with something sir?”
Brooke jumped, quickly turning the t-shirt back out. “Sorry.” He turned towards the voice, realising that it was the shop assistant, a tall, blonde man who looked to be in his mid twenties, his hair falling around his face. “Sorry. Just looking.”

“Are you Canadian?”

“Is my accent that strong?”

“No one else on this boat would say sorry two times.” The man smiled, and Brooke couldn’t help but laugh.

“Sorry about that.” Brooke turned to the rack, about to put the shirt back when he was interrupted.

“No! Don’t.”

“Am I putting it in the wrong place?”

“No, just. I think you’d look really nice in it.”

“Oh.” Brooke looked at the shirt again, putting it over his arm. “Well, thanks.” Brooke was about to leave, when he realised he recognised the other man’s face. He had seen him somewhere on the boat before, but where? “Wait, didn’t I see you at the bar?”

“I do everything around here.” The man smiled, holding his hand out and Brooke took it, their hands meeting in a firm and brief handshake. “I’m Justin.”

“Brock.”

“We’re kinda understaffed for the summer. New management fired off two thirds of our budget on Drag Queens.”

“And you don’t watch Drag Queens?”

“Sometimes.” Justin smiled. “I bartended that nature documentary. Did you see it?”

Brooke snorted out a laugh. “Yes. Yes I did.” It had been a stroke of genius from Silky to suggest Vanjie narrated a documentary live. It had started off as a joke on Twitter, Silky filming Vanjie on their trip to Hawaii fighting with a bird over their breakfast, and the clip had gone viral. “It was. Something.” Brooke was pretty sure he had almost broken a rib, his abs hurting from how much he had laughed at Vanjie narrating a penguin march.

“Brooke!”

“I have to go.” Brooke pointed over his shoulder, Nina standing at entrance to the dressing room with his hands full, clearly ready for Brooke to start actually trying on everything he had found for his makeover.

“Come by the bar sometimes? Ocean 8, best drinks on the ship! I’ll give you a Tropical orgasm? On the house.”

Brooke smiled. “Thanks, that’s really nice of you.”

“Brooke!” Nina called again.

“I’m coming!”
Brooke walked over, not noticing that Justin was watching him walk away.

Vanjie had looked all over for Brooke, and he was starting to get real fucking pissed. He had been left hanging like an ugly Grindr hookup at breakfast, and now his man was nowhere in sight. Vanjie had tried to be the bigger person, settling down when he saw Brooke make a beeline for Nina without a word, the two old friends, and Vanjie could understand it. Sometimes you just needed your good Judy, and he got that. He really did, but that didn’t mean that he had to like it when he looked fine as fuck. Vanjie had put on his best pair of speedos, the little red number making his ass look like a ripe peach ready for the eating. He was an exclusive buffet, and the guest of honor hadn’t even shown up. Brooke should be here, with his sexy smile and his plate in hand, ready to taste the goods.

“Why you walking ‘round like that sis?” A’keria was laying on a sunchair, sunglasses on his face, his shorts so low you could almost see his peas and beans. “You’re making me seasick.”

“Shut up.” Vanjie dumped down by the pool, dangling his toes in the water. Silky was in the pool, bopping around like a cork, and under normal circumstances Vanjie would have jumped right in. He was even wearing a brand new pair of speedos, but where was the fun in strutting his stuff when the one he wanted to strut it for wasn’t even there?

“Any of you seen Brooke? Bitch been gone since breakfast.”

“Nah, haven’t seen her,” A’keria answered, though he did push his sunglasses into his hair, Silky swimming to the edge of the pool. Vanjie could sense the other guests sneaking glances at him, but he had gotten used to it. “She finally made a run for it?”

Vanjie hadn’t even considered that possibility, her blood running cold.

“She probably out fucking some other bitch,” Silky laughed, kicking his feet as he hung on, a wide smile on his face. “You seen the trade on board this ship.”

“Oh honey, I tasted the trade on board this ship, and it’s good.”

“Stop tryina make me feel pressed ho’s, I ain’t no fucking panini.”

Both Silky and A’keria laughed, and Vanjie wanted to join them. He really did, but he had seen the trade, and maybe they were right. They were on a gay cruise, of course there were hot guys everywhere. That was part of the reason why people went on these boats, to get drunk, fuck for 10 days and then go home without ever having to see anyone ever again. Everyone was flirty, it was in the air, or maybe even the water, and while Vanjie had no problem fighting off the attention he received, the same couldn’t be said about Brooke. Vanjie knew he was fucking gorgeous so of course people wanted a piece of him. Right now he could feel the eyes of several men checking him out, his red speedo chosen for that exact purpose, but he was looking to catch a very different fish. Vanjie shot one of the men a dirty look, the other back off immediately, and Vanjie smiled, feeling very satisfied.

“She gone found herself a better deal.” Silky smirked, pushing the water so it splashed on her friend.

“Bitch!”

“Someone way less psychotic than your crazy ass.”

Vanjie had seen the trade talk to Brooke. Had seen his kind, tall, disgustingly handsome asshole of a man laugh at their jokes, reply to compliments with thanks and smiles, and even say sorry if someone
bumped into him to grab a feel of his junk or trunk. Vanjie wasn’t proud of that part of him. He was a jealous bitch, and he couldn’t help it. If he could, he would gorge out the eyes of anyone who dared look twice at what was very much his, but he was trying to be mature, and Vanjie knew Brooke hadn’t no idea someone was flirting with him 99% of the time, Vanjie having to practically shout in his face that he found him hot to get him to make out with him the first time.

“Y’all ain’t no fucking help,” Vanjie whined, dumping down on the hot stones of the poolside, looking up into the sun, his mind racing away with his internal catalog of every man he had seen getting close to Brooke for the last three days.

“Relax, girl,” Silky chuckled, touching his knee and shaking it to calm him down. “She’s probably tightening up that bod with Kameron. Getting her pump on.”

Vanjie lit up. Of course. Of course. Vanjie sat back up, taking a deep breath of relief. There was a gym on board, and with Kameron there, there was no way Brooke wasn’t using this time off as a chance to get a workout in. After all, there was no other place Brooke would willingly hang out on the ship, at least not without Vanjie at his side.

/ /

“How are you doing in there?”

“I’m doing.”

“You know, Brooke,” Nina sighed, leaning against the side of the fitting room, barely catching it as Brooke threw yet another shirt back in his face. “You don’t have to change yourself. You know that right? Clothes are a way to express yourself. Show off your personality with a wham bam.”

“If I strangle you with my shoelace, does that count as expressing myself through clothing?”

“Uh, no,” Nina laughed heartily. “But maybe your personality is just… You know… Laid back and chill?”

Brooke poked his head out from behind the curtain, Nina passing yet another shirt to Brooke.

“I’m all for this change, but it feels pretty sudden. Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Yearh, I’m fine..” Brooke accepted the shirt, although he was sure the frown never left his face. “It’s just.. I never realised I didn’t look…”

“What?”

“Nevermind.”

Brooke walked out of the dressing room, wearing a tight pair of floral shorts and a white tank top.

“Hmm.” Nina looked him up and down, tapping his lower lip. “I feel like you need a little more oompfh. Maybe more flowers?”

“I’m not wearing enough?” Brooke gestured to his shorts.

“You can never wear enough flowers.” Nina followed Brooke’s hand, his eyes first going wide, then squeezing shut, his blue eyes nothing more than slits. “But you definitely need those shorts a size up.”

Brooke looks down, eyeing his own body in the offending garment, a flush rising in his cheeks. “Oh,
fuck off.”
/
Brooke opened the door to his cabin, peeking inside, a rush of relief washing over him when Vanjie wasn’t there. He was alone for a few minutes, and that was all he needed. Brooke had paid way too much money for it, but he had a thick stack of clothes in his hand, Nina - smart as a whip as always - had told him to not get a bag, so Brooke just dumped everything into his suitcase before he shoved the receipts to the very bottom of their trash can. He was considering cutting the labels out of the shirts, trying to decide if that was crazy or not and seriously debating if he should call someone about it, when the key card beeped and Vanjie walked in.

“Oh thank fuck ho, I thought you had gone thrown yourself into the ocean.”

“Hi.” Brooke quickly sat down on the bed, turning against Vanjie, trying his best to pretend he hadn’t just been minutes away from calling home just so he could FaceTime his cats to relax. “Still here, still alive.”

“I’ve been looking all over for you.”

Vanjie locked the door behind him, and Brooke felt a flush his cheeks, fully taking in Vanjie’s appearance for the first time. His boyfriend was almost naked, his tan skin slick with tanning oil, his strong legs and his perfect stomach on full display in the filthiest little red speedo Brooke had ever seen.

“Yeah, sorry..” Brooke broke his gaze away, catching Vanjie’s eyes, the other clearly noticing his staring. “Nina had an emergency.” Brooke smiled, hoping his face didn’t betray the fact that he was obviously lying.

“She okay?” Vanjies voice was low and soft. “She need anything?”

Brooke felt his heart melt a little, Vanjies immediate concern for one of his best drag friends so sweet he almost forgot he was technically lying. “She’s fine.”

“Good.” Vanjie smiled. “Cause now I don’t need to feel nothing for doing this.”

Brooke couldn’t tear his eyes away, Vanjie walking painfully slowly towards him, his bare feet poised as he pranced, clearly putting on a show before he lowered himself onto Brooke’s lap, his arms snaking around his neck, Brooke’s mouth dry, his dick instantly hard and interested. Vanjie smelled like sun and sea, the thick scent of oil playing just beneath his natural sweat.

“We missed you at the pool.” Vanjie’s hand snaked into his hair, Brooke leaning back into the touch.

“Who’s we?”

“Oh so you a detective now bitch?” Vanjie laughed, his hand tightening, forcing Brooke’s face so close to his their lips were only inches apart. “Fine, it was just me. I missed you.”

Brooke wanted to leave forward, but Vanjies hand kept him in place. “Sorry.” Brooke felt like he couldn’t breathe, Vanjie controlling him so easily.

“You better be.”

Vanjie smiled, tightened his knees, digging into the side of Brooke’s thighs, their chests pressed together, Vanjie’s weight forcing Brooke to put his hands behind him, supporting them both,
Brooke’s new shirt open just like the shop assistant had told him looked good right before he had left. Brooke almost whined, the sound on the tip of his tongue. Vanjie still hadn’t kissed him, and he felt like he was starving.

“I didn’t even have no one to put sunscreen on my tush.”

“Did you get burned?” Brooke tried to keep an even head, but he felt hot all over, Vanjie’s voice as low as it would go without him whispering, his skin burning from the suspense. Vanjie’s eyes were sparkling, satisfaction radiating from him as he had Brooke under his thumb. If he had been at the pool, would Vanjie have made him lotion him up? Brooke couldn’t help but imagine his palms sliding over Vanjie’s broad back, making sure every inch was protected. Brooke looked down, barely keeping a gulp in at the thought of pushing down Vanjie’s speedo, spreading the liquid there without being able to sneak a slick finger in between his cheeks, everyone around them-

“Why don’t you check for yourself?”

Brooke was snapped out of his fantasy, Vanjie’s voice pulling him back to the moment.

“Please.” Vanjie laughed, tipping them over, their lips crashing together and Brooke felt like he was flying even though they landed in the blankets, Vanjie already rocking against his stomach as they made out. The control of the kiss switched back and forth, back and forth until Vanjie bit Brooke, Brooke breaking the kiss with a groan, his lip sore, the pain causing a fizzle of pleasure to run through his body.

“Let me see.” Brooke flipped them over, Vanjie still clinging to him, a hand on his lip and a final kiss turning Vanjie over so he was lying on his stomach. Vanjie’s back was lined with muscles, Brooke’s fingers on Vanjie’s hip tightening without a thought as he leaned down, gently kissing the skin, breathing in the sun, salt and water. Brooke hooked his thumb in Vanjie’s speedos, pulling them down and over the perfect globe of Vanjie’s ass, his kisses following as he sat back on his knees, watching his boyfriend’s body, Vanjie’s hips working against the mattress. Brooke landed a slap on Vanjie’s left cheek, right above his beauty mark, the smack loud in the room, Vanjie’s gasp even louder.

“What the fuc-”

Brooke laughed. “Seems like you pass inspection.” Brooke pushed his shorts down, his dick springing free before he lowered himself down, his chest pressed against Vanjies skin, Brooke’s weight pushing Vanjie into the mattress.

“What you do that for?”

“Didn’t you ask me to check if you were burned?”

“That don’t mean you can slap my ass.” Vanjie laughed, the sound slightly breathless. “I ain’t no fucking prize at the counter fair.”

Brooke chuckled, considered if he should correct Vanjie since he had never heard of counter fairs, only county fairs, but it didn’t really matter. Brooke pressed a kiss behind Vanjie’s ear. “Of course not.”

“You bitc-“

Brooke moved his leg, hooking it on the outside of Vanjie’s hip.

“Hi.” Brooke smiled, his arms on either side of Vanjie’s head, the new bend of his knee giving him
the leverage to push forward, his cock sliding between Vanjie’s cheeks. They hadn’t had time to prepare, but Brooke loved this too, the spontaneity and the intimacy of just rutting against each other.

“Fuuuuuck.” Vanjie moaned, his body going slack, and Brooke smiled, kissing Vanjie’s neck as he started thrusting. “Keep going.”

Brooke wasn’t much of a talker, but Vanjie was, filth spilling from his boyfriend’s lips as Brooke rutted against him in the firm, long and hard strokes he knew Vanjie preferred.

Brooke groaned, pressing his lips to Vanjie’s jaw as he whispered. “You’re so sexy.”

“Say it again!”

Brooke blushed, the demand in Vanjie’s voice making his entire body tingle. “You’re so fucking sexy.”

Vanjie was withering, his smaller body fighting to move, to do anything to the desire building inside of him, but it was a futile effort, Brooke easily holding him down, their bodies sliding together, slick with sweat, Vanjie’s hard nipples rubbing against the sheet. Brooke was in complete control, everything he did serving Vanjie in the best way he could, Vanjie’s desperation growing and growing.

“Please, Brock, I- Shit, I’m gonna, please-”

Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s hands, his body resting on his elbow and knee, forcing Vanjie’s hands above his head, stretching his arms out over his body, Vanjie crying out as he was pulled taut.

“Say it.”

“Please, I-.” Brooke smiled, Vanjie’s voice high and desperate.

“Ask nicely.”

“Fuck, I’m gonna cum!”

Brooke bit down, his teeth closing on Vanjie’s neck, a hard thrust and the edge of pain pulling Vanjie over the edge as he came, soaking the sheets, his body shaking with it.

“There you go.”

“Please.”

Vanjie moaned, overstimulated and hot, but Brooke knew exactly what he wanted. He upped his speed, rutting against Vanjie’s body, whimpers of oversensitivity taking over as Brooke fucked hard and fast, his hips pistoling until he came too, a loud groan spilling from his lips as he emptied himself, hips only stopping after he had rode out the last of his aftershocks.

Brooke rolled over, taking Vanjie with him easily, the two settling away from the wet spot, their bodies intertwined, filthy, lazy open mouthed kisses traded over Vanjie’s shoulder as they laid together.
They had taken their sweet time, enjoying each other before Vanjie got up. He had quickly run a washcloth over his body before throwing it at Brooke who had laughed and cleaned himself up too. Vanjie had been ready to go out again in minutes, speedos discarded and forgotten in favor of a pair of blue shorts that were much more appropriate. However, Brooke still wasn’t done, insisting he had to use the bathroom.

“Brock! Come ooooool.” Vanjie knew he was whining, but he had never been above acting a fool to get his way. “Why you takin so long?” he asked, a series of rapid knocks on the bathroom door interlacing with his words. “The sun ain’t gonna shine all day.”

“Go on up,” Brooke called back. “I’ll join you in a sec.”

“Why’s the door locked? You taking a shit or something?”

Vanjie could hear the deep belly laugh. Vanjie knew he was often overreacting, but few things got him going like a locked door, and it was even worse if he knew Brooke was on the other side.

“Something like that.”

Vanjie laughed. “Fine! I’ll leave without you, but don’t you go taking too long, I need you to come show me off like the fine fucking catch I am.” Vanjie grabbed his phone, making his way to the door, yelling, “Love ya!” before he closed it behind him.

/  

It was truly incredible how Vanjie could switch from being the sexiest little minx to crass and hilarious in the span of minutes. Brooke chuckled softly to himself as he rubbed sunscreen onto his face in gentle circles, making sure he covered each inch of skin. He had managed not to get burned yet, and there was no way he was risking his streak, even if Vanjie was more impatient than a toddler sometimes.

Brooke went back into the room, ready to do the hardest part of the day. Picking what to wear. Nina had pointed out a few personal faves, and Brooke ended up grabbing the floral shorts that both Nina and the shop assistant had said looked good on him.

Brooke took a look in the mirror. The swim shorts - which he did get a size up, thank you very much - were decorated liberally with various Hawaiian flowers. He felt like himself, though a slightly more bougie version. Brooke grabbed a sky blue shirt, not bothering to button it up since it stretched tight across his chest. Nina had called it fashion and said he looked swole.

/  

The sun hadn’t always been a friend of Nina’s. However, generous amounts of sunscreen - SPF 50, of course - had allowed him the luxury of basking in the sun while on this cruise. If only he were careful and applied a new layer at regular intervals, he was golden. Literally, which he had every intention of getting.
“This is so unfair.”

Vanjie’s voice never failed to catch Nina’s attention. Brooke was smothering Vanjie in sunscreen, running his broad palms down Vanjie’s arm, and from the whine in Vanjie’s voice, Nina knew this was a prime chance for a story to evolve.

“I thought this would be some sensual shit.” Vanjie fretted, legs bouncing up and down as he shifted impatiently. “You could at least butter me up with some oil instead so I can get my tan on.”

Vanjie was full of golden nuggets, little pieces of information that Nina was carefully putting aside for future use. His podcast thrived on stories of Vanjie’s adventures and crazy theories, and Nina had to thank his excellent memory for allowing him to tuck every word aside, so that he could write it down later. His most listened to episode of the podcast so far had featured Vanjie, his friend agreeing to come on and explain a few of his most popular quotes. Nina’s co-host, Patricia, had been all up in arms, excited and even more bubbly than normal while displaying her sincere disappointment in the fact that Vanjie was not only taken, but also gay, as she had never met a man she had wanted to marry more.

“Just sit still.” Brooke ran his hands across Vanjie’s arms, tongue poking out from between his teeth in concentration. “You’ll burn if you don’t let me put this sunscreen on you. And then I’ll have to put up with your whining.”

“Pfth. Sunscreen. That’s just some marketing mumbo jumbo. I don’t need this just let me go.”

Brooke looked as if someone had just slapped him squarely across the face.

“... Are you saying you don’t believe in sunscreen?”

Nina had rarely seen Brooke look so dumbfounded, Vanjie’s mouth already running, babbling like a waterfall. “It’s like the florade in the water-

“The what?”

“The florade. You know that mind control shit that the government put in the water. Sunscreen is the same.”

“Do you mean floride?”

“Sssh Brooke, let her finish.” Nina waved her hand at Brooke in an effort to silence him, perching up in her seat.

“I ain’t ever used sunscreen and I’m fine. Rays from space? Who even made that up?”

Nina sat up straight, throwing her legs over the side of her chair in an effort to look closely at Vanjie. “Tell me more, tell me more.”

“Nina don’t-“

“Besides, even if them UN rays are real.”

“UV. It’s UV rays.” If looks could kill, Nina would already have been dead, Brooke shooting daggers at him.

“Even if they are, I’m Latinx! It’s like, the protection is in my blood, you know?” Vanjie held his head high and proud, and Nina could feel her cheeks straining from the insane smile that was
plastered there, Vanjie clearly on a tangent. “Everyone be talking about skin cancer, but there ain’t no person in my family who has ever used sunscreen and my Abuela lived to 105!”

Nina had to bite her lip, breathing deep not to fall into a full on crackle. “So, just to be clear. You’re saying you can’t get skin cancer because of your race?”

“I might have to reeducate myself.” Vanjie smiled, his eyes sparkling. “Cause when you say it like that, I usually put my foot in my dang mouth. Damn Nina, you always make me feel like a dumbass.”

“You’re not dumb,” Brooke reassured him, squeezing his biceps teasingly. “You’re just horribly misinformed.”

“You still love me?”

If Nina didn’t know them both so well, she might not have noticed how Vanjie’s face visibly fell before morphing into the mirror image of a relaxed grin. She might also not have noticed how Brooke - the Brooke she had known for so many years, the canadian queen of solitude - pressed the most tender of kisses to the patch between Vanjie’s shoulder blades.

“I’ll always love you.”

/  

Ariel licked the side of his ice cream cone, catching a drop of vanilla flavored liquid that was making it’s escape. He had been enjoying the sun when noise from the pool had distracted him. Silky had accidentally fired a beach ball into Detox’s face, the queens quickly breaking up into factions, the water fight of a century starting as everyone got dragged into it, or at least, nearly everyone.

Ariel spotted Brooke near the railing, his sister standing with his phone and taking pictures.

“Look at you.” Ariel smiled, licking his ice cream. “Out here, thotting it up while the world has gone into madness.”

“. What?” Brooke looked up from his phone, and Ariel realised with delight that Brooke had no idea about the water fight.

“Nothing, I just wasn’t sure you knew what patterns were until now,” Ariel commented, nodding towards Brooke’s shorts.

“Have you not seen my drag?” Brooke huffed, although there was nothing but jest in his voice.

“Do you need help?”

“You’re offering me help?”

“Why not?” Ariel shrugged. “Besides, it’s not like there’s anything more fun to do.” If Ariel played his cards just right, he would secure his entertainment for the rest of the day. Keeping Brooke distracted would mean there was no one who could break up the fight, and if Ariel was lucky, Silky was getting annihilated by the pool as they spoke. “New day, new me.”

/  

“Twist your back.”

Brooke had laughed when Ariel had insisted on oiling his chest, but as Brooke looked over his
shoulder, he was sure it would look great. Soju had called Brooke’s Instagram thirst central several times, and while Brooke loved it, he couldn’t help but hope that his fans would notice something else this time around.

“Are you sure this is a good look?”

“Trust my vision, big guy.” Ariel smiled, clapping Brooke’s abs before he tucked the string of his shorts into the waistband. “There is a reason I’m an Instagram queen.”

“I can’t believe you left my ass hanging!”

“I told you.” Brooke laughed, Vanjie ready to explode like a little cartoon character as they ran down the hall to get to their room. “I was busy.”

“I called for help and you didn’t come! What good is dating your hot Canadian butt if you don’t come to my aid like some prince on a white moose!”

Brooke snorted. Vanjie had acted like he had been forgotten on the battlefield when Brooke had finally returned. From what Brooke had gathered, the entire thing had turned into a major shitshow, Vanjie jumping on Silky’s team the moment Detox had teamed up with Nina and A’keria, the fight quickly migrating from the pool to cover the entire deck. Ariel and Brooke had returned to Silky and Vanjie in a giant fort, built out of sun chairs, while A’keria had just returned from the gift shop with hands full of water balloons. “I was there for Untucked Papi. You can hold your own.

“I nearly died! What if I had died?!”

“I’ve never heard of anyone dying in a water fight.”

“I could have been the first!”

“If you had,” Brooke laughed, grabbing Vanjies arm and pulling him in, spinning them around before he pushed Vanjie against the wall. “I would have mourned you appropriately.”

“Just kiss me you fucking asshole.”

“Are you sure this is a good idea?”

“Best idea I ever had.” Vanjie smiled, excitement radiating off him. “It’s gonna look sick.”

“Unless you break your neck.” Brooke smiled back, Vanjie’s good mood almost infectious though the other man had no reason to be as excited as he was. They were stuck in rehearsals, the cruise company wanting every queen to participate in a big finale show at their end destination, and while Brooke wasn’t opposed to it, he was again and again reminded why he preferred to work alone. Brooke and Vanjie had been the last to slip into the room, Raja laughing at them, but thankfully none of the staff had pointed it out. “Just because you saw it on Youtube, doesn’t mean it’s a good idea.”

“If I fall and break my neck, Imma come back and haunt your dick so I’m fine either way.”

“Come on then.”

Vanjie ran, bare feet touching the floor, extending his arms, Brooke catching Vanjie’s hands and using the momentum to swing Vanjie over his head, Brooke clicking his elbows into place as Vanjie
tried to find his balance, Brooke’s boyfriend doing a handstand above his head, both of their arms stretched. Vanjie flailed a little, his legs not fully up, and Brooke moved forward instantly, counterbalancing Vanjie’s weight, his neck bend backwards to watch Vanjie, making sure he was safe. Brooke squeezed Vanjie’s hand, pushing up and using the movement to swing Vanjie down on the other side of his body, his boyfriend landing clean on his feet.

“You ok babe?”

“That, was, awesome!!” Not even a foghorn could have competed with Vanjie in that moment, Brooke almost blown backwards. “Again!”

“Again?” Brooke smiled, Vanjie’s pure excitement contagious.

“Yes bitch again!” Vanjie jumped in place, giddy with the fact that the trick has almost worked perfectly. “Wait, let me find my heels! God this is gonna look fucking sick!”

/}

“Concentrate please!

Brooke peeked over the top of his book, Lord of the Flies the latest paperback he was working his way through. It had always been a habit of his to have something with him during his ballet career in case there was downtime, an inevitable part of working in a company. Since Drag Race had aired, he had however raced through his bookshelf, every forgotten copy from strange little stores or shitty airport shelves getting picked up and thumbed through to keep him entertained.

Brooke had picked the choreography up almost instantly, the instructor letting him go after two rounds, Brooke nailing the entire thing on the second go. The same couldn’t be said for Cracker or Nina though, who were still struggling through it, Vanjie caught in the background with Silky which was the exact reason Brooke hadn’t left yet and why he was spread out over a shitty bar booth instead of napping or enjoying the sun.

That, and the fact that his fingers were itching to look at his phone, the smallest part of his brain that he couldn’t control fully spiraling over whenever or not his fans had picked up on his new shorts on Instagram.

The fans were terrifyingly intense sometimes - Brooke sure, without the shadow of a doubt, that if he ever needed to be hospitalised he could ask twitter for his blood type, social security number and medical history and receive it within minutes.

“Hi stranger.” Brooke looked up, faintly recognising the voice. It was Justin, the guy from the clothing store, now carrying a case of beer. “Missed me already?”

“Oh absolutely.” Brooke laughed, a short sound coming from him as he sat up straight, Justin putting the case down on the table. “Didn’t realise this was your bar.”

“So, you’re not just a regular guest, huh?” Justin smiled, his white teeth bright in the half dark of the room.

Brooke felt a brief surge of unease. It had been nice chatting to a complete stranger, and Brooke was already mourning the loss of that a little bit, the days on the cruise making him feel like he was an animal at the zoo. “Who told you?”

“Doesn’t take a genius to figure that out when you’re in a closed bar during the day. You’re one of the dancers, right?”
Brooke smiled, quick relief coming to him. “Or maybe I’m just a really enthusiastic alcoholic?”

“That’d be the first alcoholic I’ve seen that reads Lord of the Flies and goes on cruises for fun.”

Justin sat down, Brooke moving over to make space. “How do you like it so far?”

“You’ve read it?”

“Of course!” Justin smiled. “Required reading and all that, though I disagree with the idea of human nature being this uncaged animal, just waiting for a chance to get out.”

“I think I’d be pretty uncaged too if I had to survive on badly cooked jungle meat prepared by preteens.” Brooke thumbed through his copy. “How do you feel about the conch?”

“As a symbol for society?”

“It could appear that way.” Brooke smiled. “But in Hinduism-“

“Wasn’t the story published in like.. 1951?”

“1954, but in Hinduism conches were believed to be able to banish evil. Blow the conch, the kids have to listen, seems like a classic metaphor to me.”

“Because the banishment of evil worked real well for the boys.” Justin smirked.

“Better than a symbol of society.”

“If you insist on being contrary, let me just point out that the fragility of the material could be a metaphor for the weakness of-“

“Structured power!” Brooke laughed, quickly folding down the page in his copy so he could save the note Justin had given him.

“Exactly!” Justin laughed. They continued talking, shooting back and forth, Justin apparently still in college part time where he was finishing up a creative writing degree, their taste in books almost identical. Brooke didn’t even realise he had completely forgotten his phone, he and Justin quickly getting thrown into a rapid discussion on what the story would have turned into with all female characters

/  

“It’s so fuckin hot back here.” Vanjie grumbled, fanning himself with his hand. Nina was still struggling, the cocktails he had had in the sun earlier that day affect his already slow ability to pick up a routine. “Can’t believe we gotta be stuck for this shit.” Vanjie was only wearing a loose t-shirt and shorts, the drawstring tightly secured since Brooke’s fingerprints had started to appear after their rut after lunch. Vanjie secretly loved it, his darker skin not picking up marks as easily as Brooke’s, but there was something special about carrying an imprint around, five perfect fingers blossoming on his right hip.

Silky laughed, his best friend sweating like a sinner in church. Cracker was going through it again, the choreographer showing him the steps, and they had the briefest of breaks. Vanjie would have gotten off stage, but he was sure he was caught in some Sisyphus nightmare, the rock he was hurling up a dumb hill Cracker’s two left feet and Nina’s Disney dancing ass.

“Here.” Silky handed Vanjie a bottle of water.
“Nah I’m good.”

“Come on cyst, gotta stay hydrated.” Silky grinned, holding the bottle to Vanjie’s lips.

Vanjie hit the bottle, water almost spraying everywhere. “My hyd- huda- hydaraion is fucking fine, besides, I don’t want no sloppy seconds.”

“Oh so you’re a nice girl who only has premium meat?” Silky wiggled his eyebrows, making Vanjie snort.

“Fuck off.” Vanjie laughed. “Brock! Babe, where you at!” Vanjie held his hand above his eyes, blocking out the stage lights, scanning the dark bar. “Can I have a water please?!”. Normally, Brooke would come running right away, his boyfriend the most caring person Vanjie had ever met from the moment they had stepped off the race, but as he waited one beat and then two, nothing came. Vanjie had expected Brooke to be somewhere, happily reading whatever nerd book he was into right now, but what he saw was something completely and gut wrenchingly different. Vanjie saw Brooke and someone else, a stranger, sitting together in a booth, open beer bottles in hand, Brooke openly, happily and loudly discussing something, the smile on his face so bright he might as well have been looking at the sun.

“Give me that stupid bottle.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait. I hope you’ll all will enjoy reading this chapter as much as Q-tip and I have writing it!

Thank you to VeronicaSanders and Meggie for betaing.

Please enjoy, and don’t forget to leave a comment!
Vanjie shot off the stage as soon as he got the chance, grabbing a towel and wiping his hair down, the stage lights making him sweat, stomping over to the table, Brooke finally finally finally paying attention to him.

“Babe!” Brooke lit up the moment he saw him, Brooke always a bright and happy drinker, Vanjie noticing that Brooke was on his second bottle of beer.

“You finished with the meet and greet?”

“The meet and greet?”

Vanjie looked at the stranger who had just spoken, a tall blonde man who looked about 23. There was not an ounce of recognition in his eyes, and Vanjie bristled. Was he really pretending he didn’t know anything. It wouldn’t be the craziest thing a fan had done to get close to either of them, but Vanjie was onto him.

“Justin and I are just talking about the book I’m reading right now.” Brooke looked at the stranger, Justin, the other smiling and Brooke grabbed a beer for Vanjie, uncapping it and pushing it across the table, the bottle still somewhat cold.

Brooke read, and he read a lot. Old, weird books with wrinkled pages, the things never costing much more than a few bucks each so Brooke ‘wouldn’t feel bad about losing them’. In the beginning, Vanjie hadn’t understood how Brooke would curl up during rehearsals or grab for his bag in airports. There were so many things that were so much more fun than reading, and Vanjie had just put it down as one of Brooke’s idiosyncrasies, some of the weird shit he did just because he was Brooke.

Vanjie’s opinion on it had changed though, when he and Brooke had happened to be in New York at the same time, Vanjie coming in from Mexico with Alexis afterwards while Booke was on his way to Canada for a two week tour. Vanjie had changed his flights last moment, and while Brooke had been ecstatic that they had had the time together, he had also looked almost apologetic when he had told Vanjie he was meeting up with old friends. The friends had turned out to be Brooke’s old company, Vanjie suddenly spending his evening in a bar, feeling like a midget around 6’3 ballerinas who were all reminiscing about their time at Trockadero, all loudly discussing the books they were currently reading in between shows, on flights, and in practice.

Vanjie picked up Brooke’s book, quickly casting a glance at it, “Lord of the Flies” and a lush green jungle filling the cover.

“Is that that long ass movie you used your googly eyes to try and make me watch?”

Brooke laughed, and Vanjie felt a quick flush fill his cheeks, Brooke’s bright smile telling him instantly that he had put his foot in his mouth once again. “That was Lord of the Rings.”

“Same shit, different writer, right.” Vanjie grabbed his beer, taking a sip of it, the liquid tasting just as shitty as it always did, but it gave him something to do with his hands.
“Not really.” Brooke moved, and Vanjie scooched into the booth, Brooke putting his arm around him instantly. “Justin, this is Jose.” Brooke gestured with his bottle. “Jose, Justin, Justin Jose.”

“Hey.” Justin raised his beer in salute.

Vanjie was just about to speak up, when Brooke interrupted. “He’s my boyfriend.”

“A boyfriend? You’re just full of surprises Brock.” Justin smiled, a mischievous glint in his eye that Vanjie couldn’t place. “The mystery truly does grow.”

“It does, doesn’t it?” Brooke took a sip of his beer, and Vanjie hated the smirk that was tucked away on Brooke’s face.

“So what do you think of the portrayal of Piggy in the movie?”

“I don’t know.” Vanjie felt Brooke’s arm pull him even closer, Brooke’s hand sneaking under his t-shirt and settling on his chest. “Haven’t watched it yet.”

“You haven’t? But it’s a classic!”

“I tried with this one.” Brooke gestured to Vanjie with his head. “He fell asleep before the opening credits had rolled.”

“No! You have to watch it, I think I have it somewhere on my computer. It’s film histor-”

Vanjie had meant to pay attention, he really had, but it was hard to focus when he didn’t even know what they were talking about, Brooke’s voice warm and sure, his laugh making his entire chest rumble as words spilled from him, his thumb slowly rubbing back and forth, back and forth on Vanjie’s chest.

It seemed like the stranger, Justin, wasn’t actually a fan that was trying to take advantage, just someone Brooke had met and had an instant connection with, and if Vanjie was honest with himself, he had no idea what was worse.

/ 

“Yes!” Vanjie punched the air, excitement rushing through him as he had finally finally finally found the stupid movie Brooke had been talking about with his new best friend. “Brock!”

“Yes?” Brooke leaned out from the bathroom, toothbrush in mouth, his hair still wet from the shower he had taken while Vanjie had been cockblocked by the geo tracking on their Netflix account, the poor thing not having any idea what country they were actually in, Vanjie finally whipping out his wallet to buy it on Amazon.

“I found the movie! The Lord of the Flies, original edition baby!” Vanjie smiled brightly, flipping back the covers on Brooke’s side of the bed with a dramatic woosh. “Come sit your ass down, and enjoy the show.”

“You’d hate it, trust me. It’s nothing like the Notebook.” Brooke smiled , walking into their room, brush still in his mouth.

“But you really liked talking ‘bout it earlier.”

Vanjie looked up at Brooke, his heart sinking. “Are you sure?”

“We don’t have to have everything in common.” Brooke gave Vanjie a quick peck, his lips tasting like peppermint. “We love each other, right?”

“Right.”

“Morning.”

“Mmmh..”

“Don’t forget to take your pills.”

“Shit.”

Brooke turned over, grabbing the little orange container that was sitting on his nightstand. He swallowed them with a gulp of water from the bottle he had left there the night before.

“Thanks.”

Brooke laid back down, Vanjie crawling into his arms, sprawling himself over his chest. They were in their cabin, the morning sun shining through the doors to their balcony. Last night had gone by in a blur, the conversation with Justin so easy Brooke had talked and talked until because both he and Vanjie had been called back on stage, the evening ending with drinks for everyone and pizza after the finished rehearsals, their choreographer finally happy with them.

“No problem, bitch.”

It still felt a little weird to have Vanjie remind him to take his pills; it was intimate. Almost too intimate. It had been too much in the beginning, Brooke bristling whenever Vanjie reminded him that he had forgotten to take care of himself. Brooke had never needed anyone, had never allowed anyone to be close enough that they could help with something so private. It had been uncomfortable to rely on someone else, the medication and his adult diagnosis of ADD almost too much to handle with the expectations of a relationship. Brooke had happily shared his diagnosis with his fans. Talking about it to them was easy, a joke or a poke easily falling from his lips in public.

In private Vanjie had been wonderful, the other man breaking down Brooke’s barriers as easily as he had everything else, navigating the trenches of Brooke’s mind with him, learning how to manage and what made him lose focus completely. Brooke had been panicked that two people with ADD, their symptoms manifesting so differently, would tear each other apart, but Vanjie had been nothing but patient, his diagnosis decades older than Brooke’s. While Brooke had been quiet in school, Vanjie had been even louder back then, a trouble maker who had managed to charm his way out of any serious problems. Vanjie had told Brooke stories of getting kicked out of the library, of skipping school and road trips to the beach in half borrowed cars, of how he never had any idea of what was going on in his public school in Tampa, but Vanjie’s ADD had been caught, and caught early, Vanjie’s routine of medication as simple to him as brushing his teeth and taking a piss, while Brooke still struggled with remembering every single day.

“Can I have my phone?” Brooke ran his palm over Vanjie’s back, gently scratching him in just the way he knew Vanjie liked. Vanjie had his own iPhone X in hand, scrolling away on Twitter. Brooke’s favorite was mornings like this, neither of them hung over or getting ready to jump on a plane.
“Mmh.” Vanjie reached out, unplugging it from the wall and handing it to Brooke, Brooke groaning when he saw the little red bubbles littering his screen. He tapped onto Instagram, instantly regretting it when the first thing he saw on his new picture was someone asking for vitamin D. Brooke snorted, scrolling through the comments that reigned from innocent “tropic like it’s hot”, to classics like “how about a good lei?” to the downright crazy, “Is @VanessaVanjie gonna deflower that ass later, and can we watch?”

“So which one is your fave?” Brooke looked up from his phone, Vanjie looking at him, an expectant smirk on his face, Vanjie clearly enjoying the entire situation way to much for his level of comfort. “‘Cause mine is ‘If you were a fruit, you’d be a fine-apple’.” Vanjie snickered, looking at his screen again. “It’s keeping it real classy, don’t you think?”

Brooke bit his lip. “You’ve read all of them?”

“You really think my ADD ass would have stayed in bed if I hadn’t had premium entertainment?” Vanjie was laying with his head in his hand.

“This was a mistake.” Brooke groaned, covering his face, his phone hitting his forehead. “I’m going to delete the pic.”

“Uh, this one is good too babe, ‘Love the flowers, when can we see the tree trunk Papi?’” Vanjie cackled, his eyes flying over his screen, almost like he was reading.

“You’re being such a little shit.”

“You love me.” Vanjie moved, nearly kneeling Brooke in the crotch before Vanjie flopped down on his back, Vanjie settling down on Brooke’s chest, Brooke instantly securing Vanjie with a hand on his stomach, holding him tight. Sometimes Vanjie was like a toddler, happily climbing all over Brooke’s body without any regards for his own safety or the protection of Brooke’s balls.

“I do, but I don’t.”

Vanjie lifted his arm, his phone securely in his hand, the camera already open, Brooke spotting himself, morning hair and all. “Smile!”

Brooke had learned that if Vanjie’s phone was out, there was only one thing to do. Pose, and hope for the best. Vanjie posed too, his head turning for a quick peck, but Brooke wasn’t going to let him get away with this behavior. He knew Vanjie had probably planned a whole photo session, his boyfriend hoarding photos of them like a dragon did gold, but Brooke wasn’t in the mood. Not when Vanjie was being so wonderfully bratty.

Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s hair, deepening the kiss, holding him in place, forcing his mouth open with his tongue, Vanjie whimpering as Brooke bit into his lip and he smiled, finally feeling like he was regaining control of the situation, when Vanjie started laughing.

Brooke pulled back, the shit eating grin on Vanjie’s face frankly annoying. “What?”

“We’re live.” Vanjie shook his hand a little, and Brooke looked at the phone, really looked at the phone, for the first time.

“Shit!”

Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s hand, desperately trying to press the disconnect button, the clip of him grabbing Vanjie’s hair now all over the internet.
“Have you finally fucked Brooke up?”

Vanjie looked up, her eyes catching A’keria’s in the mirror. They were all backstage, everyone getting ready for a day on deck, Atlantis hiring them to host several pool parties. They had all opted for caftans, the flowy fabrics meaning they didn’t have to tuck which was a form of torture in itself in the hot tropical weather. Vanjie was doing her eyebrows, the third layer of powder leaving two bright white circles on her face. She shrugged her shoulders, trying to play innocent.

“Cause she looks real mad.” A’keria pointed her brush to the other side of the room, Brooke sitting with Kameron and Cracker. “You have no idea why she’s brewing up a storm?” Brooke did actually look kinda mad, and she had been in their room, Brooke rolling off the bed and pacing around, clearly upset.

“No idea.” Vanjie touched her face, the powder pressed and ready. She knew she should probably feel bad about accidentally blasting Brooke, but it hadn’t been her intention. She had only wanted a bit of fun banter, maybe a peck and a cuddle, but then Brooke had kissed her like that, and Vanjie had forgotten everything. Her stomach was warm, curling in cruel delight and possession with the fact that she had managed to show everyone just how much Brooke belonged to her, even if the one she truly wanted to show hadn’t been watching. Vanjie grabbed her pencil, ready to draw in her eyebrows, when she was interrupted by Silky.

“No idea my big fat black ass. You know just what she did” Silky grabbed her phone from her makeup bag, A’keria lighting up at the mention of gossip coming her way. Silky quickly found the video, Vanjie briefly wondering how she managed when A’keria looked at Vanjie with a twist on her lips and delight in her eyes.

“She’s going in on that kiss huh?”

“Y’all just mad.” Vanjie snorted, hoping she could distract her friend.

“We ain’t the ones who’s mad boo.” A’keria laughed. “Brooke is handling that one all on her own.”

/

Vanjie was making her way across the room, when she felt Nina grab her elbow, the other queen looking at her with something almost like concern on her face. “So, are you okay?”

Vanjie felt taken by surprise, Nina rarely asking her how she was feeling. “Yeah.. Yeah, I’m good.”

“Are you sure? Because you don’t seem good.” Nina’s voice was low, and Vanjie felt a moment of true love for the friend she had gained from Drag Race, her quite compassion and discretion exactly what Vanjie needed, though she wasn’t going to accept, too unsure of her own feelings to share them with anyone.

“I’m good.”

“Fine.” Nina stood up again, clearly ready to leave Vanjie to her mood. “Just,” Nina touched Vanjie’s shoulder. “Know that you can always talk to me, okay?”

Vanjie nodded, a small smile playing on her lips. “Thanks sis.”

/

Brooke looked at herself in the mirror, adjusting her bra. When Brooke had packed the outfit, it had seemed like a brilliant idea fitting the requirements from the cruise company perfectly, the purple
chiffon light and flowy and while she did have to tuck, the regal elegance and how strong she felt in it absolutely outweighed the discomfort. She was in full face and hair, her chest bare, but she was still wearing her sweat pants, the pair slung low on her hips.

She had done her makeup, sitting with Kameron and Cracker. Cracker’s waterfall of a mouth always meant Brooke didn’t have to speak if she wasn’t in the mood, a gift she was more than happy to accept on that particular day. She still felt tingles of embarrassment run down her spine each time she thought of the accidental kiss that had ended up online. Normally Brooke didn’t mind. Had no complaints about a kiss or even a proper makeout session going online from dark club corners, their relationship a central part of what his fans loved about him, but this one was different. Brooke had been aggressive, the possessive, fun and playful part of their relationship their own, something private that was theirs alone.

Brooke grabbed her corset, getting ready to put it on. The process of fastening a corset was a comfort in it’s simplicity, the constriction, the routine a way to center herself. Brooke loved it for the same reason she loved doing her makeup, the ritual of it straightforward and familiar. The next step however, was tucking, and she was once again confronted with the most embarrassing part of the day. She was half hard in her sweatpants, her dick fat with the memories from the morning, had been since the kiss, since that wonderful kiss. Annoyance and arousal and shame all simmering under her skin.

“Knock knock.”

Brooke turned around, worried she’d see Nina or Detox or even Raja, really anyone who would not only clock but also have no hesitation about teasing her mercilessly for her half aroused state. Instead, it was Vanjie, her boyfriend standing behind her, her face looking like an angel’s with a perfectly painted mug, her body bare except for the black pair of Marco Marco underwear that Brooke knew made her ass look like sin, the only thing falling from her lips the dumbest thing she could possibly say.

“... Did you just say knock knock out loud?”

“You have a problem with that?” Vanjie smiled, and Brooke realised Vanjie could sell her sand in the Sahara. Vanjie took a step forwards, her stuff set up besides Brooke’s at the very end of the long row of racks that had been provided for them. Brooke felt the itch again, the lust, the want, the need to finished what she had started, when she herself had stopped, but what her body so obviously craved, Brooke needing to be sure that Vanjie understood how much she cared for her. “Can I have my outfit?”

“Oh...” Brooke felt like she was pulled back to reality, surprised at Vanjie’s mundane question. “Yes. Yes of course.” Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s outfit, taking the hanger off the rack and handing it to the other. “Here.”

Brooke had expected Vanjie to leave, the two of them never getting ready together, but Vanjie was still there, looking up at her with a strange expression on her face.

“So...” Vanjie bit her lip, the sight beyond distracting, her bright white teeth burrowing into her red and full lips, her voice soft and quiet. “You done being mad?”

“I’m not mad.” Brooke knew she was lying the moment the words had left her lips, or at least leaving out parts of the truth, the arousal still swirling under her skin, making her irritable and annoyed, her entire body humming.

“You’re a shitty liar Brooke Lynn Hytes.” Hearing her full drag name from Vanjie was always an
experience, Vanjie almost never using it, the smaller queen moving into her space, Vanjie poking a finger to her naked chest. “You’re mad.”

Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s head, hands on her cheeks, crashing their lips together, Brooke pouring every emotion she had kept inside into the desperate kiss, Vanjie throwing her arms around her neck, instantly accepting, loving, taking everything Brooke threw at her.

Two small steps, and Vanjie was backed up against the wall, a gasp leaving Vanjie’s mouth as she broke the kiss, their bodies shielded from view by their sisters’ dresses.

“Ssh. Sssh. You have to- Just shut up.” Brooke didn’t know what to do, the sounds of music and chatter so loud Brooke could almost believe they had privacy, at least for a moment. Brooke was just about to tell Vanjie to be quite, the whisper almost over her lips, when Vanjie grabbed her ass with both hands, pulling Brooke even closer, forcing the kiss this time, their chests smashing together, the desperation, the want, the need in the act catching Brooke off guard. There was nothing but instinct, their lipsticks smearing as Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s thigh, hosting her up, her feet leaving the ground, Brooke carrying her weight, their cocks touching, Vanjie breaking the kiss once again, the smile on her face annoyingly cocky, flirty and playful, like she was in control of the situation. Vanjie thrust her hips, Brooke groaning, instantly biting her lip to keep the sound in.

“That ain’t no two kiss boner I’m feeling.” Vanjie was infuriating, her eyes bright with mischief. “Is this why you’re such a sour face? Or should I say sour cock. Poor lil Brooke Lynn.”

“You’re infuriating.” Brooke whispered, their faces inches from each other. “I told you to shut up, just, shut up, please, L-“

“Make me.”

The challenge was clear, and Brooke wanted to do nothing more than fuck the attitude right out of Vanjie, but she couldn’t, not there, not in that moment, her chest constricted by her corset, her ribs pressed together, their friends, their sisters, their colleagues right on the other side of the thin barrier of racks and racks filled with drag.

“Don’t start what you can’t finish.” Vanjie was loud, a force of nature, something almost impossible to control. She was fire, but Brooke was water, and she was not given an inch.

Vanjie opened her mouth, and Brooke did the only thing she could think of, covering Vanjie’s face with her hand, holding her jaw shut with thumb and fingers, the grip secure from the moment she latched on, and Vanjie’s eyes grew wide, a shiver wrecking her entire body with pure excitement.

“What you going to behave now?”

Vanjie nodded, Brooke only feeling the movement because she was holding her head. Getting their cocks free was easy, Vanjie’s hands in Brooke’s pants before she could even tell her, their cocks already wet with precum, but Vanjie knew how Brooke liked it, her hand coming to Brooke’s mouth, Brooke spitting in her palm before Vanjie finally finally wrapped her fist around them, Vanjie’s other hand buried in Brooke’s forearm.

The arousal, the annoyance, the burning itch, all of it disappeared as Brooke fucked into Vanjie’s fist, their cocks touching on every stroke, the slick slide delicious, Vanjie hard against her, Vanjie relying entirely on Brooke holding her up, their gaze locked, and Brooke didn’t think she’d ever be able to look away.

What pushed her over was a single moan, Vanjie sounding so desperate, the sound barely escaping
between her fingers, and Brooke only had a moment to think, removing her hand from Vanjie’s face, catching her mouth with her own, swallowing every sound as she grabbed a towel from one of the racks, only just covering Vanjie’s hand before she came, Vanjie whimpering into her mouth, a deep groan leaving her as she emptied. Brooke broke the kiss, the rush of oxygen, the pure risk of what they just did leaving her lightheaded, Vanjie’s arm sneaking around her neck, holding her close, the towel wet between them, Brooke’s sweats around her feet, Vanjie’s underwear bunched together on Vanjie’s thigh, the fabric stopped by the crook of Brooke’s elbow.

“That was…”

“That was fucking awesome!”

Brooke laughed, a loud, sharp sound, Brooke taken by surprise by Vanjie’s outburst, the entire room growing still, until it burst into complete and utter chaos, everyone yelling and laughing, Detox screaming the loudest of all that they better not have touched her fucking drag from the other side of the racks.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to Meggie and Veronica for betaing.

Don't be shy in leaving a comment, or come talk to either Q-tip or I on Tumblr!
Brooke was a master at damage control, and Vanjie thanked the gods for it. It had saved their asses countless times, mostly because both of them had a problem keeping their hands to themselves in public places.

Vanjie had barely even recovered from her orgasm, still clinging to her boyfriend, before Brooke had pulled up her sweats and detangled them. She calmed Detox down, the other queen relaxing the moment Brooke had explained that they hadn’t touched anyone’s stuff, Brooke effortlessly standing like a shield between Vanjie and everyone else, the tension in the room officially lifting when Silky made a joke about how someone’s stuff had been touched, everyone erupting into laughter.

Vanjie managed to escape somewhat unnoticed, throwing on her caftans and getting back to her makeup table, everyone else still chatting with Brooke on the other end of the room. Everyone except A’keria who was watching her with a smirk, Vanjie seeing the reason the moment she spotted herself in the mirror. Her mouth was a war zone of red and purple, Brooke really going in on the kiss without a care in the world, but most of it was salvageable, her eyes and brows still in place, though her contour had been halfway destroyed by Brooke’s hands on her face.

“Hey.”

Vanjie was blending her foundation as she peeked over her shoulder, spotting Brooke who was standing with a sheepish grin on her face, a disaster of lipstick matching her own, Brooke’s cheeks still dusted with pink. She had changed too, the lilac color of her caftan just as gorgeous as the first time Vanjie had seen it.

“Do you have room for one more?”

Everyone else was hustling out the doors, all ready and finished. Brooke held up her makeup bag and her mirror, and Vanjie realised that Brooke was asking if they could redo their faces together.

“You sure you’re gonna keep your mess to yourself miss thing?” Vanjie smiled.

“I’ll do my best?”

Vanjie pretended to consider it, gently tapping her brush against her chin. It was a true rarity that she had the upper hand in moments like this. Usually the roles were reversed, Vanjie running around like the confused but enthusiastic puppy needing Brooke’s attention more than she needed air, but if there was one person she could never say no to, it was Brooke.

“Good, cause I don’t want you messing up my shit.”

Brooke laughed, and Vanjie moved aside, Brooke sitting down next to her, instantly moving right up against her, their thighs touching. Brooke caught Vanjie’s foot under the table, hooking their feet together, her hand resting on Vanjie’s hip. They never got ready together, their original unspoken pact of keeping a professional distance in the werk room carrying into their lives off the show so naturally they had never discussed it. In their L.A apartment they each had a drag room, the fact that they needed that space as high on their list as room for Brooke’s cats. Vanjie hoped they could possible get a dog too, though they hadn’t found the perfect one just yet, both of them still traveling so much Brooke was sometimes scared Henry and Apollo would forget who she was all together.
Vanjie drew an invisible line down the center of their table, Brooke’s eyes following her finger.

“That’s your side Mami.”

Brooke snorted. “Sure.”

“Here.” Vanjie handed Brooke a makeup wipe, her boyfriend taking it and wiping her chin, Brooke’s palm covered in red from holding her face in place, Vanjie’s cock twitching.

She talked about it loud and proud, Vanjie happily proclaiming to the world how strong Brooke was, sometimes even semi stalking Brooke at the gym to take video of her to brag online, but few knew how fucking hot she found it that Brooke was stronger than her. Vanjie almost lost her breath sometimes at how easily Brooke could pick her up and throw her around, hold her above her head or press her against a wall.

Vanjie grabbed an extra wipe, taking Brooke’s hand and rubbing the lipstick off. She rarely got to be so close at this stage in the process, Brooke peeking into Vanjie’s mirror to make sure the last of her ruined makeup was gone before she plugged her own in, the light turning on. Vanjie picked up her beautyblender, quickly going in with her heaviest duty dermablend, the high temperatures on the cruise making it even more of a struggle to make sure a mug stayed on. Brooke was painting too, her boyfriend touching up with Krylon instead.

“This is nice.”

“Real nice.”

Vanjie pushed one of Brooke’s lipsticks back, her things already migrating past the invisible line.

Brooke had been nominated as the messiest queen with a unanimous vote from the season 11 sisters, and Vanjie would have to agree, though Brooke would defend herself all the way to her grave.

Brock was normally fine, her boyfriend never bringing enough stuff to truly get messy, but Brooke had a way of exploding everywhere.

They had brickered about what makeup belonged to who more times than Vanjie could count whenever they were forced to share space to get into drag. It was the reality of a drag queen’s life that you sometimes get ready in sketchy bathrooms or half broken toilets, which was also why they always tried to avoid working with each other on individual bookings. Vanjie more often than not feeling like she was playing some sick form of memory cards when she was once again sat with two almost identical bottles of pros-aide, trying to decipher from the washed out labels if it belonged to Brooke or to her.

“Just don’t make a habit of coming here.” Vanjie looked at Brooke, a smile playing on her face as she pushed Brooke’s makeup with her hand, Brooke’s stuff already inching her side of the table. “I ain’t got time for your messy ass on the regular.”

Brooke laughed, pressing a quick kiss against Vanjie’s temple. “I love you too.”

/ 

Detox was sure she was going to crack a rib, everyone singing along to “Drag is magic”, Nina somehow managing to make a show with kids music not only entertaining but straight up hilarious as she pranced around on the stage, wearing a giant dinosaur costume and shaking her tail to the chorus.

Brooke was dancing too, her movements most of all looking like a noodle that was waved around in the air. Detox hadn’t expected to have anywhere near this much fun on the cruise, yesterday’s water
fight and today's wardrobe spectacle something she had tucked away in the most secret parts of her heart for a rainy day and when drag wasn’t fun at all.

Detox had known Brooke for years, and considered her a friend, a fierce and formidable but also incredibly uptight friend. Detox used to see it as her duty to loosen Brooke up, to introduce her to the fun sides of life, to make sure Brooke also remembered that life was more than competitions and being the best.

Normally Detox would be doing her all to get Brooke drunk and find her some trade, to make sure she was having fun, but as she watched Brooke hoist Vanjie up, settling the smaller queen on her shoulders so Vanjie could see everything, Detox realised Brooke didn’t need her for that anymore. She had Vanjie now, and probably a dinosaur costume in her near future, if the screams of delight coming from Vanjie were anything to believe.

/ 

“You ready for the stage?”

Brooke looked at Vanjie one last time, his boyfriend a vision in gold. They were sitting backstage, Vanjie going over her cue cards one last time. They had eaten a late lunch, Brooke hitting the gym with Kameron while Vanjie had just taken a short nap in full face. Brooke coming back to their room, gently waking Vanjie with a can of red bull, his boyfriend already bouncing off the walls once again.

“I was born ready.”

Brooke had to agree. He had never met anyone so effortlessly fun, and though Brooke would rather dance an entire performance en pointe without toe nails, he knew without a shadow of a doubt that Vanjie would kill the afternoons entertainment. There were only minutes until the clock struck 10, and one of the most anticipated events of the cruise was about to take off. The Vanessa Vanjie Mateo quiz sold out in minutes the moment the tickets went online. Originally, Brooke had not believed his ears when Vanjie had pitched him the idea, her Silky and A’keria jotting down the outline of it in a single afternoon filled with wine and Chinese food while Brooke had been in Toronto.

“You look it.” Brooke smirked, grabbing Vanjie’s hips and pulling her in. “You always look like perfection.”

“Awh.” Vanjie smiled, running her cards down Brooke’s face. “I think you’re full of it Mama.”

“But is it working?”

“A little too well bitch.” Vanjie leaned down, kissing Brooke, her hand twisted into Brooke’s leather jacket. “You better be keeping those ears open cause I expect you to be the winner of tonight, you hear?”

“We’ll see.”

“Vanjie!” They both looked up, Brooke blushing as one of the stage techs showed their face. There had to be something in the water, or maybe it was just the climate, but Brooke felt unable to keep his hands to himself. “You’re needed!”

“Yes ma’am!” Vanjie threw a thumbs up in the direction of the sound guy, a last smile playing on her lips as she looked at Brooke.

“Gimme kiss?”
Brooke tugged on the gold tassels of Vanjie’s dress, the two of them kissing one last time. “Can’t wait to watch you.”

“You better.” Vanjie laughed, and Brooke released her, the crowds cheer filling his ears before he even truly realised that she was gone.

/H

“Holla’ in the house!” Vanjie slapped her microphone, laughing loudly when the audience jumped. “It’s Miss Vanjie Vanjie Vanjie bitch and tonight, TONIGHT, we’re playing a little game. Y’all always creeping and peeping up in my DM’s and my Twitter, but not today Mary, oh no today It!” Vanjie pointed at herself. “Vanessa Vanjie Mateo gets something!” Vanjie smiled brightly. “In my hand I have a stack of super secret crazy kooky ninja level questions about me and Brooke Lynn’s personal business.”

The crowd cheered, and Vanjie would have stopped, but she was already on a role.

“The rules are real fucking simple. You guys get it right, I take a shot! B-U-T, if you hos get it wrong, y’all have to drink and pay me a dollar. Why you ask? Cause it takes a lot of money to look this expensive, and I wanna take my boo on a proper resort vacation experience, okay? We talking little umbrellas in the drinks and a private beach so I can oogle his junk like I damn well please. We all comprende?! Good! Cause here comes the first question!”

/H

Watching Vanjie on stage was an experience like no other, and Brooke always enjoyed it more than he could put into words. He had tried to explain to once, to explain how brilliant Vanjie was, but even then it had come off jumbled and crooked, not at all justifying the intense pride, warmth and love Brooke felt in his chest whenever he saw Vanjie in her element.

Tonight however, he saw a Vanjie who was rapidly getting more and more drunk as she tossed back shot after shot, her estimation of the stalking capacities of the gays aboard the ship clearly not calculated correctly. Brooke had originally sat on the edge of the front row, laughing along and waving when it was required, making sure that Vanjie could easily spot him if needed, but right now it seemed like Vanjie needed a water, more than she needed anything else.

The crowd laughed, Vanjie taking another shot and Brooke stood up, making a quick line for the bar, brushing past Nina, Raja and Cracker who had all volunteered to distribute shots to the guests.

“Can I have a water?” Brooke grabbed his phone, quickly filming Vanjie who was loudly quizzing a fan on the lyrics to her track “I’m Vanjie.”

“Sure thing stranger.” Brooke looked up, the voice weirdly familiar, and that’s when he realised that he knew the bartender, the blonde hair and striped t-shirt giving it away at once.

“Justin? Hi!”

/H

“Woop!” Vanjie drank her shot. “I didn’t expect y’all hos to be so goddamned clever. This whole thing is blowing up in my face in record speed!” Vanjie laughed.

Vanjie had no idea why she had never done this before, the firing back and forth with the audience making her feel like a regular Alex fucking Trebek. She was losing miserably, but this was still easily the most fun she had had at a gig in a long time when she wasn’t dancing.
Vanjie switched to her next card, a giant smile breaking out on her face. “Alright homos, here comes a hard one.” The room spinning slightly but this was one of her favorite questions of the night, a bonus round she had spent extra time on to make sure she would earn at least a few coins. “What’s the original name, and yes you heard me correctly, of the ballet where my boo thang himself, Brooke Lynn Hytes, was cast as the part of death at the Cape Town City Ballet?”

Vanjie’s eyes swept the room. She couldn’t see Brooke, but she knew she had to be out there somewhere.

“I’m real proud cause I went to the trouble of googling this shit myself. Full Nancy Drew mama, I even got myself a reddit profile and shit so y’all can hit me up on there too, and I did it all on pacific ocean wifi, so you KNOW it’s true love.”

There wasn’t not exactly silence at the question, but there certainly wasn’t any correct answers either. Vanjie heard Coppélia and even Dance Macabre, that fairly enough did show up if you googled ballets with death.

“Still no correct guesses?” Vanjie smiled. “I thought you freaks were all up in his life story, creeping and shit.”

“Is it La Bayadère?”

“Wrong! Also that ain’t dutch my dude, that’s a french name if I ever heard one, but dotcha’ all worry, I’mma be a good judy and let you name the english version!”

Someone shouted Swan Lake from the bar and Vanjie was getting ready to enjoy her victory rain of dollars, when she noticed who else was sitting at the bar, Brooke not even looking at her, his back turned to the stage as he talked to the bartender. The same bartender that he spoke to the day before, fucking Justin smiling at Brooke like he was the most amazing thing that had ever ordered a drink.

“Anyone here knows the english version?!” Vanjie yelled, raising her voice but Brooke didn’t even flinch, didn’t even move. He just stood there, the back of his head looking like he was having the time of his life.

“It’s fucking Vier L…” Vanjie looked at her card. “Vier Letzte Lieder! Everybody! Fill your glass and take a shot.

Everyone was raising their glasses, but all Vanjie could see was Brooke not paying attention to her.

“Yo! Brooke Lynn Hytes!” Vanjie was nearly screaming, but Brooke finally finally turned around, his eyes wide, her microphone nearly redundant at this point. “You know I’m the greatest good you ever gonna get, so you best pay attention boy!”

Brooke lifted his beer, a smile on his face like Vanjie wasn’t funny, like it was all a joke, and Vanjie was burning, anger swirling with the tequila in her stomach. Brooke’s face was not at all like she had imagined when she had written the question, the affection and admiration she had so hoped for now amusement like she was some animal in the zoo Brooke found fun to have around.

Usually when Brooke attended her shows, he was all but rolling on the floor in genuine laughter, and here he was, smiling like she was merely amusing. Despite the churning in her gut and her fingers tightening around the poor, abused microphone, Vanjie kept a brave face on, quickly moving along because if there was one thing she was, it was professional above all else.
“Alright bitch, I’m ready to leave!” Getting off stage was always the greatest relief, the last of the guests herded out the door by the staff that was now walking around, mopping up the floor and putting chairs back in place. Vanjie had taken a lot longer to get off stage than she normally would, her world spinning, taking her lashes off taking three entire tries, and she had every intention of forcing Brooke to shower with her the moment they got back to their room, her chest already rumbling a little at the pure delight of the idea of Brooke soaping up her body and easing away the pains of corset and heels and way too many shots.

“Brock! Where you at?” Vanjie stepped out of her shoes, picking them up and putting them in the gym bag she had stolen from Brooke earlier in the day.

“One second!” Vanjie looked for the voice, her stomach dropping completely when she realised Brooke was still sitting at the bar, her boyfriend’s jacket laid over a chair, the beer bottles multiplied from the day before. “I can’t find any paper.”

“Paper? Why the fuck you looking for paper?” Vanjie walked over, her feet hurting with each step she took.

“I just need a moment baby.”

“I have an idea.” Justin smiled, completely ignoring Vanjie as he wrapped his fingers around Brooke’s arm, quickly pushing Brooke’s jacket up, like it was something he was allowed to do, Justin putting the pen in his hand to Brooke’s skin and very clearly writing down a phone number. “There, now you can call me. I’d love to see-”

“Oh, FUCK, no!”

It all happened so fast. Vanjie grabbing Brooke’s half empty drink and throwing it in Justin’s face, the liquid splashing everywhere, some of it hitting Brooke as well.

“You think you can look at my man like that?! I’m not some dumb ass ho that can’t see shit!” Vanjie voice was so loud Brooke swore the entire ship was looking at them, every staff member still presents stopping dead in their tracks.

“You wanna play games?!” Vanjie threw the glass down, the entire thing shattering against the bar top. “Well let’s fucking play!”

“What the-” Justin wiped his face, the man looking completely shocked, his shirt soaked.

Brooke had seen Vanjie fight before, his boyfriend a ball of emotions, a firecracker that was always ready to go off, but it had never exploded because of him before, and Brooke had a sinking feeling this was all somehow his fault.

“Oh bitch, don’t you try! You’ve been flirting since the moment you saw him! You think we some package deal where you can fuck one of us and we cool? Well guess again! We’re exclusive, bitch! We co-dependent, a restricted area, an invitation only kinda party and my dick is first, last and fucking second on that guest list cause guess what? I can go twice!”

“You’re insane.”

“I’m insane?!” Vanjie grabbed Brooke’s arm, throwing it down on the bar. “Then what the fuck is this?! A number? You don’t do shit like that to another man’s man!!” Vanjie released Brooke,
turning on her heels, rushing out of the room before Brooke even had the chance to collect his composure.

“Jose!” Brooke stood up, ready to run after Vanjie. “I- oh fuck!”

Justin looked down, a thick piece of glass peeking out the top of Brooke’s palm, from where he had planted it flat on the counter.

“Shit!” Brooke grabbed his hand, blood already pouring everywhere.
Chapter 6

Chapter by TheArtificialDane

“Bitch! Open up!” Vanjie hammered on the door, her curled fist meeting the wood over and over again. “I know you’re in there!”

Vanjie knew she was causing a racket, but she couldn’t find it within herself to care. The hotel floor was only her and her sisters anyway, so if any of them had a problem with her making noise, they could suck on it and choke. Vanjie had already knocked down Silky and A’keria’s doors before she remembered they had talked about karaoke. She kicked the door, almost ready to scream in rage. Ariel wasn’t responding, and she was running out of options fast.

“Ariel open the fucking door! Ain’t no way in fucking hell you in there getting dick!”

Vanjie knew she couldn’t go to her own room. Their room. It was the first place Brooke would look for her. Her first and only instinct had been to throw her bag into their room and slam the door behind her, her phone already vibrating like a widow’s favourite sex toy as Brooke was calling her over and over again. Vanjie knew she had made a mistake, but she couldn’t see him right now, her blood still boiling with something even worse going on beneath the surface, tears already pushing to spill from her eyes.

“The stupid motherfucker is going to turn the corner at any moment!”

Vanjie couldn’t see Brooke right now, she just couldn’t, but as long as she was dressed as Vanjie, there was no way she could leave the protected area of their hallway, the idea of her fans seeing her like this forcing her throat to close up.

“Ariel, please.” Vanjie whispered, leaning her head against the door. There was nowhere to run but one of her sisters’ rooms, and she cursed the cruise for forcing this on her. If she had been in L.A she could disappear, go to some straight club and toss down drink after drink, but here everyone knew who she was, and there was no way she would let any of her fans see her like a crazed madman, running from who the public knew to be the love of her life.

Vanjie heard footsteps, her hand gripping the doorknob for one last desperate shake, not yet ready to accept her destiny of blowing up in Brooke’s face once more, when she heard the voice of an angel.

“Are you okay?”

Nina fucking West had just come down the hallway, a washed out Winnie the Pooh tank sliding off her shoulder, pyjamas pants on, boy hair out, a half-eaten burger in hand, and she had never looked more perfect to Vanjie. Nina lowered the burger slowly, her eyes watching Vanjie like she was an animal in the zoo, a dollop of ketchup dripping onto the carpet.

“Are you destroying cruise property?”

“I ain’t destroying no fucking proper-”

Vanjie was cut off when the door opened, Ariel poking her head out. She was wearing a zebra print eye mask pushed into her hair, her chest on full display in an open bright pink and turquoise robe.

“Can youse fuckknobs carry your drama to your rooms so us actual beauty queens can get our beauty sleep?” Ariel groaned, leaning against the doorframe, barely hiding a yawn.
“Oh, so this is how you treat refugees, sis?” Vanjie threw her arms out, Ariel’s detached boredom only refueling the fire in her belly. “You better be fucking lucky baby Jesus didn’t plan to get born in your room, huh!”?

“Well you’re neither a baby, nor Jesus last time I checked.”

“You absolute BITCH-”

“Shit!”

Vanjie felt Nina knock the air of her as she was grabbed, the other queen physically restraining Vanjie and picking her up, carrying her away as Vanjie left behind a string of curses so crude even Captain Haddock would blush.

/Brooke had known, should have known, that Vanjie was smart enough to get rid of her phone, but he had called anyway, over and over again, his heart in his throat as he swiped the card for their room, his worst suspicions confirmed when the room turned out to be pitch black, the outline of Vanjie’s gym bag visible on their bed.

“FUCK!”

Brooke knew no one could hear him, but he yelled anyway, Vanjie’s giant iPhone X clutched in his grip. Brooke pressed the phone, the screen lighting up and he could see his 37 missed calls, his phone bill without a doubt reaching astronomical heights. The background was a picture of them, Brooke holding Vanjie, both of them smiling brightly into the lens, Vanjie’s eyes sparkling with love.

“Shit Jose…”

He had rushed as soon as he could, but they had held him back. Brooke’s hand was throbbing, the bar staff refusing to let him leave until a paramedic had looked at him. He had wanted to protest, had wanted to run after his boyfriend right away, but the staff did have a point, so he had to put on his best behavior, grin and bear it as pieces of glass was fished out of his skin, his left hand ruined. It didn’t help one bit to have Justin there, pelting him with questions about his “psycho” boyfriend.

“Where are you?”

/“You think you can talk to me like that?! Well I’ll let you meet my real good friends! They’re called Lefty and Righty and you bet they’ll be remodeling your fucking face you son of a cocksucker!”

Getting the door unlocked with a cursing and squirming Vanjie over her shoulder, the Latino wiggling like a fish, was a challenge, but Nina had never been anything but resourceful. Vanjie’s bark was a lot bigger than her bite, and Nina could feel the other queen growing heavier and heavier. A sigh of pure relief left her as she managed to get inside, Nina kicking the door shut behind her before she dumped Vanjie down on the bed, the other queen growing completely quiet, a mix of shock and disbelief on Vanjie’s face.

“So. That was intense.”

They stared at each other, Nina’s blue eyes meeting Vanjie’s brown, neither saying anything. Vanjie tried to get up, but Nina pushed her right back down, a firm hand on her shoulder pushing her back
onto the bed.

“What the fuck-”

Vanjie made another attempt, but the same thing happened again, Nina’s palm pushing Vanjie down.

“Take a seat.”

“You’re not the boss of me.”

“I’m not.” The whole thing played out once more, Nina using both hands this time. “But you really need to calm down.”

Having both of Nina’s hands on her shoulders was surprisingly comforting, the heavy weight of Nina’s palms centering and grounding in a way Vanjie hadn’t expected. Her breath was calming down, her heart beat returning to normal. The room was surprisingly cozy and somehow quintessentially Nina, even though it was a hotel room. There were extra pillows on the bed, all of Nina’s stuff neatly unpacked and put away, something neither Vanjie nor Brooke ever bothered to do since they were always on the go, but here, the room almost felt lived in. The ketchup stain on Nina’s shirt caught Vanjie’s attention, the red mark almost making it look like Pooh had been beheaded, the entire thing actually very morbid if you thought about it.

“Feeling better?”

“... No.”

The word caught in Vanjie’s throat, her voice as shaky as she suddenly realised how she felt. It had been sneaking up on her, hiding just under the surface, but Vanjie had pushed it down and then pushed it down even deeper, pouring gallons and gallons of rage on top of it. She wasn’t angry, had never been if she was honest. Instead, she was sad, the sadness so deep it felt embedded in her bones, the hurt from what had happened so sharp she could cut herself on it. Tears welled up in Vanjie’s eyes, Nina’s presence making it impossible to hide.

“I think you should take a shower, get out of drag. Then, if you want, we can talk after.” Nina’s voice was infinitely soft, the wrinkles around her eyes reminding Vanjie of those on her mother’s otherwise youthful face. “What do you say to that?”

“Okay.”

/ 

“Hey, anyone in there?!”

Brooke was knocking on the fourth door of the night. Both Silky and A’keria had been a bust, so he had started working his way from left to right. Raja had responded right away but she hadn’t left her room all night and was high on top of it, so Brooke had left the moment he had gotten the chance.

“Kameron!”

Brooke sighed, giving it one last knock before he walked to the next. Brooke wasn’t much of a detective, but it didn’t take a genius to figure out that Vanjie was still in drag, their room way too clean for Vanjie to have de-dragged, not a single trace of anyone entering in there except for the bag that looked like it had been thrown. The thought was the only thing that kept Brooke sane, panic bubbling under his skin. If Vanjie was still in drag, it meant she still had to be on their floor. There was no way Vanjie would ever risk a fan seeing her this upset. She cared about her image and her
fans way too much, her love for them so genuine Brooke was almost surprised by it at times, Vanjie never leaving a meet and greet or a performance until she was sure everyone had gotten what they came for, even if she was tired to the very bone.

Brooke moved to the next door, his fist almost connecting with the wood, when it was pulled open, Ariel standing right in front of him, looking more pissed than Brooke could ever remember seeing her before.

“What?!”

Brooke knew he should probably ask, inquire as to why his sister and friend appeared to be having a terrible night, but he couldn’t concentrate on anything but one all-important question. Not with his own personal night of hell taking place.

“Have you seen Jose?”

Ariel crossed his arms. “Why?”

“I have to talk to him.”

Ariel looked at him, and Brooke felt like he was being scrutinised, Ariel staring as if she was unveiling his soul, taking a peek at his innermost self.

“She left with Nina.” Ariel sighed, standing up. “I think they’re in her room.”

Brooke hugged Ariel, the other queen losing her breath as Brooke almost crushed every bone in her body.

“Thank you.” Brooke smiled. “Thank you thank you thank you.”

Brooke released Ariel, taking off in a run, the only thing on his brain one simple sentence.

/I’m coming baby./

Nina had the opening scene of Lilo and Stitch playing, the movie one of Nina’s favorites, when Vanjie returned from the shower. Nina had just thrown the first and the best from his dresser at Vanjie, which had turned out to be a Minnie Mouse shirt. Vanjie looked like a child, the fabric reaching his knees, his arms tucked behind his back, even his expression matching the outfit since Vanjie looked like a ten-year-old boy that knew he was in trouble.

Nina held a plate forward, presenting Vanjie with the pizza she’d ordered while Vanjie was showering.

“No burger?” he asked, approaching the bed like an animal with its guard up.

“Lost my lust for it,” Nina didn’t mention how she had dropped it in the hallway when she was trying to keep Vanjie from knocking out Ariel’s fake teeth, not thinking it appropriate for the situation she was trying to defuse. “Want a slice?”

“Mmh,” Vanjie hummed, grabbing a slice and sitting tentatively on the edge of the bed.

It was rather strange. One minute Nina had seen Vanjie out in the hall, about to tear down any and all walls around him, and the next Vanjie was a wounded baby bird in a severely oversized shirt and pyjama shorts that barely stayed up, seemingly afraid of her. Nina gulped down the last bite of her
“Why are you being so nice to me?” Vanjie asked, his voice is infinitely small. Although confused, Nina could feel her heart ache. If Vanjie was here, with her, instead of being with Brooke, something had to be seriously seriously wrong.

“Are you undeserving of someone being nice to you?”

“Right now I am, that’s for fucking sure.” Vanjie half scoffed, half laughed. “When Brock finds my ass, it’ll be even worse. It’s a real fucking tragedy that’s what it is. Like some greek irony bullshit.”

“You’re hiding from Brooke?” Nina had noticed that she hasn’t seen Vanjie use her phone. The electronic device usually never more than inches away from Vanjie’s hand.

“Why else would I be breaking into Ariel’s room? Just to hang out?” Vanjie laughed, short and crude. “Ain’t nothing good in her room but her collection of highlighters. That shit is intense.”

Nina smiled. “Here.” She had once said on her podcast that dating Vanjie would never be boring, and she hadn’t been proven wrong yet. “Have some more water.”

Vajie took the bottle, tentatively taking a sip. “I ain’t ready to see his face and hear his mouth tell me how I done fucked up.” Vanjie looked at the pizza, taking another slice with a deep sigh. “At least I won’t have to lie about being okay with pineapple on pizza if he breaks up with me.”

Nina wants to be surprised, she really does. But most of all, she’s just confused. “Brooke adores the ground you walk on.”

“Sure bitch.”

“He doe-” A knock on the door interrupts them both, Nina holding her breath as she realised that it had to be Brooke, but Vanjie simply looked at her, almost challenging her to prove that she was right.

/ 

“.. Are you bleeding?”

Brooke looked at his hand, Nina’s concern so genuine he was surprised for a minute. The white bandage was indeed turning red, his excessive knocking cause the wounds to bleed. Brooke honestly couldn’t find it in himself to care. “Only a little.”

Nina had opened the door after two knocks, Brooke’s stomach falling in disappointment when he hadn’t come face to face with Vanjie. Nina looked almost strange, the expression on her face one Brooke couldn’t remember he had ever seen before.

Brooke’s skin was itching to know how his boyfriend was doing. He couldn’t hear any noise from the room besides the TV, no obvious signs of a battle meeting his eyes from what he could see behind Nina. No knocked over lamps or coffee machines, no cracked TV screens or broken chairs. It was quiet. Suspiciously quiet.

“Is he still mad?”

Brooke was used to Vanjie’s moods, his partner’s ADHD showing up so differently from Brooke’s own. Vanjie often exploded in fireworks that fizzled away as quickly as they appeared. He felt everything, his feelings magnified and sometimes to the extreme, but sorrow and happiness shining
so bright that it was sometimes all consuming.

It wasn’t unusual for Vanjie to go off in fits of rage if he was even slightly provoked, their washing machine at home already replaced once after Vanjie had kicked it for changing the color of his favorite hoodie, not recognizing his own fault until after the machine had broken. The whole thing at the bar had been just as explosive, Vanjie firing off and Brooke’s brain had honestly shut down, the entire thing happening so fast he had barely had time to react, everything afterwards a desperate chase to find Vanjie and make sure he was okay.

“Come check for yourself.”

Nina stepped aside, and Brooke walked in, his heart clenching in relief when he saw him on the bed. Nina had obviously gotten to him, all traces of Vanjie washed off as Jose sat on the bed, hair still wet, in an oversized Minnie Mouse shirt and a half eaten pizza between them.

“Love the new look.”

Brooke watched Vanjie’s face, hoping his joke, however bad, would lighten the mood a little. Nina snorted in the background, and Brooke could just imaging the wry smile on her face.

“So.. That whole thing was..” Brooke ran a hand through his hair. He felt incredibly awkward, Vanjie’s brown eyes watching him like a hawk. Brooke had never been one to investigate after fights, had never cared about anyone enough to make up after a fight. “It was kinda crazy, huh?”

“You don’t seem mad.”

“You lost it. It’s okay.”

Vanjie bit his lip, his eyes finding the number that was still written on Brooke’s arm.

“I know how it looks.” Brooke sighed, pulling down on his sleeve, his injured hand aching. “But I promise nothing happened.”

“It looked like something happened.”

“He lives in New Jersey, and I’m in New York in November. We both wanted to watch Balanchine-”

“Bless you.”

Brooke rolled his eyes. “I didn’t sneeze, it’s a ballet. They’re doing La Sou-”

“I know you didn’t sneeze, I’m not fucking stupid.”

“Well you’re acting like it.”

Brooke realised instantly that he had said the wrong thing, his drunken brain getting the best of him, Vanjie shooting up like a lightning bolt.

“What did you just call me?!”

Brooke looked up. He had to, since Vanjie was standing on the bed, the tiny Puerto Rican taller than himself for once, Nina gasping in the background, and Brooke knew he had to act fast.

“We both know you overreacted.” Brooke reached out for the first time, trying to grab Vanjie’s hips to steady his clearly still angry and tipsy boyfriend. “Jose, can we please just call it a night? Please?”
“Overreacted? Overreacted!” Vanjie shoved Brooke’s hands away, his voice growing even louder. “How ‘bout you look real fucking close, cause you ‘bout to win an Oscar for underreacting! I might have thrown a drink and I might be fucking stupid, but at least I ain’t no fucking eyefucker!

Brooke groaned, his own rage growing. He knew he should be sensible, that he should pull back towards sanity, but he just couldn’t help it. Tequila was one powerful foe. “I haven’t eyefucked anyone!”

“Don’t you lie, I was there when y’all was talking about that fucking book!”

“My hand was /literally/ in your shirt!” Brooke wanted to tear out his hair, his frustration so rich he had completely forgotten Nina was even in the room. “I introduced you as my boyfriend. What more do you want?!”

“For you to realise what that word means and be fucking loyal!”

“Everyone knows I belong to you!” Brooke grapped Vanjie’s shirt, his fist cluthing the fabric, his voice low with venom as he spat. “Should I wear a fucking collar? Would that make you happy?”

Brooke pulled at Vanjie, their faces so close Brooke could feel each breath “Property of Jose Cancel, or is that not recognisable enough for you? Should it be Vanessa Vanjie fucking Mateo instead?!”

It briefly crossed Brooke’s mind that this wasn’t right, that this wasn’t how all those relationship courses on youtube had taught him to deal with an argument, but he couldn’t find it in himself to care.

If you asked, Brooke wouldn’t be able to tell who moved first, but suddenly they were kissing, Vanjie’s hands in Brooke’s hair, teeth, lips, tongues all crashing together in a thunder of emotion, rage and lust, a battle for dominance that screamed to the sky, neither of them even noticing the door slamming behind them, Nina making a run for it at the first chance she got.
Chapter 7
Chapter by TheArtificialDane

Chapter Summary

This is the last chapter of Cruising for a bruising. Thank you to everyone who has read along, and both Q-tip and I are beyond great full for every comment, kudos and interaction we have received!

It was hot and heavy, angry and dangerous in a way Vanjie barely recognised. They were fighting, bodies expressing what their words couldn’t say, rage crashing together until Vanjie gripped Brooke’s hair, ripping into curls, forcing his head backwards, Brooke moaning, broken and desperate.

“You belong to me.” Vanjie wasn’t used to saying it so directly, the words burning on his tongue, but he meant every syllable. “You’re mine.” It was intoxicating, Brooke’s complete attention washing over him, power coursing through his veins.

“You don’t own me.”

Normally Vanjie would back down from Brook’s disagreement, let his partner lead. Brooke so sure on his feet, showing the way. He would agree with whatever, just to be done with it, but not here, not now, not when white hot anger was roaring in his belly. “Yes I fucking do.” Vanjie pulled again, almost tearing the hair from the roots.

“I hate you.” Brooke spat the words, both of them knowing it was a lie.

“I hate you more.”

Vanjie kissed him again and Brooke grabbed his knee and pulled, both of them falling on the bed, Brooke landing on Vanjie, knocking the air from his lungs. It was a flurry of fabric as Vanjie fumbled with Brooke’s belt, desperate fingers pulling his white t-shirt and taking it up up up until Brooke finally let go and raised himself up, sitting back on his knees, pulling his shirt over his head and Vanjie lost his breath. Brooke was breathtaking, his hair an utter mess, strong arms raised above his head as he threw away the shirt, lips already bruised.

“Hurry up.”

Brooke almost growled, and Vanjie felt chills run over his body.

“Shut it.”

It was nothing like the playful tone from earlier, Brooke telling him to be quiet in the wardrobe, his plea sprinkled with desperation. Here it was hard, merciless, cold and Vanjie shivered in delight.

“You’re a fucking psycho.”

Brooke laughed, short and cruel, his voice filled with venom.
“I’m the psycho?” Brooke leaned over Vanjie, looming like a dangerous animal, his hand fisting in the fabric of Vanjie’s shirt, pulling him up, the only thing holding Brooke up his left arm, the muscle working and straining right next to Vanjie’s head, and Vanjie was once again reminded of how small he was, how he was here entirely at Brooke’s mercy. Their safeword FLEW through his mind, almost leaving his lips, but Vanjie swallowed it, Brooke’s gaze holding his own. “You’re a fucking liar Jose.”

“I’m no-”

“You are.” Brooke’s body was so heavy, pinning him down.

“If I’m a liar.” Vanjie spat. “You’re a whore.”

Brooke snorted, his leg moving and Vanjie groaned, Brooke’s thigh on his cock, pressing down down down, bordering on painful, and Vanjie knew that this had nothing to do with his pleasure, but his cock was so hard it had a heartbeat of its own, his body pulsing, his lungs too big for his chest, his eyes falling shut.

“Apologise.” Vanjie felt Brooke’s hand twisting the fabric, raising him off the bed, the t-shirt almost creaking so loudly Vanjie can hear it. He was suspended above the bed, Brooke carrying his entire upper body in one single sure grip.

“Apologise Jose.”

Vanjie whined, turning his head. He felt so weak, like a newborn kitten, but he wasn’t backing down. Vanjie opened his eyes, brown and blue meeting each other as Vanjie spat his words.

“Fuck you.”

Brooke slammed him down, and Vanjie hit Brooke’s arm, the other man falling, both of them tumbling around, nails marking, teeth biting, skin sliding against each other in a desperate search for friction and dominance. A battle of wills that lasted right until the blinding white of coming, raw and needy and angry, Vanjie falling on Brooke so exhausted every bone in his body hurt, the darkness of night taking him before he had a chance to soothe the wounded animal inside, Vanjie clinging to Brooke as he slipped away, sleep giving him a break he wasn’t sure he deserved from the fight that was wreaking havoc on one of the most important things in his life.

/ 

“Ow!” Brooke woke up due to a terrifyingly accurate kick to the softest part of his shin. He swore, eyes shooting open to lock with Vanjie’s. The other man was just lying there, looking at him as if he was just some stranger that he woke up next to. Like Vanjie’s hair wasn’t sticking in all directions and his chest wasn’t covered in red marks, Brooke own body matching, both of them clawing at each other just hours before, Vanjie attempting to mark him like a branded cow, stopping just short of pressing burning iron into his skin, though Brooke was sure would have if the opportunity had presented itself.

“What?” Brooke asked. The indifference on Vanjie’s face, no matter how fake Brooke knew it was, made his stomach fade with anger once again, the fact that they had fallen asleep, bodies pressed against each other, Brooke’s cum still on Vanjie’s thighs, apparently not making a difference.

“We gotta get back to our room.” Brooke looked at the balcony. It was pitch black outside, and he knew Vanjie was right, the fact that they had effectively chased Nina from her own room momentarily making his chest clench with guilt, but then, Vanjie continued speaking. “You have to
take your meds in the morning.”

Brooke felt his heart break, Vanjie’s attitude forcing him to think of ditsy secretaries that spend their work day filing nails and popping bubblegum, the clear lack of interest cutting him to the bone, Vanjie normally so diligent and caring in helping him remember his medication.

Brooke rolled over. “Maybe you should take your meds,” he huffs, “so you don’t throw a tantrum again.” Brooke didn’t mean to, but it came out harsh, his voice sounding more like a growl than the exasperated sadness he felt inside

“You fucking bitch.” Vanjie kicked his legs over the side of the bed, sitting up with his back to Brooke. “You know damn well that my meds have shit to do with that.”

“Yeah, well.” Brooke sat up. “Apparently I’m the only one who knows anything around here.”

Vanjie turns to look at him. “Oh, cause you’re so clever? You never do anything wrong.”

“Babe.” Brooke sighed, resting his elbows on his knees, head in hands. The wound in his palm is stinging, the paramedics warning him that he shouldn’t have left, but he had still chosen to, the white bandage soaked in red. “Let’s just go to our room, take our meds in the morning, and stop acting like children.”

“I ain’t no fucking child. I’m not the one who’s running around like a middle school girl with ten fucking boyfriends.”

“Jose. Please.”

The response is a huff, and then they’re both on their feet, shuffling around the room to collect their clothes, Brooke quickly finding his underwear, throwing Vanjie Nina’s Minnie Mouse shirt. Vanjie holds it up in front of him, a deep frown taking over his face.

“Shit.”

There’s a tear from the collar down to about mid chest - definitely too large for Brooke to fix with a thread and needle. It looked like Minnie’s head has been cracked wide open, and Brooke cringed, already worrying about Nina’s reaction.

“We’ll get her a new one,” Brooke tried, tone neutral in an attempt to de-escalate the situation as he picked up his own shirt and slipped it on.

“Another 90th anniversary edition t-shirt?” Vanjie deadpanned, turning the shirt around, and there it is indeed, a big, golden emblem with 90 written within, 1928-2018 printed below.

“They have to have it on Ebay.” Brooke shrugged, though his mind was racing away, already trying to come up with anything he could say to Nina that could somehow make this okay again. “We’ll just split the cost.”

“I’m pretty sure you’re the one who ruined it.”

“Is that really what you want to discuss right now?” Brooke took another deep breath, trying to stay focused. “There’s more important things to-”

“More important than Nina’s Disney shirt collection?” Vanjie snorted, but the tension in the room made his attempt at humor fall flat, Brooke barely feeling any of the usual warmth that filled his chest whenever Vanjie turned that blinding smile in his direction. “Depends on which bitch you ask.”
Brooke picked up his jacket, holding it out to Vanjie. “Here.” Normally, Vanjie would accept it without a single pause, but now, he just looked at it, eyeing it warily. “It’s not gonna hurt you, just—” Brooke pushed it into Vanjie’s arms. “Just wear it.”

Vanjie shrugged, and Brooke stepped forward. He was sure that Vanjie would roar at him to get away, but instead he was allowed close. Brooke raised a brow, silently asking if he could place the jacket on Vanjie’s shoulder. His mouth had gotten him in way too much trouble, and he wasn’t going to open it again when they were finally standing so closely together, Vanjie like summer weather, ready to brew up a storm at any moment.

Vanjie rolled his eyes, hands dropping to his sides, Brooke putting the jacket on him, his eyes catching on the red of Vanjie’s chest.

He was so distracted he barely heard the gasp, Vanjie grabbing his hand and holding it up.

“What the fuck happened?”

Vanjie’s voice was thick with worry, his thumb running over the bandage, barely touching it, like he was afraid he’d hurt Brooke if he wasn’t delicate. Brooke smiled a sad half-smile, the entire situation so close to being touching and heartwarming, Vanjie’s semi-conscious comfort all he truly wanted, if only it didn’t sting so badly, if only they weren’t still having one of the worst arguments in the herstory of drag queens dating each other.

“Why are you bleeding?”

“I—” Brooke hesitated. He didn’t want to bring up what had happened at the bar after Vanjie left, knowing all too well that it would only bring everything back to the surface, the truce between them as thin as winters first ice. However, brushing it aside, or even lying about it, would only serve to escalate the situation if the truth rose to the surface.

“I cut it on a piece of glass, after you…” Brooke gestured vaguely, unsure what to say. “Left.” He knew it wasn’t perfect, but it was all he could think of. If he hadn’t still been mad, confused and even a little scared of the tension between them, he would have wrapped his arms around his boyfriend.

“I did this to you?” Vanjie’s voice was so tiny, choking up in a way Brooke had so rarely heard.

“What?” Brooke grabbed Vanjie’s arm, his fingers digging in. “No! Jose, you didn’t throw any glass at me, remember?”

“But I broke it,” Vanjie looked up, their eyes meeting, tears collecting and threatening to spill. “If I hadn’t broken it, you wouldn’t have been hurt.

“I was inattentive, I didn’t look and I touched the bar. It went through my palm but it’s not your fault.” Brooke held on even tighter, hoping, praying, that Vanjie would understand. “I was rushing to go after you, and I was an idio—”

“That’s why you didn’t come,” Brooke could see the realization draw on Vanjie’s face, his voice back to the barely audible mumble as he basically whispered. “I thought you were too pissed to chase after me.”

“I wanted to. I really did.” Brooke bit his lip, pulling back, hands ending up at his side now that Vanjie was zipped in. “The paramedics told me I should probably have stitches..”

“Please tell me you didn’t skip them?” Vanjie scoffed, and Brooke was unsure if he was being scolded, or if Vanjie was angry with himself.
“I had better things to do.” Brooke saw his jeans, thankful for any opportunity to get away from Vanjie, to lick his wounds as he slipped into them, one leg at a time.

“Cause getting in a fight with your boyfriend is more important than taking care of your fucking health?” Vanjie tilted his head, crossing his arms over his chest.

“The fight wasn’t exactly part of the plan.” Brooke huffed, annoyance rising yet again at Vanjie’s inability to see where he was coming from. “I wanted to check on you. Make sure you were okay.”

“Well, congrats on a job horribly done.” Vanjie sneered, teeth bared like a wild animal. “You’ve proven to be pretty fucking shit at making sure I’m okay.”

“Oh I’m bad at making this work?” Brooke snorted. “At least I tried. At least I’m trying.” Brooke realised he was ready to leave, Vanjie having pulled his shorts on when he wasn’t looking. “You have the keys.”

“You’re a terrible boyfriend.” Vanjie sighed, digging into the pocket of Brooke’s jacket, pulling out the room key and handing it to him.

“Excuse me?” Brooke huffed indignantly.

“You ain’t good at comforting, you flirt with other boys, you’re out here buying clothes behind my back when I would have been the world’s best shopping assistant.” Vanjie stopped talking, clearly amused at the shock Brooke knew he hadn’t been able to keep off his face. “Oh? You didn’t know I knew? Well guess what. I did.” Vanjie looked Brooke up and down. “Who knows what other dirty little secrets you got pitter patting around in that head of yours.”

“We’re grown men.” Brooke put on his shoes.

“You sure don’t act like it.”

Brooke sighed, taking one last look around the room. “I don’t have any dirty little secrets.”

“Don’t lie.”

“Oh? You think I’m lying? Guess I never do anything for you. I only think about myself, and lord knows I’m having several affairs. It’s just part of my selfish nature, I guess.”

“Brock-”

“No, you’re right.” Brooke powered through, cutting Vanjie off before he even had a chance to speak. “I’m a shitty boyfriend,” The words stung, his eyes watering from voicing every horrible thing he had ever thought about himself when he had been at his lowest lows. “I’m selfish, arrogant, a stuck up bitch. Someone who’s just waiting to betray your trust. Isn’t that what everyone is saying? That I’m not good enough for you.”

“Come on,” Vanjie said, his entire body shrinking. “Stop.”

“Why, Jose?” Brooke sneered. “So you can tell me everything I’m doing wrong? That I like ballet and classical music and literature, because I want to be better than everybody else? That I bought new clothes so everyone else would -“

“You made me feel like a fucking idiot, okay?!” Vanjie shouted, and Brooke stopped dead in his tracks.
“When you were talking to Justin, I felt like thin fucking air,” Vanjie said softly. His head was downcast, Vanjie looking so much like a broken kid that Brooke felt like crying. “You talked to him about all this stuff that I don’t know nothing about, and you made me feel so stupid. Like, Silky at a salad bar kinda stupid.”

“You’re not stupid.” Brooke bit his lip, his voice low as he carefully voiced the only thing he could think of. “Can we just- let’s just go to our room. Please?”

Vanjie tore off Brooke’s jacket the moment they made it to their room, Nina’s shirt stuffed in his pocket. He was still fuming inside, the night feeling like a trip on the world's worst roller coaster, up and down, down and up and down again, his heart breaking over and over again. Brooke dumped down on the bed, pulling his shirt over his head. Vanjie waited for a beat. Then another, and then yet another one, Brooke not saying anything.

“So, are you just going to pretend none of that just happened?”

“Can’t we be cool for just 10 minutes?” Brooke turned their bedside lamp on, standing up to take his jeans off. “I can’t stand this… mess of emotions between us. I don’t know how to do it.”

“You think I do?” Vanjie felt the anger bubbling again, the rollercoaster taking him up, up, up yet again.

“I don’t want to be angry anymore.” Brooke leaned on the nightstand. “I want all of this-” Brooke gestured between them. “to be done.”

“… What?” Vanjie felt like a bomb had just been dropped on him. What had Brooke just said? Did he mean it?

“I don’t want to do this anymore.”

“So, what?” Vanjie’s body shook with a silent, toxic laughter. “We just stop ?” Vanjie sneered even as tears began to roll down his cheeks, hot and angry.

“What? No. Shit. Shit shit shit.” Brooke walked over, grabbing Vanjie like he had already done so many times that night. “I don’t want us to stop.” Brooke looked horrified, like he only just realised what he had actually said. “I want us to stop fighting.”

“You said you want to be done.” Vanjie was fully crying now, fat tears streaming down his face.

“Done fighting ,” Brooke cupped his face, big palms and disgusting bandage against Vanjie’s cheek, but he didn’t even care, everything in him so desperately needing the confirmation that Brooke was there, that he was still with him. “Jose, baby, I’m not breaking up with you. Holy shit. I can’t do anything right, huh? I love you, I love you so so so much.”

“No you can’t you fucking piece of shit.” Vanjie rubbed his eyes, trying to wipe away his tears. A broken but oh so happy laugh leaving him. “I love you too you absolute idiot.”

Brooke laughed as well, and Vanjie felt his heart break for the final time that night as Brooke gently tilted his head, their lips meeting in a kiss. “I’m really really sorry.”

“You better be.”

“Jose-”
Vanjie smiled, his tears obscuring his vision. “I'm sorry too.”

Vanjie spat into the sink, putting his toothbrush back in its place. He was so tired he was sure he could fall over at any minute, his phone telling him it was past 3 am when he had finally pulled it from Brooke’s pocket, the 37 missed calls making another wave of shame wash over him. He had really put Brooke, both of them, through the ringer tonight, though Brooke wasn’t exactly innocent either. Brooke had whispered into his hair over and over again that he was sorry, Vanjie holding him as well as they both cried, the anger finally gone.

They had changed Brooke’s bandage, Vanjie wincing as he saw the wound, Brooke accepting the talking to Vanjie had given him without a single peep, though Vanjie knew he was actually the one who deserved it. It wasn’t okay that he had freaked out in the way that he had, his own insecurities rearing their ugly head so suddenly and loudly that he hadn’t been able to control it. Brooke had scrubbed his arm down, Justin’s number disappearing down the drain, and while it had made Vanjie feel better, he also knew that it wasn’t the end of what they, what he, needed to work on.

Vanjie took one last sip of water, before he made his way into their bedroom, Brooke’s suitcase still filled with the mysterious new clothes that Vanjie knew they had to talk about, though he wasn’t sure he’d have the energy for it right now, even if he had an entire case of Red Bull. Vanjie looked at the bed, fully expecting Brooke to be tucked underneath the covers, but instead, he found him sitting against the headboard, Vanjie’s computer open on his lap.

"What are you doing?" Vanjie knew he had to have a puzzled expression on his face, even as he crawled into bed, their sheets so much more comfortable than Nina’s, even though he knew they had to be the same, simply because they were theirs.

"I found the movie." Brooke turned the screen slightly, and Vanjie could see that he had pulled it up, the entire thing ready to play. “I figured we could-”

"I don't wanna do that." Vanjie leaned against the headboard. He was touched by the gesture, but in so many ways, it was utterly useless. At least for where they were now.

"... Didn't you buy it for this exact purpose?"

Vanjie wanted to reach out, the confusion in Brooke’s voice so real he could taste it, and thankfully he could do just that, making sure their legs were touching each other.

"I did, but I don’t." Vanjie scratched his head, trying his very very best to choose his words carefully. “I tried so fucking hard Brooke. I tried to care about the stupid-” Vanjie interrupted himself. “Sorry, I tried to care about the… stuff you care about. I even found Lord of the Flies, and then you said no.”

Brooke chuckled, the sound so surprising Vanjie wasn’t even sure he had heard it right.

"What?" Vanjie turned. “What's so funny to you?"

"I just realised that's the first time you've said the title right."

Brooke was smiling, and Vanjie wanted to punch him in the face. "Fuck you." Vanjie had already formed a resolute and firm middle finger, the thing ready to be flipped up, but Brooke caught his fist.

“I was tired, and I just wanted to go to bed.” Brooke squeezed Vanjie’s hand. “I didn’t realize I had hurt you that badly.”
"You don't realize a lot of shit."

“Maybe you’re the one who doesn’t realize a lot of shit.” Brooke closed the laptop, turning slightly in the bed, so he was looking at Vanjie. “Jose, you’re the only one I want to be with.”

Vanjie huffed, barely even realising he wasn’t trusting Brooke’s words, until Brooke squeezed his hand again. “I’m not going to be with anyone else, and I can’t make you trust my words, but I can tell you that...you're the only person in the entire world that I want to fight with.”

Vanjie laughed, Brooke’s words taking him by absolute surprise. “Guess you proved that tonight, huh?”

“I think we proved it tonight.”

Vanjie rolled his eyes, but he stayed perfectly still.

“You’re the only want I want to fight with, when it comes to how you say sequins in plural. I want to listen to you spend an entire dinner dramatically retelling me every detail of whatever soap you’re watching with Alexis, not because I’m ever going to watch it, but because I care about you. I love you Jose, your crazy brain and your conspiracy theories included.”

“You’re still going to take me to that fucking Balanchine show.”

“Bless you.” Brooke smiled, and Vanjie laughed.

“You’re the actual worst.”

/ 

“Fuck!”

Brooke looked over his shoulder, almost startled at the fog horn that had just went off. He had simply pulled the curtains back, something many people did each and every day, but Vanjie looked like someone had just pissed on his mother, both hands covering his eyes. Brooke was still tired, his every bone aching, but they had a long day in front of them, even if they had been up for most of the night.

“What the heck, you trying to kill me bitch?!”

Brooke laughed, his boyfriend, the wonderful man that was actually still his boyfriend, ever the dramatist. “A little sunlight isn’t going to kill you.”

Brooke had already been up for a while, showering, taking his meds and brushing his teeth. He had their first aid kit in hand, the bandage not as badly soaked as the night before, but there were still clear traces of blood in the white gauze.

“No, but the view might.” Vanjie smirked, looking out between his fingers. Vanjie was starring with unapologetic glee, his gaze wandering over Brooke’s naked body, and for a moment he felt almost self conscious. Brooke left the curtains, creaking the window open for good measure before he crawled back into bed.

Brooke had no idea how he had gotten so lucky, how someone could look at him like this, with the bruises and extra flab that came from doing drag on the road, could look at him in his awkward morning glory, limp dick and all, and still find him attractive.
“Move.”

Vanjie groaned, but it seemed like he had given himself over to his new destiny of being forced to endure the fact that it was morning. Brooke lifted the blanket, sliding in next to his boyfriend, his arm bent so he could rest his head on it, their legs touching as Vanjie made himself comfortable immediately, resting his head on Brooke’s arm as if he owned his body, and if Brooke was honest; he absolutely did.

“I need your help.”

“Mmh?”

Brooke nudged Vanjie slightly with the first aid kit, Vanjie turning and grabbing it, forcing Brooke’s hand into the air as he removed the dressing from the day before.

“This is almost kinda kinky.”

Brooke snorted, Vanjie always and forever surprising him. “If you find this hot, I’m going to need a safe word of my own so I can give this a hard, hard, hard pass.”

Vajie rolled his eyes and rolled over, taking Brooke with him as he forced the other to cuddle with him, Brooke slowly nodding off. He knew they would be late for breakfast, but he honestly couldn’t find it in himself to care. Vanjie was in his arms, his boyfriend going through his morning ritual of checking every social media platform under the sun. Brooke’s phone was buzzing away on the floor as Vanjie was tagging him left and right instead of showing it to him on his own screen like a normal person.

“Wake up.”

“I’m not sleeping.”

“We’re gonna miss breakfast.”

“Mmh.” Brooke sat up, Vanjie already out and getting dressed, his boyfriend pulling on a lilac hoodie and white shorts. Brooke looked at his suitcase, all the new clothes there suddenly taunting him.

“Here.”

Vanjie threw him a top, and Brooke caught it. He held it up, recognising it as his red hoodie. “You want me to wear this?”

“Sure? Isn’t it one of your classics? Keeping it tight for the hytes and shit?”

Brooke laughed, slipping into it as Vanjie threw a pair of shorts his way too. “You don’t want to pick any of the new stuff?”

“No.”

“You sure?”

“You’re being awfully insistant miss thing.” Vanjie looked at Brooke, and Brooke suddenly realised he had never explained. “You sure you’re not hiding any of those dirty little secrets?”

“I bought them for you.” Brooke blurted it out, barely even realising he had said it.
“That’s real sweet of you, but I don’t wear floral, and there ain’t no way I can fit in a large-”

“No, not for you. I got them...” Brooke bit his cheek, suddenly realising how stupid it sounded. “I got them for photos.”

“For photos?”

Brooke stood up, pulling on his shorts, the fact that he hadn’t bothered with underwear not even crossing his mind. “So I don’t always wear the same stuff.” Brooke stood up, slipping on the shorts. “You know, on your Instagram.”

Brooke tied the string, fully expecting a response from Vanjie, but when he got nothing, he looked up to see his boyfriend frozen on the spot, cologne bottle and cap in hand.

“You did this for me?”

“And me I guess, if we’re being totally honest.” Brooke bit his lip. “I was just tired of embarrassing yo-”

Vanjie shot into Brooke’s arms, the smaller man jumping, legs and arms clinging to him like a koala as Vanjie kissed him, both of them falling into the bed, Vanjie attacking him with nothing but love for the first time and eager, sloppy kisses.

/ 

“Did you hear anything last night?”

Nina bit her lip. “No. Not a peep. Did you?”

A’keria smirked, and Nina knew exactly what A’keria was referring to, though she was pretty sure her friend believed she was the one who had had a round of whatever marathon monkey sex Brook and Vanjie had engaged in. They were all having breakfast, Nina sitting with A’keria as she was used to, A’keria making her way through her bowl of cereal, and while Nina would usually have been devouring her small tower of croissants, she hadn’t been able to this morning. She had made a run for it as soon as she could last night, unsure if Brooke and Vanjie were going to tear each other’s heads off, or fuck their way through the floor. She had sought refuge in Ariel’s room, the brunette for once actually opening her door which Nina had been beyond grateful for.

Everyone else was at breakfast, except Vanjie and Brooke, and Nina was slowly but surely tearing her way through her pastries, the delicious treats getting turned to a mountain of flakes on her plate, when Brooke and Vanjie finally entered the room, the two walking hand in hand and heading directly for the breakfast buffet. A’keria finished her food, leaving with a smile to Nina, before Brooke and Vanjie sat down, both carrying matching trays of food.

“Hey.” Brooke was the first one to break the silence, and Nina was about to explode with curiosity and worry.

“Hey.” She tried to keep her face in place, answering Brooke’s greeting, but then, Vanjie smiled, and Nina swore she felt a stone drop from her heart, all three of them laughing together, Nina possibly the loudest out of all of them. She reached out, grabbing both of their hands.

“I’m so glad you guys figured it out.”

Brooke nodded, a small smile playing on his lips. “Me too.” Brooke was practically radiating, and Nina felt her heart sing, except when she noticed the flicker in her friend’s eye.
“... Where is the poop Brooke?”

“What makes you think there’s a poop?” Brooke took a sip of his coffee, very obviously looking anywhere but directly at Nina. “Vanjie and I are amazing, it really helped to talk things ou-”

“Where is the poop Brooke?”

“I’m not-”

Vanjie laughed, and Brooke sighed. “Fine. Fine.” Brooke put his cup down, Vanjie gently nudging his shoulder, and Brooke looked directly at Nina. “So.. I was just wondering.. What size Disney shirt do you wear?”

Nina felt like a bucket of ice cold water had been dumped over her. “No. Please don’t tell me-”

“Large? X-tra large?” Brooke searched her face, his blue eyes watching her every move. “Medium? Nina do you use a medium?” Brooke bit his lip. “You just need to nod.”

“I really hope the makeup sex was beyond amazing.”

Vanjie smiled. “Oh don’t worry. It was.”

End Notes

Thank you for reading this first chapter of a love child story made by Q-tip and I, all based around Brooke bringing so few clothes on Drag Race, that production went out and shopped for him.

Please come chat to us both at Tumblr at @ArtificialQtip and @TheArticialDane where we're both sharing our love for Drag Race, and Branjie is particular!

Also a huge thanks to VeronicaSanders, the actual angel who has edited this monster without caring about any of the queens in it, haha.

We can't wait to hear from you!

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