sclera

by alovelyvixen

Summary

The second that he was able to comprehend how other people were feeling, his mother asked him to never make eye contact. It was a scary thing, and other people would agree. She told him he had bright eyes; They were full of happiness and dreams, and she wanted to keep them safe.

He didn’t listen.

Notes

wow!! i posted a story !! this has upcoming chapters, as it is a story, so please anticipate those, i hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Jaemin was rushing from his class to the next one, as always. His eyes were shifted down, only to be able to see the feet in front of him and not make eye contact.

Ever since he was younger, teachers and such would tell him to look up, and to make eye contact because it was respectful. All the other kids would look adults in the eyes when they talked to them, to show that they were not insubordinate to their authority. Jaemin greatly appreciated anyone that took the time out of their day to aid him in developing. Nobody was able to tell, though.

The second that he was able to comprehend how other people were feeling, his mother asked him to never make eye contact. It was a scary thing, and other people would agree. She told him he had bright eyes; They were full of happiness and dreams, and she wanted to keep them safe.

He didn’t listen.

All of the children were terrified of him. There were endless rumors spread around about what he did to people, or what he would do if you talked to him, or what would happen if you looked into his eyes. They soon began calling him ‘No-Face’, and concluded that he was a creature, not a person. It followed him even now, into high school.

Jaemin hated normal eyes. Normal eyes were judgmental and they had so much hatred in them when he caught a glimpse. The pupils would narrow and grow smaller with anger, and double in size with prudence. Most eyes were plain brown, or blue, or green, and he hated it. Normal eyes were all over the place and were put on a pedestal for being beautiful and simplistic. The eyes that he looked into the mirror and stared back at were petrifying and unbearable.

Teachers understood when he began packing up minutes before class ended, then sped out the classroom the moment the bell dismissed them. Nobody wanted to bump into him or see him, and he felt the same way. The hallways may not be entirely empty, but enough that he could go through to
his next class. When he quickly walked down, people would move. Out of a high school of 2,000 students, there was not one that didn’t know his name, whether it was Jaemin or No-Face.

Though, nobody called him Jaemin. He would say that the only people who knew his name were those in his classes, but still referred to him as No-Face.

His mother was furious when she realized that he was being ostracized. Being someone who loved him all his life, she could not understand why they found him to be a monster. She did not have his eyes, as he had gotten them from his father.

They were the only pair of normal eyes that he loved. Every time he looked into them, they beamed with love, and happiness, and they sparkled as she spoke to him.

He told her that he didn’t mind it. They left him alone most of the time, and he was able to get an education. What she was worried about was being alone, but that was the least of his concerns. The world had proved to be horrible, and he didn’t want any part of it. As for the rest of the time, bullying was nothing new to him. You were brave, or tough, if you stood up to No-Face. It was almost as if you were slaying a dragon.

When he came home with bruises or cuts on his face, his mother would cry silently while he lay down and she nursed his wounds.

A nasty rumor once went around, that a group of freshman from another high school were planning on gouging his eyes out. Such a threat, unfortunately, was not new to him, but in such a large scale, he was terrified.

He didn’t see the outside world for a while, as they tracked down the group and tried to prevent any harm from coming to him. Adults saw him as an endangered species, and wanted to keep him on
display. All of them were still scared, though. Humans are scared of lions but they keep them in cages to look at.

That month was the best month of his life. No outside world. It felt like he was a happy kid again, and that he was able to live his life as if nothing was wrong.

The rumor turned out to be true, and a restraining order was put into place. These kids were psychopaths, soon to be killers, and they wanted to get rid of No-Face. Once he was back in school, he learned that they were put in a special institution. He wouldn’t ever have to face them again.

Though, after he came back, they found he had developed a weak spot. So many people wanted to stare at his eyes, but he never looked up. ‘Jaemin!’ They would call to him in class, just like his mother did, and he looked up. His ‘peers’ were using his own name against him. It didn’t take long for him to realize what he had succumbed to and eventually stopped.

Life resumed as per normal for him months later, and he continued to live as No-Face Jaemin.

His birthday came around, and he was turning eighteen. Though, he was nearing the end of his junior year. Because of the various incidents that would occur, he would miss months of school, and was already late starting school because of all the adjustments to be made. The gap wasn’t too big, because some people were also eighteen, but it just made him that much more different.

Jaemin stared at himself in the mirror, cross-legged. His face had matured quite a bit. If he covered his eyes and peeked through them, he was sure that people would consider him handsome. In fact, that’s how he would judge himself when he looked in the mirror. Now that he had grown, his body was filled out and he was able to look at his body with pride. He had never had issues with self esteem - other than the obvious - but it was nice that he was growing to be more handsome. His black hair made his eyes look more pronounced, especially the way that it curled and framed his face.
He moved his hands away from his face and looked himself in the eyes. The light from his window made them look glossy, and reflected off from where his ‘pupil’ was. They were an opaque shade of black all over, almost matching his hair. When he blocked out the rest of the world, he, too, found them beautiful.

The glossy vantablack eyes that stared back at him were his. Jaemin smiled at himself and watched as the eyes lightly sparkled a light gray, something that only he was ever able to see.

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Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

jeno and jaemin's first interaction.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Amidst the near summer season, which couldn’t yet be called Spring, Jaemin was studying for his finals. His constant trips to and from the library were something to marvel over. Nobody ever sat at the table that he had, essentially, claimed, because it was bad luck; Whatever the rumors were saying this time. The library was his favourite place. During lunch, the librarian would let him sit behind the desk. Mostly, because the students had scared her so much, that she thought he would do something to her if she told him to leave. Over time, he thought that she would realize he was harmless, but she never did.

The library was also open to the public, so some came to marvel over the boy with the black eyes. It was to their dismay that he never made eye contact or looked up enough that they could catch a peek.

He was studying far ahead of the other students. Finals was not for another month or so, but he wanted to get a boost before the library was swarmed with students and he would have to retreat to the private room that the librarian used as a break room.

Jaemin, ahead in his second class, was on his way to the library. He made haste walking down the stairs, eyes averted as always.

His foot must have caught on something, because he fell on the landing of the staircase. What an inconvenience. After he picked up his laptop that had fallen out of his hands, and adjusted his bag on his shoulders, he looked up to regain his balance.
It caught on someone.

They made eye contact for a second, before he panicked and quickly turned around to continue on.

“Hey!” The person grabbed his arm. Admittedly, he was not scared walking around the halls, or in general, but whenever someone had him in a vulnerable situation, he was terrified. It was a boy, and he was even more affected. Girls could hurt him, but boys could hurt him further. They did hurt him further.

Jaemin narrowed his eyes and pulled away angrily - but more so out of fear.

The footsteps of the boy followed him as he went down the last flight of stairs. At this point, he was on the verge of crying. Last time someone followed him, he had to buy a new laptop.

“Go away!” He spun around and yelled.

There was nobody there. Jaemin looked around and saw the boy retreating back up to the landing of the stairs. Coming down the stairs was another student. The latter two looked around each other in confusion. Better not fuel their minds. He went back off into the direction of the library.

Back in the library, he was so exhausted from the sheer terror of that ordeal that he had fallen asleep
at his table.

When he slept, his mother said he was safe. Nobody could harm him in his sleep. Sleep was a place for dreams; If you were having nightmares, you weren’t sleeping. It was something else.

*You sleep with your eyes closed, Nana. Everyone does. It is simply the way that the body works when it is tired. You are no different than anyone else when you are asleep. We all sleep the same, no matter who you look at. Nobody’s eyes are able to be seen. You cannot see their eyes, or what color they are, or their shape; None of that. Nobody is able to see your eyes, and they cannot judge you. Close your eyes and escape.*

So, falling asleep at school was the most normal thing he could do while on campus. There was some people who wouldn’t be able to recognize him when he was asleep, even. They only looked at his eyes - or rather, his downward gaze.

He missed it when the bell rang, and nobody bothered to wake him, because he was sitting at No-Face’s table. Half a class period went by before he was woken up.

Lucky guess as to who woke him up.

Jaemin was naturally terrified again, because this seemed like he was being stalked. Multiple events had taken place to make him second guess anyone that ‘coincidentally’ appeared in random places the same time as him. The boy was especially intimidating, and gave him an itchy feeling in his stomach, and put a lump in his throat. “Go away.” He figured that it would be easy to scare someone away with such a harmless command. A look in one’s direction would scare someone alone, normally.

“You’re late for third period.” The boy piled up Jaemin’s papers that were spread out across the
table. “I apologize if I scared you earlier, I wanted to see your eyes.”

There was a catch, he was sure of it. Jaemin looked up at him, in the eyes. He hid his shaking hands under the table; If he wanted to see his eyes, he could. That would get him to stop following him, it always worked with curious strangers in public. Fellow students were much different, but this one was different. This kid seemed as harmless as some child in the grocery store. His chest grew tighter with every second he stared, and the other looked at him if he had lost something in his eyes, and were searching for it. Eventually, he reprised his normal averted gaze and shoved all of his stuff in his bag, running out of the library to the bathroom to calm down.

+++ Chapter End Notes

ooo thank y'all so much for liking the story so far! i was scared that nobody would like my idea but hey it be like that sometimes

anyways i plan on updating every friday, lets hope i go through with that. let's winwin y'all
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

jaemin emotions always get in the way.

Chapter Notes

thank y'all so much for liking this i didn't think anyone would like my odd idea that i got from some airport pics skhsghs

i almost forgot to post this,, i was so caught up with superhuman and rewatching awkward. (that show is so raunchy my young mind used to be so corrupted) enjoy the update!

It burned deep in his throat to finally let out his fear. There was no use looking in the mirror and watching himself cry, so he was sitting in one of the stalls, drying the tears that soundlessly ran down his cheeks. Contrary to any idiot’s belief, he cried the same tears as everyone else. When he was scared, he would quietly let them fall with little emotion. If he had too much emotion crying in the school’s bathroom stall, he would make noise and draw even more attention to himself; There were enough rumors about him as it is, even when he walked around with a blank expression.

Jaemin’s jacket sleeves were damp, because he had quite a lot of emotions. Sometimes they would come out, even when he didn’t want it. They had to leave his system one way or another.

One pro about having black eyes was that no matter how hard you cried, nobody could ever tell.

Third period was culinary, which was the worst class. Because of the lack of willing participants for his group, he was stuck on prep. This meant chopping everything, and washing dishes, and cleaning up counters and floors. The only thing he enjoyed was that he could eat the example dish that the teacher made.
Being late just resulted in someone else having to take that job, who was not participating or contributing to their group. Jaemin retreated to the station, and sat on the other end of the table. Any closer, and the student might have flipped out.

He recalls a time before, when he was a freshman taking home economics.

In home economics, you also cook, but only in duos. That teacher was much more strict, and forced someone to work with him. His name was Jiseok. Jaemin liked to let his eyes flick up every now and then to take a look at him. Every day, he would notice something more about him. About two weeks since the beginning of their partnership, he noticed the elegant way his eyes were shaped; Not the eyes themselves, but the shape. They sloped in a way that he had never seen, and he often found himself marveling it the best he could.

Jiseok noticed that he had begun to stare at him. Jaemin would shamefully look away when he caught him, for two reasons: The look he gave him when he caught him was full of disgust and discomfort, and Jaemin stared because he thought he was beautiful. A male.

He’ll never forget what Jiseok told him when he caught him one day, sitting at his table in the library.

’Hey, No-Face,’ Jiseok walked up to him and hit the table a couple times to get his attention. ’Stop looking at me during class, and in general. The semester is almost over, and I expect you to stop before then. I hate it when you look at me with those soulless eyes. It’s appalling, you freak.’

It didn’t break his heart, but it did create a feeling of yearning that made him question a lot. Fantasizing about going around with men was sinful, and he was sure his mother would die from having her son be any more different than he already was. For the time being, he convinced himself that it was just his eyes. He liked his eyes, and that is why he would stare at them. Jiseok’s character and personality, and looks had nothing to do with why he was so infatuated with him.
Jaemin entered the class, and everyone looked at him as, though cooking, stared at him.

“I apologize for being late, I fell asleep in the library, studying,” He said gently, bowing to the teacher.

The teacher sighed and wrote him off, meaning he would only get half points for participation today. It was nothing, considering that grades like that were flawless on his record. “Your partner was more than willing, eager, even, to trade you out for our new student.” A look of pity came onto the teacher’s face. Seeing pity in normal eyes disgusted him.

Though, he knew what that meant. Without a partner, he could not eat the teacher’s example dish, because it would go to the new student, he would not be able to cook, and he would be stuck washing dishes and cleaning up stations. As if his least favourite class could get any worse, he was now a custodian for the students. He collected himself and sat at the stray desk that always lie near the door, preparing to act as the class slave.

It wasn’t until the end of class that he was required to start cleaning and washing dishes, which left him tons more time to study and get work done for other courses. There was even enough time to plan out the coming days.

Approximately twenty minutes before class ended, he started cleaning up messes - that, he may note, were worse than normal to simply give him a hard time - and washing the dishes. Admittedly, he liked working by himself in most cases. It was much more enjoyable than working with someone who he knew feared him and thought of him as something other than human. His mind was at ease, knowing he was not inconveniencing anyone or stressing them out.

On the way back to his new desk, a lot of eyes were on him. And for what?
Jaemin pulled his backpack up onto the desk to put his work away, and was greeted by a torso in his insanely good lower field of vision. He waited to be greeted rudely, or complained to, or bothered for no apparent reason.

Several seconds passed before he was forced to shift his eyes up a bit to get a vague idea of their face.

It was none other than the boy who had bumped into him in the hallway, and woke him up in the library, and made him cry despite just having encountered him.

“What do you want from me?” Jaemin said helplessly, and turned back to his things.

“I’m new? I think I stole your partner from you, I’m sorry.”

Of course it was him. God, he would have to tell his mom about this random new kid following him around - and, more importantly, talking to him. Nobody ever just wanted to talk to No-Face. It made them look weird, and he was surprised that this kid was still walking the halls with other people.

“My partner didn’t want me, I am not bothered,” He pulled out his phone and unraveled his headphones to watch dramas during lunch.

“Hey, I apologize if I’m bothering you. I’m Jeno,” The- Jeno stuck his hand out.
Nobody wanted to be his friend. Nobody wanted to get to know him; They didn’t even want to know something as simple as his name. It did not bother him, but it did when they actually wanted to. Why did they? What was the occasion? What were they going to bother him about this time? What would it lead to? Jaemin wouldn’t trust anyone.

The bell rang, and he turned around and left the classroom without answering Jeno, or even looking at him.

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Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

jaemin's past catches up with his present.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Admittedly, ignoring everyone and averting conversation did nothing to make him seem any more friendly or different than what the rumors said. It was either ignore them - which, did still encourage rumors - or make a fool of himself by trying to prove them wrong. In his youth, that is exactly what he tried to do; Now look at what it had done.

Jaemin loved watching k - dramas, and currently his favourite was ‘The Universe’s Star’. Despite the great nature of death and despair, he looked into the other parts of the plot - excluding the love aspect.

Despite how okay he seemed, he found himself sad. Nobody liked him, and that would not change when he got older, and moved out. That last part was even questionable. In the show, WooJoo was very relatable to his own personal character. Not entirely, though, because he was a celebrity. But, even with tons of money and a set future, he finds life empty and useless. There is no significance to life if you can see exactly where it is headed. As he was progressing through the episodes, though, Byul was saving him, and giving him reason to live. ‘I would love for someone to be my Byul,’ Jaemin thought, before immediately slapping himself.

WooJoo was famous, and admirable. Of course someone would want him; Nobody wanted Jaemin.

He sat behind the return desk at the library, feet kicked up while he watched it. Students would walk by and throw their books on the counter, and, if they were brave enough, in his direction. While he watched, he ate, and it made students mad, until they concluded it is because he scared the librarian into letting him eat.
It was the one time that Jaemin didn’t try to avoid others’ gaze. The screen reflected off of his eyes, and you could barely see that they weren’t normal. Everyone’s eyes were like that. Of course, they recognized him, but had no care to bother him on their own free time.

One of the main characters in the show reminded him of Jeno. Byul’s best friend, Yi - Na, is quite bothersome. Even though she shows up for approximately the length of one episode, she is a nuisance. Though, Byul called her a best friend and was happy around her. Jaemin couldn’t say that about anyone.

The books being thrown at him on the desk were piling up, and falling onto the floor. He was extra into it, considering that she had come back to life to protect him. It was sweet, to say the least.

His feet were knocked over who knows how long later, and he looked up, shocked.

“Keep your eyes down, freak,” A random student had tossed a textbook on the desk and it made a small stack fall. Sometimes he was convinced that students came to the library and checked out books, even just for small intervals of time.

Jaemin narrowed his eyes and pulled the books back on the desk. This didn’t last for long, though. Whilst he was pulling the books back onto the desk and organizing them, a taller, yet younger - but still notably handsome - student grabbed onto the back of his shirt and yanked him so that he fell over the front of the desk. The audacity these underclassmen had, all because of the dumb rumors.

He composed himself and dusted off his clothes like normal, picking up the books. As they went away, the girls swarmed around him were laughing and commending him for bullying an upperclassmen.
“Hey!”

Someone from the library called out and he ignored it. There were tons of people that yelled - despite the fact that this was a fucking library - so it didn’t bother him.

“IT’S JENO!”

At that, he absolutely didn’t look up. Jeno was some sort of trouble. A threat, almost. Yeah, sure, Jaemin had never had a friend before, but it was for a reason. Some new kid, coming to the school, was the most suspicious way to universe could suddenly decide to give him a friend.

“You heard me!”

The books in front of him were picked up. With a glance, it was the person he didn’t want to see. What was he even doing in the library?

“Are you okay? I saw you fall. You were basically thrown over the edge of the desk, and the books-” Jeno stood up, sighing. Still, nothing. Clearly, he was new, because even the teachers ceased to blink an eye when such things happened.

“Jeno, what are you doing? Go eat lunch. I am fine, and the books are fine,” Jaemin paused the show and set his headphones down to organize them back onto the counter.

“Are you sure? I ran in here to see if everything was okay, you know. I was trying to get to the office.”
“You’re lying, because the office is across campus. Anyone would know that,” Suddenly, his voice became harsh and threatening. “Quit following me around and acting like you want to hang around me, or I’ll have you taken out of this school quicker than you were able to get in. Don’t think you’re special just because you’re new.”

Jeno’s eyes went wide, and he scoffed. “Really? You’re the one getting angry at me? That’s what I get for being nice.”

The newly discovered bad side of him must have brought out karma, because another random person, this time a student in his same class, walked up to him.

“Oh, bullying a new kid. No-Face is getting brave,” He grabbed him by the shirt and pushed him to the floor. “This fresh meat isn’t yours to cook. Don’t suddenly think you’re special, and that you can order someone around like how you do in your spare time. You haven’t stopped trying to fit in, I see. Know your place, freak.”

Jaemin was angry, and he looked up to see who it was this time. His throat tightened up. It was a face he hadn’t seen in quite a while.

“I told you what would happen if you looked me in the eyes again,” Jiseok lurched forward to grab him, and some students rushed over to pull him away. How nice, you would think. But no, they were not thinking of Jaemin, they were thinking of Jiseok. They were exclaiming, ‘Jiseok, your record!’ ‘You’ll get a detention, you’ll get expelled!’ ‘He’s not worth it!’ As if he were the victim.

Here was the current bane of his existence, interacting with his former.
“You’re lucky I have a clean record, No-Face.” Jeno was still there with a dumbfounded look on his face, which caught Jiseok’s attention. His lips stretched into a grin. “You don’t know No-Face? You really are new. We’d better get you away. I’ll tell you all about him.” Jiseok slung his arm over Jeno’s shoulder, and they were gone.

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Chapter End Notes

i almost forgot to post again pls forgive me

BIG NEWS: with dnyl coming out i was hit with a big strike of inspiration and i am working to pump out a chensung fic set in that universe,, look forward to it yee yee
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

jaemin reflects on the day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On the drive home, he was thankful for Jiseok. Once Jeno knew about all the rumors, he would leave him alone. It seemed like he was the gullible type. For once, someone knowing didn’t bother him. Jeno was scaring him, so it was better that things be flipped around, so that he was the one scaring Jeno.

“Honey! Wait, look at me,” His mother grabbed his face when they arrived at a stoplight. “You have a bruise on your cheek! What happened this time?”

There was no asking who it was, because if they accused all the time, there would be nobody left in the school. More often than not, they had fake witnesses, too, and the school board was too stupid to think they were lying. He was driven to and from school now for the same reason.

“Someone pulled me over the library desk and I fell into the floor, and some books hit me. I didn’t realize there was a bruise,” Jaemin pulled down the visor and looked in the mirror. There was definitely a bruise, so he must have not felt his face hit the floor or any books fall and hit his face.

She sighed, shaking her head, as always. “You haven’t been getting hurt so much lately, but it seems like they’re getting more violent. Jaemin, I’m getting more worried for you; you haven’t gotten seriously hurt and I don’t plan on that happening.”

I do, he thought.
“When we get home, I’m icing your bruise, and I’m looking for more.”

Jaemin waved her off before looking out the window. They were tinted, so nobody could see inside. It looked just like his eyes, from the outside, except that people liked the look of opaque black ‘eyes’ on a car.

The black-eyed boy lay on the couch, watching a new drama that his mother recommended, while she rested ice on his cheek and on the 3 other bigger bruises.

“Such big books, they’re studying hard, they must be smart. Clearly they are not smart enough to leave my son alone! They haven’t learned human decency!” She exclaimed, angry. Only when he had more than minor injuries to him would she get mad.

“Mom, please, I can’t hear the show,” Jaemin teased her. He was still able to hear her angry remarks, now made under her breath.

The show was a love story. Typical of his mother to encourage him to pursue love with such propaganda. This was not new to him.

He thought for most of the episode, while the cold bags of ice on him numbed his skin and seemed like dead weight. New students never approached him, or talked to him. Sure, they were unaware of the rumors, but were terrified of his eyes alone. The same went for everyone. Over time of being an
outcast, the exclusive ways of society became predictable, no matter what kind of person it was or how they seemed. When it came to such circumstances, everyone was the same.

“There’s someone following me around school,” Jaemin looked down.

“What!” His mother jolted upwards. “How long? Has he done anything to you? I will have to call the school and tell them to look out for him.”

The normal, routine questions to keep him safe. “His name is Lee Jeno. I see him everywhere I go. He’s new. When I was walking to the library, I bumped into him, and I fell. I fell asleep in the library, and he was there to wake me up. He is in my culinary class, and he stole my partner. He ran into the library after I was pulled over the desk. Just won’t stop talking to me. He won’t stop staring into my eyes. It’s only been a day, but he’s scaring me.”

She stroked his hair. “Oh, baby, he’s intimidating you.” Her voice wavered, out of pure sadness for her son. It was obvious that his pain hurt her to hear about, even in the smallest amounts. “I’ll contact the office, and let them know. Lee Jeno.” For a moment, she continued to stroke his hair until he looked up at her.

“The scariest part is that he stared into my eyes, without any emotion. Just stared. It made me cry, I had so much anxiety afterwards,” Jaemin exhaled.

“I can’t remember the last time someone tried to intimidate you. But I know how I had to pick you up.. Better take these off before your skin turns purple and your blood cells give out.”

While she took off the packs, he thought about how different Jeno’s approach was. How scarily personal it was to talk to him, and look him in the eyes, and hang around him like they were two of the same. He was sure that this tactic would falter the second Jiseok told him about No-Face.
Jaemin would rather Jeno know him as No-Face.

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Chapter End Notes

the dnyl fic., about that.,

BUT i apologize for this being so short i really need to write more of it skdkfgdj but anyways stream dont need your love :)


The second that he had entered the school, he was escorted to the office. Obviously for something bad. As per usual. Jaemin was taken to the usual guidance part of the office. His mother knew nothing about this, most likely. He went ahead of the teacher who had attempted to bring him there himself. The normal lineup of people was there, the normal staff.

He stopped in the waiting area, seeing that his counselor was busy. What was he even here for, then?

“Jaemin,” His counselor peeked out from the board room and waved him in.

The boardroom was... Something else. It just meant that something was going wrong. He walked in and rolled his eyes when he saw Jeno sitting with his counselor. Jaemin took a seat and looked at them with a pressed look. Who cares in Jeno saw his eyes in their entirety?

“Your mother called to file a report on Jeno. Jeno came up here to file a report on you,” She looked between them both. “What’s going on here?” His mother only filed reports if she was really scared.

As odd as it sounded, nobody ever tried to report Jaemin, despite all the rumors. Either they were too scared, or they liked the torture he received by being there. “My mom already told you. She’s just worried about me, you can drop it if there’s no evidence.” He shook his head. “What does it say on his report?”
Her gaze dropped. “The usual.”

Jaemin reached over and took the paper.

“Hey, isn’t that a breach of confidentiality?” Jeno looked at her. But she wasn’t seeing anything.

Upon examining it, it took Jaemin .5 seconds to tear it up and throw it on the table. “Tell Jiseok he has to try harder.” A dozen of these reports in his handwriting came in weekly, trying to get him in some sort of trouble. “Is that all?” Jaemin sighed and looked back up at her. “This isn’t really anything new.”

“You said that he was following you around, and your mother said he was intimidating you. I.. Can’t really say this is true. You run into a lot of students, many times a day, and I don’t think he’s intimidating you. Jaemin, you’re getting older, and this aggression-”

“Please get to your point,” He pushed his chair back. Another daily lesson on how his psyche was damaged was not on his morning agenda.

“Jeno seems nice. Which is why you’re going to be his Scholar for the week.”

The whole Scholar thing was a long story, and was mostly just to help him get into a good college. With good grades, you could be apart of it. Not only was it a mentoring program, but it was like an internship. Nobody wanted to be mentored by him, and nobody was ever mentioned for it, so he was earning free merits. Until now.
“What sort of scholar am I to him? He’s new, and I’m sure he could get into the program himself, considering we share a culinary class.” Jaemin was already upset at the notion of having to babysit someone who made his heart pound in fear.

“You’ll get even more merits, and perhaps it will help your social status,” She slid him Jeno’s Scholar forms, with all of his current information, that she probably forced him to fill out. “You know how this works. I already informed your mother, who was easily persuaded.”

Who could he trust if he couldn’t trust his own mother?

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The both of them exited the office as he read the top paper. He knew the drill, which was awful. There was a checklist of tasks he had to complete by this time next week on the back, that Jeno had to sign off on.

☐ Off-Campus Study Session (Minimum of 3)
☐ Lunch Period (Scholar Help Session) (Min. 2)
☐ On-Campus Study Session (Min. 2)
☐ Non-Verbal Conversation (Call, text, etc.) (Min. 1)
☐ Tour of the School (Min. 1)
☐ Academic Growth/Understanding (Min. 1 Subject)

With those also came the responsibilities such as walking him to every class (tardies would be excused on this occasion) and making sure he wasn’t getting into any sort of trouble with other peers. The only one he would be getting in trouble with was his Scholar.
“We should get to class-”

“We still have 40 minutes before the bell rings. Nobody is here yet, that’s why it’s empty,” Jaemin shifted his eyes back down as per usual. “I was going to the library anyway, so let’s knock one of these out.”

Jeno scurried along, trying to keep up with his fast pace. “So your name is Jaemin.”

“Mhm.”

“Why do they call you No-Face?”

Jaemin didn’t hesitate to look up at him like he was stupid. “Isn’t it obvious? Jiseok already told you everything, too, so don’t act all coy.”

“Are you really violent?”

“Do I seem violent to you?”

“No.”
“There’s your answer.”

Jeno noticed that he had some bruises on his arms, and some peeked out from his shirt. “Have you ever fought back?”

“That wouldn’t exactly help my scholarly image, now would it?” He couldn’t help being rude in the midst of this. And it was only the beginning of the week. Jeno kept going down the line of questions, such as if the rumors of his violent acts were true, or the supernatural ones, or any of the off-beat ones. Though he turned all of them down, he doubted that he was taking any of this to heart.

“Are you..”

Jaemin stopped in front of the library, finally. “Am I what?” There was a guilty look on Jeno’s face.

“....Gay..?”

Something about that made him snap. He looked around for any other students before dragging him into the library, amongst the shelves, cornering him in the fiction section.

“Considering everything else you’ve asked me, do you think that’s going to be true? You’re just going to believe everything Jiseok told you? Would you believe everything the students go around telling you?” In this dim corner, he looked soulless.
Jeno regretted saying anything, ever. He swallowed. “Why did you stare at him, then?” There was nothing but curiosity in his voice.

Jaemin blinked. If he had told Jeno that, then surely everyone knew. Or maybe it was just Jeno. “Wouldn’t you want to look at something normal for once if you looked like this?” He clenched his jaw. “Come on, we just wasted time.”

It was nice that someone was listening, or at least someone had the decency to ask, but he was speaking to deaf ears. That’s what it was like talking to everyone - his mother excluded.

They walked in silence to his table. Jeno needed assistance in chemistry, as well as art, so as if that conversation never happened, they studied. Tomorrow they planned to study art, and at lunch today they would have a tour of the school. Since Jaemin had a doctor’s appointment on Thursday, they couldn’t plan that far ahead. Not that the planning for today and tomorrow was done yet.

“Jaemin,” Jeno looked up at him while they packed up to go to his first class.

He looked up for a moment to signal that he was listening.

“Can I have your phone number?”

Jaemin looked up at him and slung his bag over his shoulder. “I already have your number, it’s on the form. I’ll send you a text to let you know it’s me.” He said without letting a moment pass. Jeno nodded, and followed him to his first period.
Chapter End Notes

DUUUDES this is so unrelated but stan hrvy, his music is so cute and he's friends with the dreamies and he's cute i just aaaaa

ANYWAYS there is a possibility i might not update once a week, because im falling behind on having enough content to post whoops,, yall know where to bother me to update though :)

+++
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

jeno is really grinding jaemin’s gears.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Classes seemed like a relief, what with Jeno having to be by his side almost every other time. This might be useful, as the whole Scholar thing was supposed to be, but it was more of a bother than anything since he was scared of him. Plus, still a bit of lingering suspicion, considering that when he wasn’t hanging around him, he was talking with other people. His social status wasn’t tanking, so something was definitely up.

At the moment, he was in culinary, with Jeno. There was nothing to do but clean up, since he had a leg up on his work.

“Hey, No-Face,” Some girl walked up to him.

“Mhm,” He kept his eyes down, washing the dishes.

“You’re Jeno’s Scholar, and he needs some help,” As in, their little friend group needed help.

“I don’t need to help during class hours. If he really is struggling with something, he’ll ask for my assistance after class. Helping him wasn’t even on his agenda during class hours. This was one of his only times to catch a break.
“That's not very Scholarly of you,” She huffed. “I can report you to your counselor for not helping out your assigned student, and you’ll lose your extra credits.”

Jaemin kept his head down, but narrowed his eyes. “He’s not the one that came up and asked me for help, either. On top of that, the counselors can only receive reports like that from the assigned student themselves. So go ahead.”

There was nothing else to be said, so she walked back to their table. If Jeno’s friends thought they could reap the academic benefits of him having a smart, organized Scholar, they were wrong, or take advantage of him at all, for that matter. They didn’t want him before (and never would) so they could never have him.

The end of the class was nearing, so he had to hang around to wait for Jeno. This whole ‘escorting him to every class’ thing was tiring, and he still had to do it for the rest of the week. Jeno was taking forever to finish eating. Bold, considering he had English next, where he was *not* allowed to eat. He walked over and nudged him. “We have to leave soon.”

“Huh?” Jeno let out a noise that made him look up in what could only be described as confusion.

Everyone laughed at Jaemin, but he just sighed in slight frustration. “We don’t have all the time in the world, let’s go.”

Still, he didn’t budge. He was more annoyed than anything, but to everyone else it looked like anger. The amusing faces around him filled with fear when he snatched up Jeno’s backpack and slung it over his shoulder. “Let’s go.”

For a moment, he noticed that he was scared for a few moments. That lingering presence of fear in his eyes, stilled movements, shrunken pupils. It was normal for everyone when he did make an
attempt at any action that wasn’t purely helpless or nice. Jeno put his food down. It was a surprise to the students. A new kid? Not scared of No-Face? Furthering their shock, he grabbed his bag back from Jaemin and set it down on the table. The look he gave him wasn’t mean. It was more in the nature of, ‘hey, you have my bag, so I just took it back’. Harmless, in Jeno’s eyes. He didn’t realize what he had just done.

Jeno was basically jogging along with Jaemin as he walked him to every class, trying to match his fast pace. This is how he would normally walk, and he couldn’t afford to be caught slipping just because he had an anchor tied to him. He knew it annoyed Jeno. Just an added bonus.

“Hey!” The other had fallen behind because he wanted to catch a drink of water. Jaemin would ignore him.. If he hadn’t grabbed onto the back of his backpack.

“Jeno-” He turned around, but it wasn’t Jeno. Jeno was still running down the hallways. It was just another student looking to bully him around. With his little pet running to catch up, he was being pushed into the wall and manhandled for the sake of being rough. Jaemin just rolled his eyes and awaited whatever was to come. It was the normal shoving him to the ground and hitting him with his own books by dumping them on him, then running away because god forbid they actually get caught.

The bully cleared out, and he saw Jeno bend down to help him pick up his stuff. He’d been watching the whole time, of course. What else would he expect him to do?

“Get to class, you’re going to be late. It’s just down the hall, tell them I’m in the nurse, because that’s where I’ll be.”
Jeno scoffed. “I can be a minute late, relax.”

Jaemin looked up at him, angry. A couple students walked by and were listening in on their conversation and watching them. “Fine. I’ll take you. Stop reading my papers!” There was one in his hand for a LGBT crisis hotline, and he lunged forward to grab it. Great. He had just taken that out of pure curiosity, and that was the last thing he needed getting out. “Listen, Jeno, you’re already fucking up this week and it just started.” The organization in his backpack was lost as he just started shoving papers and books in.

He looked shocked, of course. But that’s what he gets for ruining the slight reputation that he had built up over the course of a few months to protect himself from what was now to come, because he had ruined it for him within a matter of a few seconds. Little contact between them, that wasn’t academic, was mandated. Some stupid new kid who knew no boundaries whatsoever was not going to ruin his life.

Both of them stood up and walked over to his class. Instead of popping in for a quick second to say hello to his teacher, and introduce himself as Jeno’s Scholar, he opened the door enough for him to get in, and left.

♡

Chapter End Notes

whew chile all this angst, might have to flood the fic with fluff soon,,
“How could you do this!” Jaemin threw his bag down onto the couch. “You don’t even know what you signed me up for, and I have no way of getting out of it.” His mother was doing the laundry, when he had just ran in - literally. Since she wasn’t picking him up, he had to walk, which quickly turned into a run for his life. This small argument had been going on for a minute or two, since he had to work up the courage to even begin to form a rebuttal against the most important person in his life.

“It’s good for your college resume, and she said it would also get you behavioral merits.”

He turned red, in anger. “I have to be with him at all times. I have to talk to him every time I see him. I have to get him out of situations, be his babysitter- He has to come over!”

She let out a chaste breath and looked at him. “Maybe that’s not so bad, Jaem.”

“Seriously? You’re taking the school board’s side on this?” Jaemin furrowed his eyebrows.
“Soon enough, you’ll be out of here, and you’ll be doing these things, and you’ll thank me later. For now, you are just getting accustomed to it.”

This was unbelievable. Unlike the normal teenage ‘you don’t know me, I can’t believe you’re making me do something other than what I want to do’, this was a breach of the comfort that he knew. His mother was his one and only vice to happiness in the world; She was letting him go, emotionally. There was no more understanding, or mutual trust, because his future was on the line. A burning sadness settled in his stomach and squeezed at his throat.

“Jaemin.” She stood up. Before she could even make her way over he grabbed his bag harshly and hastily made his way up to his room.

His home was the one place that he really felt safe, and it would be gone now that she would just be letting people come in. Jaemin felt tears come to his eyes as his body slumped against his bedroom door.

Have you ever felt alone? That’s how he was feeling. Alone on a spiritual plane that could only be described as a personal swimming pool, where you’re at the bottom. Everything around you in your life is moving like the waves, and above you there are people, but you’re stuck at the bottom.

Despite the fact that all he had previously clung onto was his mother, he was floating at the surface happily, sun beaming down on him, and he had some sort of unknown title in the world. Today, he sunk to the bottom.
“Jaemin..” His mother knocked softly on the door. “Jaemin..”

He rolled over in his bed. His phone was lit up, as his alarm blared on. She thought he was asleep, but he had been awake for quite a while now. His alarm had woken him up, and he was lying in bed, listening to it. It was annoying, deafening, and awful, but it made him feel something other than this unshakeable sadness, so he listened to it like he would listen to a song.

After he knew she was trying to form words, he turned it off and sat up. Eventually, her feet would go away from under the door, and he would go to school. He went and aimlessly picked out an outfit from his closet. His bag was already packed, so no having to worry about that.

Jaemin slung his bag over his shoulder and opened his door to leave. To his surprise, his mother was still standing there.

“Here you go.” She held out a plate. “You should eat, since you didn’t come downstairs.”

“I have to go and wait for Jeno,” He contemplated picking up a piece of whatever she made to please her, but instead, he looked at her and made his way past. “Goodbye.”

It wasn’t hard to tell when something was off with him, because of how little he ever had to emote. With this sudden significant shift in mood, it was like the world stopped spinning. The walk to school was either quicker than usual, or he wasn’t thinking about it. Jeno was stopped inside the school, next to the office, with all his new friends, including Jiseok.

He walked up and nodded at Jeno once there was a silent moment. “Do you want me to give you that tour of the school now? Just to cross it off the list?”
“Hey, he’s hanging out with friends,” Jiseok bumped in. Of course he would bump in. He shoved Jaemin’s shoulder, getting no reaction. That sparked a hint of madness, but he turned away. “Classes don’t start for fifteen, anyways. Go take your tour and come back if you have time.”

Jeno shrugged. “It would take up any other time. Sure.”

Him and Jeno walked away, towards the closest place. Jaemin tried his best along the way to avoid places that he most likely already knew, or that he knew that he was aware of, just to save them both the time and hassle. For the next few minutes, he was a tour guide, speaking as if he were reading a manual word by word.

They reached the cafeteria, where some students were eating lunch, and it was quite loud.

“If you enter the right line, it’s for vegetarians, if you enter the left line, it’s for everyone else, and the center is basically a snack bar, or a place to get utensils and such.” Jaemin looked around to see if there was anything else to explain.


“I’m fine.” He brushed it off. “There’s an exit that leads out to more classrooms, and the sports areas, as well as the fields. Let’s go that way.”

The two of them walked across the basketball court silently, since it was self explanatory. They were approaching the performing arts building, when Jeno - who else - broke the silence.
“Is it that flyer that I saw yesterday? In your bag? Does it make you uncomfortable that I know-“

“You don’t know anything, so shut up,” Jaemin stopped and turned to him. “How do you know I didn’t just get it handed to me? That it didn’t come in a packet? Maybe I picked it up, maybe someone put it in there. Quit prodding places that shouldn’t be touched.”

Again, the other looked shocked. He was lucky that he hadn’t cursed at him at all. Jeno stood under the hoop, staring. One of the nearby trees shifted, and the sun beamed down on them. Jaemin’s eyes began to shine. On one hand, they were magnificently opaque, like a marble, and where almost like something that an oil painter would draw. On the other, they were poetically glossy, only due to the tears welling up in his eyes.

“Jaemin.”

Jaemin turned around and kept on walking to their destination. It wasn’t the end of the world. Jeno wasn’t the first person to ever see him cry on this campus. He wasn’t special. Nobody in this world was special.

Jeno’s footsteps drew closer until he came into his foggy peripherals. “I’m sorry for prodding, but.. Um.. I- Can’t.” Here comes the pity party. “You can’t be my Scholar if you’re upset. It damages the quality of my learning experience.” He all but babbled out.

“Bull. Shit.” Again, he was facing him. “I’m doing a perfectly fine job. You compromised this. And since you did, I can’t be held accountable. And for what would I be? My feelings? If you want a happy - go - fucking - lucky Scholar, go get one. I have feelings, Jeno, that range from happy to sad, even if my eyes are fucking soulless, so just shut the fuck up and quit trying to get more information on me for god knows what reason.”
He swallowed and looked at him with, what, sadness, pity, anger, confusion, spite..? Jaemin wasn’t the best at reading emotions that weren’t exclusively those listed. Jeno bit his lip. “How about we go back to the counselor’s office, and we can pick this up later or something?”

Jaemin could really let out some emotions right now… So he gave in to his request. Just a small cave, a little indulgence. Jeno better not make him regret this.

+++
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

something is off about jeno.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Back at the office, he led Jeno back to his group of cool kids, immediately passing them up when he made it there. Jeno was left behind, and he made his way to the counselor’s office. Of course, his counselor couldn’t do much for him, now that his mother had left his side of the playing field, so he just cried. He would much prefer to do it alone, maybe in a bathroom, but he didn’t want to put a tardy on his record.

She pressed on to try and get anything out of him, but even in silent pauses to catch his breath, he wouldn’t say anything. It ended in him sighing and slumping back in his chair as he sniffled, and she wrote him a pass.

From this point on, he would need to try and suck it up, so that he wouldn’t ruin this ridiculous but essential opportunity. His feelings luckily didn’t shake his focus and drive to get good grades, but rather such aspects as a person. It pained him to walk alongside Jeno and his friends, and aid Jeno in non-academic endeavors if he so wished. This sudden weight was so odd, he didn’t know what it was or where it came from. Definitely not from Jeno.

The other would keep looking over at him; First, he assumed it was for help, so he would perk up. When that wasn’t it, he would assume it was just him staring to stare (since Jaemin was more than willing to let him look him in the eyes). Both of those were wrong, and he wasn’t going to ponder on it, so he took these looks as some form of pity.

It seemed like forever when the end of the day came, and he damn nearly ran out of the school. He went to cut the long way back home, when he saw his mom was waiting for him outside. Great.
Jaemin hopped in the car.

“Hi, Jaem.” She sat with the engine off, and turned to him. God, did he want her to start the car. “I was thinking that we head out to a restaurant and have some dinner later tonight.”

“I have to call Jeno and set some things up, and I have homework to do.”

“Oh, Jaem, have you been crying?” An attempt was made to grab his chin, but it failed. She was the only one other than himself that could really tell any difference with his eyes. They were puffy around the lower waterline and a bit red, and irritated.

He pulled his phone out from the front of his bag and started dialing Jeno’s number. Empty words to Jeno were better than meaningful ones that would fall upon deaf ears. “Hello?”

“Oh, hey, Jaemin.”

“We didn’t do much today, so tomorrow I propose we do one session before school, one during lunch,” He sighed, and she started the car. “And one after school. You can come home with me if you would like. Same time the day after, minus the before school, and instead finish the tour..”

“Okay. That sounds okay with me.”

Jaemin put him on speakerphone as he put all that into his calendar. “Friday we can finish up with
“You’ll have to remind me of that.”

“Don’t worry, how can I forget when I have you on a leash like a puppy?”

There was a nervous chuckle from Jeno. “Um, Jaem? You know that there’s clubs and student organizations for, you know, peo-”

He hung up the phone and sighed, closing his eyes. His mother was looking over at him, he just knew it. If he had to take a guess at what Jeno was going to say, it was that there were clubs for LGBT. Which he wasn’t and he was just making blatant assumptions. Jaemin just wanted to go home and bury himself in his work, and then go to sleep.

The next time he picked up his phone was a little while later, when he had gotten home and was halfway through his work. Jeno had called twice, and that was it. Thankfully he wasn’t as insistent through telecommunications as he was through verbal communication. He called him back, this time keeping the phone to his ear.

“I’m sorry if I struck a nerve earlier. I’m being really invasive but-”

“Jeno, I cannot wait for this to be over. You are breaking me down and ruining my peaceful existence.” Jaemin threw his pencil down. “I hope you and Jiseok become great friends so that you
can leave me alone. Hang out with him instead of bothering me. Become more interested in what
color my bruises would be rather than what my favourite color is. Let him set you up with a nice girl
so you can stop poking into my, frankly, non-existent love life.”

He was silent for many moments.

“What is it?”

“What is what, Jeno.”

“What’s your favourite color?”

Jaemin grumbled and took a deep breath. “I don’t have one. What’s your point? In fact- What’s your
goal? You keep patronizing me, oh- Jaemin are you okay? Are you violent? Are you gay? What’s
wrong? What’s your favourite color?” His voice took on a mocking tone. “What questionnaire have
you been given to get information on me?”

“Well.. I’m curious. I’ve never met anyone with scleric eyes. And you seem normal enough.”

“For god’s sake, you’re curious- I wasn’t aware! Glad I seem normal enough to have my privacy
invaded. Why don’t you go ahead and ask me to send nudes while you’re at it.”

“... Would you?”
He scoffed and went to hang up the phone.

“Wait! Jaemin! I was kidding, it was a joke. Don’t hang up.”

“I’m confused as to why I am still on the phone. What do you want from me?”

“Perhaps before we head over to your house after school, we can go and get something to eat, or drink. Some type of snack.”

“I’m not allowed to go outside on my own. It’s dangerous for me, and my mom would never allow it.” Even if she was forcing him out into the world little by little. “Besides.. I have food at my house.”

Jeno sighed deeply. “You’re missing the point, but okay. I guess I’ll see you before school tomorrow.”

Jaemin didn’t want another second of this baffling, infuriating, and meaningless call, and didn’t hesitate to hang up as soon as he said that. He gave off such an uncomfortably different vibe that, again, brought him to tears, even through the phone. Hopefully the rest of the world was better than this school, and he wouldn’t ever have to feel this feeling Jeno gave him ever again.

+++
haha did i not update last week.. whoops.

fr though i was busy for friday and saturday and updating on sunday would have through me off so im sorry mvhfhfgh i hope this chapter made up for it
While Jeno was busy fulfilling some sort of request for Jiseok, presumably, he was dragging himself around his room. His Spotify was loaded up with tons of new music that he had yet to listen to as he tried to cleanse himself. His laptop sat on his desk, displaying a bootleg Buzzfeed article titled, ‘15 Ways To Improve Your Mood Instantly!’ For obvious reasons. One of the first bullets on the list was to clean your environment.

So here he was, pushing his bed to the corner of the room, shoving his bookcase against another wall, dragging his nightstand next to his bed. That was enough change for him. It felt different, but not quite enough to have his endorphins flowing.

“Jaemin..” His mother was knocking at his door again.

“Come in.” I guess.

She walked in and did a double take at her surroundings. “Oh.. You needed more room?”

“Yeah,” He hated small talk. “Space.”
“Well.. Are you feeling okay? Have you eaten? The sun is almost down,” She was probably about to head off to work, and wanted to make sure he was okay.

“I’ll eat. I still have quite some things to do.” Suddenly, he was praying that she didn’t see his desktop. It was a good thing, but his mother was one to worry; A bad thing was that she was also one to hover. Recently, it came as a blessing that she worked nights, now, because that meant he could be alone for a small window of time.

His mother sat down on the bed, opposite from where he was standing in front of the window. “I’m glad that you’re getting your work done. I think you should wake up extra early tomorrow, and eat breakfast with me.”

As much as he wanted to turn such an offer down, he had nothing to combat it that was logical, and that wouldn’t break her heart. “Sure. I can’t guarantee that I’ll stay long, though. Jeno, you know?”

“I… I know.” It seemed as though she was regretful for a few moments. “I’ll see you in the morning.” She pressed her lips together and left the room.

The following morning was the hardest to get up to in a while. He was essentially slamming doors and shoving things around out of pure drowsiness, which barely wore off by the time he was ready and made it downstairs. His mom was laid on the couch, with food lying on the counter.

“Good morning, Jaem.” She sat up and rushed over to the table. “Lots of meat today, to prepare you for the commute to school.”
“Thanks,” Jaemin pulled out his chair and plopped down.

She looked like she had some sort of interjection, which was wiped away by her patting his head and smoothing his hair. He’d let her have that, if anything.

“I’m sure you’re aware that I won’t be able to get you a car. At least, not anytime soon. Again, I apologize for that, since you’re going to be a senior next year, and you know how to drive since you had enrolled in the driving course your school provided. You know how things are, and eventually—”

“Thank you, mom. I already appreciate you putting clothes on my back, okay?”

“I’m sorry, that’s not what I am getting at, I just—” She sat down next to him. “I’m upset at myself for that. What I’m trying to say is, since we can’t yet afford a car, I bought you a bicycle.”

Jaemin looked up from where he was stuffing food into his mouth.

“L - Listen, Jaemin,” Her voice got a little shaky. “I know that you have to run from school sometimes. It is obvious how to have to run from people, and I was pondering on that. A bicycle would make the trip much easier.” She swallowed. “Uh.. Anyways, It would also let you travel, get places faster.”

He was thanking her far too much this morning, considering he was supposed to be mad at her, or upset with her - or whatever he was. It was amusingly contradictory how she was giving him something to travel with, but on terms that he was able to come home safe.
“I just don’t want you to feel trapped. It’s almost reaching that period in your life, and I feel guilty. Please don’t be afraid to live your life a little - because of me.” There were other factors, but that’s not what this was about. “Do you still remember how to ride a bicycle?”

When he was younger, his mother and father had taught him. “Yes.” It was one of the few memories that he liked to remember and hold dear to him about the latter third of their family.

“It’s by the door.” She stood up and rubbed his shoulder. “I’ll see you when you get home, Jaem.”

His mother was more than right. He was there in half a song, and the lock and supervision would assure that his mother’s investment would be safe. While he was locking it up, he took notice of the smaller details. There were smaller carvings, essentially, in a lighter and sparklier grey, and the rest was a glossy black. Jaemin knew exactly what her vision was in the design. It made him swallow and stare at it with inconsolable sadness.

“Jaemin?” Jeno walked up next to him and he jumped. “I didn’t think you would actually be here this early.”

He grumbled and shook his head. “I want to get this over with.”

“That’s a nice bike,” His peer jogged along, to the library, presumably, as Jaemin began his trek.
“Thank you, I appreciate it.” Mothers had a thing for pleasing others unknowingly. Motherly instinct and influence.

“I have my license, so I drive. Even though I’m not far from the school, it’s good practice and adjustment. Maybe I can drive us to your place after school.”

Jaemin looked at Jeno. Not because he had suggested to drive them, but because he wondered how someone could have such atrocious mannerisms in their speech pattern but still portray what they meant to say. Jeno had a pretty average GPA and grades to be proud of, so how could he be such a different person?

“No?” He stopped in front of him.

“Yes, okay? I was thinking about something.”

“Was it your favourite color?”

“Oh my god,” Jaemin sighed into his hands and walked around him. “Not this again.”

“You still haven’t told me. I asked you, what? A day ago? It’s a simple question. And you can’t say that you don’t have one, because everyone has a set of colors that they tend to lean towards.”

Jaemin opened the library door and held it for Jeno. “Fine. Black.”
“That’s a lie.” Jeno stood in the doorway and challenged him.

“For fuck’s sake..” He mumbled under his breath.

“You have the dirtiest mouth,” Jeno continued out. “It’s a lie because nobody likes their eye color.”

He opened his mouth in shock. That should be offensive, but it wasn’t, and he hated how true it was. Last year he had taken psychology (not to mention he walked around a building full of insecure teenagers every day) and he knew this. “You’re too smart for your own good. I’m not putting my hands on you, so move, or I’m finding another entrance.”

“So, it’s not any of the colors on the darker end of the spectrum.”

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Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

jeno's getting warmer.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Surprisingly enough, it seemed as though a day ushering Jeno around wasn’t as bad as normal. Jeno’s clique of unnecessarily narcissistic and pushy friends were on their typical eye-roll level behavior. As gloomy as the entire day was, as per usual, it felt brighter. Assuming it was the bicycle, he would be easy on his mother.

“Hey, I don’t know where you live,” Jeno stopped him when he was just about to get on his bicycle.

Ah, fuck. They did plan out one of the off-campus study sessions for today. “Okay, then I can lead the way.” He swung his leg over the seat, almost sitting down when Jeno pulled him up by the waist. “Don’t touch me, stop it.”


Of course. To go with Jeno’s high qualifying grades and academic resume, he could drive himself. That rang a bell, so perhaps he had let it slip his mind. “What am I to do with my bicycle?”

Jeno rolled his eyes. “I don’t drive a tiny clown car. Put it in the trunk.”
Jaemin took a deep breath and bit his tongue. With a spiteful look, he got off. Jeno - unexpectedly - so graciously grabbed the handlebars and led it on the way to his car. “I’m starting to lean towards it being silver, or one of the colors that isn’t really a color.”

“Please stop,” He looked at him and groaned.

“Okay, for now.. What’s your favourite show?”

“The Universe’s Star.”

“Wow, you didn’t skip a beat on that one. What’s it about?”

An annoyed look came onto his face, naturally, and he wasn’t sure why. This was an opportunity to talk about something he liked. For once, the inquirer actually looked interested. “The main character, who is obsessed with a celebrity, gets hit by a car and becomes a grim reaper.”

“Sounds.. Fun.”

“Let me finish. When he is losing motivation to live, she comes back to life to save him and make sure he’s able to live longer and see the value in life, and how much he does and is doing for people.”

Jeno’s eyes widened and he stopped in his tracks. “Wow..”
“Did you expect me to say something like Idol Room or Hello Counselor?”

“No, just not that deep and meaningful.”

“You obviously don’t know me, then. Let’s keep going, come on,” He grabbed the bicycle by the spine and pulled it.

“We’re at my car, and that’s why I asked. So I can know.”

Jaemin narrowed his eyes. “Mhm. Hope you do well with that knowledge.” He looked at the car in front of them. It was silver, and had a big trunk, a medium sized front seat, and a considerably smaller back seat. A normal car, wasn’t too expensive or flashy. Modest.

“Like the color?” The other popped open the trunk, picking up his bicycle.

For the moment he lifted it, his muscles flexed inside of his shirt. Nobody at this school, based on his observation, really had any sort of muscle. This was new. In turn, he was staring at his biceps.

Jeno noticed him staring, and Jaemin immediately flushed red. Now, this could go one of many ways. He could out him for it, and use it to make fun of him. He could out him for it and use it to out him in some sort of way. He could act like he didn’t see it and just tell Jiseok. Or he could ignore it.

“Don’t say anything cheesy, I know I have muscles, okay?” He chuckled and raised his eyebrows as
he shut the trunk. “After you.”

The two of them got in. A strong scent of fast food was present, which was expected. It was clean, orderly, and not a bad environment. He leaned back in the seat and closed his eyes. For once in the entire time they had known each other, Jeno hadn’t made a single attempt to talk to him in the journey to his house, aside from the occasional request for directional queues. They reached a stoplight, and he turned to him.

“Are you nervous or something? Is it finally catching up to you, the rumors of me being a psychopath and mysterious non-human being?” Jaemin made an attempt to scare him.

Jeno simply leaned back and stared at the red light. “I can’t talk while I drive, or I’ll get too distracted, or invested in talking.”

“Shocker,” He chuckled and shook his head. “Left. My house is on the corner.”

It didn’t take long for them to pull in, and for him - Jeno - to pull his bicycle out of the trunk. His mother would probably be thrilled to see him coming home with someone; Less thrilled when she would realize this was his Scholar program assigned student. He took his time walking them inside, just in case she was unprepared and in case they were disturbing her.

“Jaemin!” She was walking down the stairs. “Hi, oh my god, hello,” Her hands were wet, so she wiped them off on the shirt to be able to stick her hand out towards Jeno. “I’m Jaemin’s mother, I’m glad to have you over.”

“This is Jeno,” He flatlined and held a blank look on his face. Truly conveying that this wasn’t a friend, it wasn’t anyone special, it was the ridiculous student he was supposed to mentor and the one that she reported for harassment.
“Apologies, Jeno, I’m just very protective of my Jaeminnie, here,” She sighed.

He took out her hand with a smile. “I can tell. It’s understandable. He takes pretty good care of himself, though. Frustrating to converse with.”

“I see.. Well, I’m just going to be walking around. You can act as if I’m not here, I’m sure Jaemin has everything under control, but let me know if you need anything,” Her place in this situation was beginning to falter.

“We’ll be in the kitchen.” Jaemin slid past her. “Thank you.”

It took her a surprise, due to her high expectations. She really wanted to him to study in his room. Without even asking, he knew. All she wanted was for him to have friends and have fun, so he wasn’t upset about that.

Jeno followed along, looking around. If he was looking to find pictures, there weren’t any. All of them were upstairs within the confines of the rooms. Considering that their family was a taboo, even just to look at, nobody deserved to see them. The kitchen table was fairly empty in comparison to the rest of the surfaces; The one that wasn’t cluttered with decorations.

“Are you hungry or anything?” He shoved his bag on a chair next to him.

“I think I’m okay,” Jeno sat back.
“Didn’t you say that you wanted to go somewhere and eat?” Jaemin squinted his eyes.

“I could always eat whatever I want when I crave it.”

Jaemin scoffed and leaned forward. “What you want to study first? Your literature teacher told me you needed a bit of help, so maybe we can do that right now.” He feigned to notice Jeno looking at all of the distracting things in the room, and, ultimately, looking for pictures.

“Your mom likes cool toned colors. Maybe you like cool toned colors.”

“Now isn’t the time, Jeno, you can bother me later. We’re studying.” The black eyed one pushed his advanced literature book at him. “It has good notes, and is far better than what they’re giving you as far as understanding goes.”

“I’m holding you to that,” Jeno grinned and pulled a notebook out of his bag (which, Jaemin almost strangled him for tossing onto the table).

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Chapter End Notes

okay at this point honestly im gonna say that updates are to be expected between friday and sunday bc my life has gotten WAY more busy than it was before

and you know what, im gonna say it,

this story has the best tiny little congregation of readers i luv u all
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

jeno's off-putting, unfamiliar signals.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

All that was left on their tour of the school was the classroom halls, which would be useless. Jeno had already been around a lot of them, and he wasn’t going to get involved in anything further, since it was too late in both the year and the commitment period. The two were walking down the halls, simply, because he already knew his way around.

“Shouldn’t we have done this before? When I barely knew where anything was?”

“You know- You know very well why we didn’t finish that,” Jaemin glared at him. The only reason they were talking, and he didn’t have his headphones in to mute everything, was because Jeno had insisted on it, blackmailing him with the threat of telling his counselor.

“You could have just told me you weren’t feeling well, and I could have withheld my knowledge to make you feel better later on,” He began walking backwards in front of him.

“You’re the worst,” Jaemin pushed him with his shoulder and sped ahead. “Come on, I don’t want to be walking around forever.”

Jeno rolled his eyes. “Listen, it’s not even that bad. There’s nobody around, we could do whatever we want. Even if we take our time, we’ll have time left over. More time to study, right?”
“We don’t need another before school session,” He had this all calculated out, there was no way they had missed something.

“No.. Jaemin,” The taller of the two leaned into him. “I just need tutoring, you know this. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been pushed into this program. My grades are good for a reason. Because I get tutoring. The stuff I learn needs to be shoved into my head in order for me to understand it to any degree.”

“Is that why you still haven’t gotten the memo to not be so annoying?” Jaemin shoved him back. It soon turned into a shoving match, which completely registered as a fight to him, but Jeno was smiling. He’d forgotten who was stronger here; A shout was let out. To prevent himself from falling, he grabbed onto his shoulders. In turn, Jeno wrapped his arm around Jaemin’s waist, and pulled him up (him holding onto his shoulders wasn’t doing much).

Jeno was looking at him with what could be registered as pity. “Maybe you should have paid more attention to my muscles.”

“Quit it,” He was pushed away. “I have no reason to.”

“Pull something like that again and I’ll have to catch you,” A lunge made for his waist made him stumble a little bit.

“And you wonder why my mother reported you for bullying,” Jaemin scowled and kept on walking.

“I know why,” Jeno was walking awfully close to him. “It’s because you’re precious cargo. Duh.”
“What, like a snake? A circus animal?”

“No. Uh… Maybe a cat? Like a panther?”

“You absolute jerk,” Jaemin scoffed. “Yeah, I have black hair and black eyes. Black panther, ha ha.”

“You look into things too much. I was talking about, like, how they’re soft and can be gentle, but are generally ferocious. It’s basically you in a nutshell. I wasn’t making some dumb comparison that you’ve probably heard a million times since last year.”

Considering his nature, he highly doubted that. But whatever made him content; So far, it seemed like he hadn’t once poked fun at him at his expense, but there had to be some underlying deceit and spite in it all. “Thanks. I appreciate you- You know what, just.. Thank you for the compliment.” If he thought things through too much - which, he had never heard from anyone before (then again, nobody but his mother knew him) - than he would work on that.

“Speaking of your mom, I felt like I was intruding the other day. Maybe we could study at the place that I had originally wanted to.”

Just as before, he wanted to reply with an instant, outstanding no, but he couldn’t. His mother had gotten him a bicycle for this exact reason; To get out at least a little bit to get a sense of the world. As embarrassing as it was, he didn’t know much about the world, other than the way it tended to perceive him. “Fine. Tell me where it is, and I’ll meet you there.”
“I can drive you, you know,” Jeno didn’t waste a second replying to his response that had taken a few moments to form.

“I have to head home first, to grab some money.”

“I can pay for you.”

“I’m a vegetarian.”

“Any specific reason?” Jeno furrowed his eyebrows, clearly doubting him.

“My mom is.”

“So you have no restrictions against eating meat?”

He didn’t really like where this was going. “Make a remark about me being gay and I will-”

“I’m buying you a burger,” The other looked at him blankly. “Not everything is some sort of joke with me. I don’t think you realize I’m not an offense asshole like most people are to you. You’ve never done anything wrong to me, and I’m not scared of you.”
Jaemin realized that they had stopped at the end of the hall. In this moment, Jeno’s eyes were burning into him with command. He was speechless, to be quite frank. The rest of his words were mostly empty space, empty promises that he hadn’t paid enough attention to prove to be true. It was that he wasn’t scared of him. Scared was an umbrella term in his case; Ignorant, disrespectful, pensive, were attachments. Not only had Jeno tolerated him, but he wasn’t scared of him.

“Let’s just go back to the library-”

Jeno grabbed his arm and he tensed up. It made his anxiety go from zero to one hundred. If Jeno wasn’t scared of him, he had a whole new power and influence over him, that scared Jaemin himself. His eyes teared up, his breathing stopped, and he swallowed.

That look was full of pity. The look that he gave him seeing that he was on the verge of breaking down just because he was holding his arm. “I mean it,” Jeno loosened his grip.

+++  

Chapter End Notes

im finally writing ahead of time someone give me a cookie

everyone is a ride or die for jaemin and i felt that
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

jaemin and jeno's trip outside, pt1.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After school, Jaemin’s heart was beating a million miles a minute on the way home. He wanted to take his time, but his anxiety took hold of the pedals, arriving there within minutes. His mother stood up and rushed over the second she saw him panting.

“It’s fine, it’s fine, I promise,” He swallowed. “I’ve got to go out with Jeno. He wants to study at a restaurant that is right next to the school. I have the address, if you want it. I just wanted to rush back so that I wouldn’t leave him waiting for too long.”

“Why didn’t you just go with him?” Her face was full of shock. Still absorbing the fact that, a day after she had let her son off of his leash, he was going outside.

Jaemin swallowed. “I wanted to let you know.”

“You could have called me.”

As his mother, and the person who knew him the best, she could most likely feel the fear and anxiety that was pulsing through him. “Let me just go and get ready. I need to grab my money, anyways.” Finally an excuse that was viable. He sighed and quickly went upstairs. To be truthful, his money was in his backpack. It always was. All he needed was some time to let out some air before he exploded.
A few minutes later, his mother was shaking his shoulders. “You fell asleep. It’s been five minutes.” She had gotten worried about him, about how he was feeling.

He shot up and rubbed his eyes. “I’m sorry, I was tired.”

“Baby.. Did you take your medicine?”

“Yes,” Jaemin groaned.

“Maybe we should get you out more. I don’t want to up your dosage.” Simple anxiety medicine, that could go wrong if they weren’t careful. “I noticed it hasn’t been working lately. And apparently you’ve been extra aggressive, as indicated by Jeno. So the side effects are taking place..”

It felt as though he was guilty of something, but he wasn’t. Made him feel bad, made him upset, like he let his mother down.

“I think it’s good that you’re going out. Maybe we can take you off of it if you keep it up.”

“I’ll try,” He yawned. “I’m going now. You can call me, or something. Whenever you feel like it.” Jaemin lifted himself off the bed and grabbed his backpack. “I’ll let you know when I’m coming back. Thanks, mom.”

The ride to the restaurant was scary. With his only pair of sunglasses on, and his hood up and drawn
over his face. It made his heart pound to by whizzing down the street around handfuls of people. Each pedal closer he got to the restaurant, the bigger the number of handfuls grew. There were no bicycle racks at the restaurant, so he was left looking for Jeno. If only he had paid more attention and remembered what color his car was. Jaemin stumbled around, looking into every car, maybe an indicator that he was around.

He groaned and sighed. After twenty minutes of walking around, he realized that his anxiety had clouded his brain. Why hadn’t he just called him.

“Hello?”

Jaemin whipped his head around, until Jeno came into his line of sight. Apparently, he was waiting, leaning against the trunk of his car.

“How long have you been watching me stumble around like an idiot,” He grumbled.

“Why are you bundled up.. They’re going to think you’re coming in to rob them,” Jeno looked him up and down, at his baggy clothes, hidden face, sunglasses.

“I’m not trying to get robbed or jumped myself. Can we just eat?” Jaemin was rushing him, and tried pulling him inside.

“I wanted to study while we eat.” Clearly, the message and the aura that he was giving off wasn’t getting through to the other, who was trying to make eye contact with him. It was extremely difficult for him to do so, though. Obviously. That was the point of wearing sunglasses, since they blended in with his eyes.
Jaemin glared at him. “Can we just go back to my place? My mom won’t mind, you’ve been there before.” Someone walked by, incidentally bumping into him. His voice lowered to a mumble and he swallowed.

Jeno hadn’t been around anyone that was like this, which was quite mind-boggling for him. Though, he had heard about such signs of nervousness, and social anxiety. He looked at him and detected instant anxiousness in his disposition. “Do you wanna eat in the car?”

“Yes,” He gripped the handlebars of his bicycle.

“Nice,” The bicycle was lifted out of his hands. “There’s a bike rack around the side, but I assume you don’t have a lock. Guess its going in the car with us.” They shuffled along to his car, Jaemin watching him as he pushed down the seats in the back and set the bike near the back. “Now there’s enough room. Pretty sure I have some blankets stuffed under the seat.”

“Okay.”

He sighed and furrowed his eyebrows at him. “You’re really shy, huh?”

“Shy is an understatement, you idiot,” Jaemin grumbled under his breath.

“There’s no need to curse me out. You stay here, and I’ll get the food,” Jeno held the keys out to him. “Assuming you know how to start the car, you can turn on the air conditioning. Hop in the back, and lock the doors.”
Jaemin grabbed the keys and jumped in to wait for him, immediately.

Okay then, Jeno thought. Couldn’t blame him. If he was scared to be outside alone, being inside a car, trapped, would be no different. It must be dangerous outside for him. “Try not to crash my car.”

“I’ll run you over with it.” He brought his knees up to his chest.

“I heard that, just wait here.” Jeno shut the door. Jaemin was still snarky and sharp, through his moments of fear. What a character. Who knew if he was like this all the time? Honestly, he was dying to know. Not out of some errand for Jiseok, or another kid, either.

+++  

Chapter End Notes

whats this? a tiny bit of jeno insight at the end owo? (i wanna do not living omg dgkjstrhsbtr) i think this might be my favourite (at the moment, i have other things planned) scene ive written so far, the second half is already sososo cute :,,(  


Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

a taste of friendship.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He counted the minutes, and it took Jeno approximately fifteen to leave and return with their food. About ten minutes in, he realized that Jeno had paid for it all when Jaemin had brought money to prevent just that. Guess it could be for gas, since he told him to turn on the air conditioning. Did that take gas? Who knows.

Jaemin saw him coming and crawled over to the door to unlock it and open it for him. “About time.”

“You sound very threatening at a whisper,” Jeno pushed the bags towards him and climbed in. “Let me pull out the blankets, it’s kind of cold in here.” He reached a hand down under the front passenger seat and pulled out the messiest, most jumbled up bunch of blankets he could imagine.

The other began to dig through the bags, full of french fries and wrapped patties, as well as some drinks shoved inside. “Where’s my food?”

“I told you, I got you a burger and fries.”

“I didn’t think you were serious,” Jaemin held his hands up when Jeno threw the blanket at him. “It’s good. And, it’s comfort food, so it should calm you down,” He threw the blanket around his
shoulders. “Lucky you wore a sweater.”

“It’s thin.” The smell, which he had just realized, enticed him to pull out some fries and a burger. He munched on some of the fries while he opened the burger wrapper. “What’s a burger patty made out of?”

“Take off your hood and glasses. You look weird.” Jeno unwrapped his halfway and took a bite. “Cow.”

“Oh, okay,” Jaemin eyed it. He looked up and raised his eyebrows. “Wait- What do you mean I look weird?”

“You look like you don’t want to be seen inside a car. Nobody can see in here, unless they press their face against the window, so you should be fine.” By now, he was a little bit used to seeing his eyes.

“Fine,” He pushed his hood off and shoved his glasses up onto his head.

Jeno could now see him. The way his eyes were wide and curious looking at the burger, eyeing it since, clearly, he had never seen one so close before. It was innocently precious. Never had he met someone so oblivious and unaware of the immediate world around them. He watched him take a bite, looking straight at the burger. His eyes lit up and he chewed it with sheer enjoyment.

“Thank you,” Jaemin said when he finished chewing, taking another bite as soon as the words left his mouth.
“Wow, I think that’s the first time you’ve ever said something blatantly nice to me,” Jeno pulled out a ketchup, peeling off the lid and placing it between them. “You’re welcome. Glad I can be the one to break your streak.”

He sucked some ketchup from the burger off of his fingers. “Don’t be cocky, I just like it a lot.”

“I’ve found your Achilles heel,” Jeno took a sip of his drink. “As long as I stuff you with good food, you’ll shut up.”

Jaemin hated to admit that, and tried to glare at him, but instead pouted and took another bite. He wasn’t aware that he was scarfing down the burger, and shoving fries in within intervals, as well as sipping on the soda he was given. All the while, being eyed when he wasn’t paying attention. It was obvious that he wasn’t built to be a vegetarian; Not when he was eating this burger like he had never eaten a meal before. Jeno simply watched in amusement and ate his food as he normally would.

His burger began to whittle down to the wrapper, and he looked up at the other. “What?” Jaemin narrowed his eyes.

“Nothing, nothing,” Jeno couldn’t finish the food he had gotten, but the other had no problem scarfing it down in the time it had taken him to eat a quarter of his. “Do you wanna start studying now?” He shoved the burger in the bag with his fries and sipped his drink.

“You’re not going to finish..?” His black eyes looked brighter than ever peering into the bag to see how much food he had left.

Jeno pushed the bag towards him, scoffing in amusement.
“No, I just wanted to know…”

“So that you could have it. Take it,” He tried to hold back a smile before he reached under the seat, where he had gotten the blankets from, for his backpack. “You don’t need to get your stuff anyways, it’s straight out of this book I have.”

Jaemin laid on his stomach and pulled Jeno’s unfinished food out of the bag. It was awfully generous; At this point, he had basically paid for both of their meals, and now they had just become his meals. If he wasn’t sacrificing his own time and helping him with his work, he would feel way more guilty. He felt guilty around Jeno, no matter what.

- 

“Make sure you do the work, okay..? Just.. Do the evens, and I’ll check them,” Jaemin nodded the best he could with his head in his arms. He was trying his best to suppress his yawns by taking in deep breaths. That had really filled him up and made him feel extremely fatigued; The only other time he had felt like this was when he had gorged himself on neoguri, once.

“You got it,” Jeno obviously noticed it more than he knew. His eyes were heavy, his body was still, and he was slightly slurring his speech. Meat could do that, and giving it to a vegetarian - well, not anymore - was like a drug. He was also on his stomach, lying parallel to Jaemin. While he was still awake, he did the whole page as practice. His help had actually been working.. The whole page was done in a minute without struggle.

A few minutes was a few too long for Jaemin. When Jeno looked over at him, he was fully relaxed, his face peacefully cradled in his arms in the softest expression he had ever seen him wear. He looked so comfortable and tiny, under his warm, knitted blanket, curled up and sleeping.
His sleep proved to be heavier than ever when he hopped into the front seat and drove him home. Upon arrival, he stared back at him. Still asleep, probably the happiest he would ever be in his presence. Jeno shoved the fast food bags under the seat, so that his mom wouldn’t see and get upset. He would be thoroughly upset to lose his tutor.

“Jeno?” Jaemin’s mother opened the door with a worried look on her face. He had knocked on the door without Jaemin, so she was naturally worried that something had gone wrong.

“Hi, Ms.,” Jeno didn’t want to alarm her, and carried a gentle tone. “He’s in my car, he’s sleeping.”

“Oh,” She let out a huge breath, holding her chest. “Okay.” Assuming the silver car in the driveway was his, she saw him through the rear window.

“He was really tired,” Jeno popped open the trunk; Still, he slept. “Oh, no, I can do it. I wouldn’t want you to strain yourself,” He kneeled in when she reached in to bring him inside.

Jaemin’s arms were curled in, and he was in the perfect position to be lifted up. One arm hooked under his knees, and the other cradled his back. The blanket was still wrapped around him, like he had tried to swaddle himself.

“Are you on the football team?” Jaemin’s mother was staring at him stand up straight with her son in his arms.

“No. I just keep myself in good shape,” He looked up. “Can you show me where his room is?”
“Of course,” She guided him inside. “So, he’s your Scholar kid?”

“Yeah. He’s really good at it, considering that he’s not the nicest person when you first get to know him.” Jeno chuckled nervously.

“Mhm..” She bit her lip. “Well, it’s just a good thing that you are a nice person. I cannot express my regret for reporting you, I don’t know a single person who would do this for him, or be willing to tolerate how he can be sometimes. He’s not mean, I promise.”

“Trust me, it’s okay. I’ve dealt with worse people. High school, you know?” Jeno grinned at her as they walked side by side up the stairs. Jaemin’s head lolled back a bit, almost bumping into the turn in the banister, before he caught it and held it gently. “I get that he has to protect himself and he can’t exactly trust anyone.”

“Does he trust you?”

That was a good question, did he? “I would ask him. I’m assuming the answer is no, because we’ve only known each other for a week. I’m not upset if he doesn’t.” He felt him take in a deep breath. “Seems like you’ve raised a trustworthy son, though.”

“Thank you,” She swallowed. “Here, let me get that.” Jaemin’s door was plain, and when she pushed open the door, his room looked slightly different from the rest of the house. Nice, though, and he could see him residing here. He gently set him down on his bed and peered down at him.
“I don’t think I’m getting my blanket back,” Jeno sighed, smiling.

“He can get it back to you. Just not now,” She nodded, biting the inside of her cheek.

The other male was looking at Jaemin, and she was looking at him. She already trusted him. It was difficult to fake being nice to her son, and even if they had only known each other for a week, that was long enough for her to trust him with Jaemin. The only conflicting factor was, why? Why was he going out with him to study, and being friendly, and going the extra mile? All for a social outcast that he had just met.

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Chapter End Notes

this was so cute even if jaemin hasn't opened up yet ;,;) apologies if this looks like a checklist because of how many lines there are. there’s a lot of dialogue fdgstbhgfygtdbf
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

jaemin’s attempt at being less aggressive.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jaemin awoke the next morning, hazy and unaware of what time it was - or where he was, for that matter. Last time he checked, he was in the back of Jeno’s car, studying. He sat up - realizing that he still had Jeno’s blanket. Yet, he was still in his own bed. His confusion carried him down the stairs, where his mom was cooking.

“Jaem, what’s wrong? Why are you awake?” She slightly moved the food in the pan around.

“I have to go to school..”

“You shouldn’t be up for another hour,” She hummed. “But I suppose that you should have enough sleep, after all. Jeno brought you home, because you fell asleep while you were helping him study.”

He raised his eyebrows when she adjusted the blanket that was still around his shoulders. “I need to give this back..”

“It’s Friday, so you can do that today. Since you’re awake early,” She stroked his hair before turning back to their breakfast, “What’s going on with you? You’ve been really closed off lately. Jeno says that you’ve been aggressive, and I know it’s not because of your medicine, since you stopped taking it yesterday and you have been much nicer.”
“It’s nothing,” Jaemin sat in a chair with his knees to his chest.

“Jaemin, I need to know what is going on with you.”

“I’m serious, nothing. I don’t feel anything, and I don’t do anything,” He shrugged. “Normal, just as usual. There’s nothing to worry about.” His chest tightened up as he rubbed his eyes. Simply thinking about opening up to his mother when she could possibly use anything against him, suddenly, made him not want to talk at all, even answer a ‘how was your day?’

“Please take care of yourself, Jaemin,” The look she gave him was the worst, and made his chest burn. It was the same one that his father used to give him when he said the same things. “Love you. Get ready for school, you still have an hour until you were supposed to be ready, so take your time.”

He stood up and rubbed his eyes. “Okay..”

Jaemin used his extra hour to pace around his room nervously. In turn, he basically tore apart his whole room to make more change. He needed to get used to change, after all, since next year was senior year - aka, year of the biggest changes he would ever go through. His mother was already pushing him to start getting comfortable with being an actual person in society. End of junior year exams? The least of his stresses.

He stumbled out of the house, more stressed than ever. To an extent, being Jeno’s babysitter had been a distraction from the pressure building up on him. What else was Jeno? His bodyguard. Was he supposed to walk around the school safely, now? There was no normal person to cover for him.
On his ride to school, he somehow popped a tire. Amazing. He was only a block from the school, and thankfully the time that he had shaved off gave him plenty to walk. To occupy himself during this walk, he put in his headphones. Currently, he was really liking slower, more melodic tracks - Palette by IU was at his top played. He scrolled through Youtube to see what was recommended. Jaemin hummed at the suggestion ‘top 10 plot twists in kpop mvs’. Maybe he would watch that later on.

His eye also caught on to a car that was slowly driving up to him, and he panicked. The school was within his view, but not yet any students. He stopped and scurried to the other side of his bicycle, in case he was to use it as a poor shield, or shove it forward as an obstacle.

“Jaemin,” The window rolled down, and Jeno leaned out on both arms. “What are you doing?” He found it amusing to watch him scurry around to the other side of his bicycle, and was trying to contain his laughter.

“I’m walking,” Jaemin looked down, ashamed that he had slightly made a fool of himself. “My tire popped.”

“You know the drill,” Jeno sighed and climbed out.

“What?” His grip on the bars tightened when he thrust his hands out.

“Give me your bike, so I can put it in the trunk.” The tone in his voice made it seem as though it was obvious.
“You don’t have to be nice to me anymore, I’m not your Scholar,” Jaemin glared at him and kept walking.

“About that,” Jeno caught one of the pegs on the back wheel with his foot. “I don’t think we should risk being late, so you should get in.”

Jaemin threw a slight tantrum and whined, stomping his foot. “Take my bicycle, I don’t care. You’ll pay for it. Literally.” As if Jeno would ever have the upper hand on him. He was already stressed, and bickering with the peanut gallery would only make him angry. His tantrum continued as he stomped away towards the school after shoving his own bicycle to the ground.

Jeno caught it before it could take any serious damage. “Jaemin!” He jogged up to him and pulled him back by the waist.

Maybe if he was quicker, he would have gotten the chance to actually pick him up. Those chances also would have increased if Jaemin wasn’t able to defend himself. He grabbed the arms wrapped around him and kicked his knee before using his shoulder to attempt to knock the wind out of his lungs. Jeno fell to the ground, disoriented. His techniques were weak and self taught, but effective on high school boys.

“Jesus fucking christ,” Jeno panted, lying a hand on his stomach.

“I’m sorry!” There was almost no apologetic tone in his voice. “You can’t just grab me like that, and not expect me to act on reflexes! You should know that I need to protect myself and if someone grabs me, I’m going to go off!”

“Let’s hope I can drive after this,” He stood up and took in a deep breath.
“You have less than a block, stop being so dramatic.”

“Stop being so aggressive,” Jeno grabbed his face between his thumb and pointer finger, squeezing his cheeks and shaking his head affectionately. It made him huff and tear his face away. The two of them proceeded to get in once he pushed his bicycle into the trunk.

Jaemin was now grumpy and slightly annoyed, as per usual being around Jeno. He glared at him while he drove into the parking lot. “You deserved that.”

“Okay, I get it, you live in a bubble and if I come inside, I’ll be the one to burst. Can I ask you something? Or, rather, suggest something?”

“What?”

“Uuum..” Jeno gripped the steering wheel and took a deep breath. “Can you be my tutor? Like, across the board, and not just for a week because the school told you so.”

“What?” He turned his attention fully to him. “Just get a tutor that the school can provide, or pay for one.”

“The thing is,” The car pulled into a parking space. Jaemin was thinking about just getting out, but he remembered that he had to be a little nicer. “I would rather not. I’m doing fine right now, and you’re tolerating me, considering that I just got here, near the end of the year, and in retrospect, I’ve done pretty good this past week since you were my Scholar.”
Jaemin sat up and crossed his arms. Was he considering it? On a flattering level, yes. His tutoring skills were so good that he wanted to keep him? He’d take any sort of positive boost he could get. Yet, he was refusing it because he didn’t know what this entailed, and he still didn’t understand what the hell he was going on, being around him for. Not one reason popped into his head when he thought about him going to any extent that was nice. “Only because you’re nice to me. Turn on me and I’ll ruin your fucking life,” He raised his fist and Jeno flinched. Now you’re scared of me, huh? He wanted to blurt out. “You can text me anytime that you want to study and I’ll see if I can.”

“Thanks,” Jeno smiled at him as he hopped out of the car and rushed into the school.

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Chapter End Notes

ngl i was laughing so fucking hard writing this, jeno really tried it. also, was i listening to palette while writing this? absolutely i was. stan iu / gd.

thank u all for the nice comments and feedback on here, curiouscat, and twitter! it makes me heart warm even if its just a 'nice' (yes, i've gotten comments on things saying just 'nice') and the comments yall leave make my heart burst <333
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

jaemin decides to turn over the piece of paper and see what's on the other side.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Fast forward a week, and Jaemin was eternally confused. Jeno had asked him for academic help about every other day, and they would sit in the library for about an hour to study. Why was he confused? Between each question, or few questions, he would slip in something as if they were in normal conversation.

What’s your favourite food? ‘’Burgers, thanks to you.’’ You’re welcome.

Have you ever been to the aquarium? ‘’That’s a dumb question, Jeno, I don’t go anywhere.’’

What do you like to do in your free time? ‘’Focus on the problem.’’

It was out of nothing but pure curiosity, he realized, because who wouldn’t want to know stuff about No-Face? Speaking of his ‘alter ego’, he hadn’t heard that name in quite a while, and received minimal bullying, Shocking? Yes. Guess they were too busy with tests to torture him.

He tried his best to answer his questions, even if they seemed a little stupid. Deep down, he hated to admit, he liked the attention. Ever since he had gotten off of his anxiety medication, he was more easily affected, but he hadn’t been. If anything, he was way more relaxed.
“Are you doing anything next Saturday?” Jeno tapped on Jaemin’s paper with his pen.

“You know me well enough to answer your own questions at this point,” He leaned against his hand with a blank look. This week was a few tests, so it was him who was working his ass off, just to ensure he knew the material. Jeno was tagging along, for whatever reason.

“You should be doing stuff, you have a bike now,” His voice feigned having a whiny tone. “Have you ever been to a costume store?”

“Is that a jab at me, Lee Jeno?”

“No, I’m curious. Costume shops are so fun, you can mess around, as long as you put everything back, you can buy stuff, you can do so much. It’s really fun, and I used to go to them all the time when I was younger with my mom.”

“I already have enough of a costume on. I’ve never been,” Jaemin resumed working in his workbook.

“You should come with me, next Saturday, to one that’s thirty minutes away from here.”

His anxiety began to rise and he looked up. “Why? What do you mean- I mean, what do you gain from bringing me along?”

“I just saw all the blood rush from your face,” Jeno rested his chin in his palm. “I don’t have anyone else to go with. You need stuff to do, and your mom says that you need to get out of the house.”
“What, are you friends with my mother now?” Jaemin swallowed and blinked a few times in a row to fight back his completely unwarranted tears.

“You look scared.” After all, Jaemin’s head was lowered, almost on top of the pages of his book, and looked like he was cowering away from the conversation. “Very threatening. Should I withdraw my offer?”

“I still don’t see why I have any reason to come along.” He ran his fingers through the thick of his hair.

“It’ll be better than the restaurant, even if you didn’t even go inside ,” Jeno rolled his eyes. “You’d be surprised how nice the people there are. And if you’re scared about your eyes,” He pointed at each one slowly, noticing how he could see what would be his pupils were following his finger, “I bet they would just think you liked wearing contacts. You’d be surprised how many people there wear contacts, they might just think you like wearing the black out ones. It’s a costume shop .”

Jaemin huffed and continued to work on his problems. “I’ll think about it.”

“Maybe then you’ll tell me what your favourite color is, or accidentally reveal it,” Jeno smiled.

“You’re absolutely awful,” He groaned and rested his face against the book.
At the moment, Jaemin was curious as to how next Saturday would go. He was taking his time, riding home. The breeze was hitting his face, from both the weather and how fast he was whizzing along the street. Feeling the weather was nice and therapeutic for his stressful mind. Going outside was something that he wished to do more often, but didn’t have the will to do so. The second he approached his house, he sighed and slowed down. The delightful breeze ceased blowing, and his hair flopped back down into his eyes. It was messed up, but looks didn’t matter, in his case.

He pushed his bicycle inside and rested it against the wall, as per usual. The same old weekend cycle, getting ready to do nothing but study and sit alone while his mom bustled around the house.

“Jaemin!” His mother called out, her footsteps descending the stairs next to him. “I need you to come to the store with me.”

“What- You know I don’t like coming to the store,” He whined.

“You know I don’t like leaving you at home alone,” She reached the bottom step and slipped on her shoes. “I couldn’t get to the store today because they closed off the main road going that way, but they’ve opened it back up for a few hours. Come on, some fresh air won’t kill you.”

When he had asked for fresh air and therapeutic outdoor time, this isn’t what he meant. He groaned and moved out of her way so that she could grab her keys out of the dish.

“Your hair is a mess, you look like you went through a wind tunnel,” She shook her head. “Why are you wearing sunglasses? Where did you get these from?”

“Hey!” Jaemin grabbed onto the sides when she tried to grab them off his face. “I ordered them
online. I got them for when I decide to go outside, of course. Since you want me to go outside more, I might as well get used to it and comfortable in some way”

She took in a deep breath. “Whatever floats your boat.”

“I can feel you judging me,” He held the door open for her. “At least I’m going outside more often than before.” Both of them were walking out the door, when it suddenly hit him and he remembered the (could he call him this anymore) bane of his existence, and the reason he was going outside in the first place, lately. “Can I go somewhere next Saturday?”

“Where on earth are you going on a weekend?” Suddenly, he was the one in front, being questioned.

“Jeno wants me to go to a store with him, or something like that,” Jaemin shrugged. “He says I’ll fit in, because it’s a costume store. A bit backhanded and rude, but whatever, I guess.” The way she was looking at him made it seem as though he had transformed into a completely different person in front of her eyes. “What? I know, I’m very skeptical of it, too, but it won’t kill me.” Even if he greatly thought that it would do so.

“If we’re in public, I have a great chance of getting help. Plus, I have my phone. I’m also able to defend myself pretty well. You have nothing to worry about, trust me. Since you and Jeno have been talking like nobody’s business, apparently.” Jaemin rolled his eyes as he sat in the car. For once, he was actually insisting on going outside. Another impulse decision. There was nothing for him to lose.

Previously she had been reluctant to let him go, yet encouraged it - hence her giving him his own form of transportation. Little did she know, and was still struggling to realize, that it gave him more freedom to be a typical teenager. “If you let me know the address and how long you’re going to be there, I might be fine with it.”
The mother and son slumped back against their respective seats, staring at each other. On both ends, they were hoping for the best for each other for the coming future. Jaemin, for developing and becoming not only a functioning member of society, but a functioning human. His mother, for having to cope with blatant fear in her heart for what could happen and how things were going to turn out for her beloved son.

+++ 

Chapter End Notes

im so excited omg omg omg

also i apologize if there's a lot of non-nomin content ,, it's really important to jaem's character development okay i promise (this is tagged slow burn though sooo)
To put it bluntly, Jeno was a fucking plague. Ever since he realized that he was following him around, just as Jaemin was doing to him before, he noticed just how frequently it was happening - along with why he wasn’t being bothered. Every time he walked out of his classes that were in a convenient area of the school, Jeno would regain his posture from sitting against the wall and take his place next to him on the way to their respective classes. Lord knows why he hadn’t noticed this the second he was doing it. For once, there were no attempts to make conversation; Jeno was simply there.

During lunch, he found that to be his only time alone. Jaemin presumed that was the time when he was hanging out with his friends, and his own time alone. He was finding it relaxing, and he was starting to become more relaxed and figure things out. Suddenly, he was facing several revelations about himself, now that he wasn’t having to worry about being bothered. In other terms, he was peaking.

He leaned back in the librarian’s chair with his headphones in. Nothing was looking entertaining in his YouTube recommended, so he tabbed over to his Watch Later. Guess he could finally watch that video he had added at least two weeks ago.

Along the line was Sherlock by SHINee, Lies by Big Bang, Ah Yeah by EXID.. All very simple and predictable whilst watching them. Some he hadn’t seen, but this still applied. Jaemin tabbed out of the video to scroll through his Watch Later in search of a new video. The video continued to play in the background, until it counted down to number one, which was apparently the best one. He pulled it back up and watched. Hm, finally one that he hadn’t seen before.

The song was beautiful, and he would most likely add it to his playlist. Despite the delightful
soundtrack, the music video was generic, a boy loving a girl, and that girl going off and marrying another man, and him toiling in his own sadness. He still wanted to hear the end of the song.

Jaemin’s eyes darted around the screen in interest as the wedding drew to a close. It was making his heart beat fast, and he was breathing heavier than normal, because it suddenly became enticing, somehow. Apparently, the two guys were friends, which just made the story that much more heartbreaking. That was cute.

He placed his finger on the video and began to drag it to the bottom of the screen until the video continued past the music. Jaemin watched as the guy who was driving the girl in the car sat, crying, and put the torn picture together. The two guys were suddenly seated next to each other as the video drew to a close.

They.. They were..

“Hey Jaemin.”

The boy jumped and his phone slipped out of his hands. His headphones were ripped out of his ears. In a desperate attempt to both collect his phone and sit up straight, he almost fell out of the chair. Upon turning around, he realized that it was only Jeno. Then again, it was Jeno, who was the last person he wanted seeing that he was watching a video like that, out of context. “Aren’t you supposed to be somewhere else?”

“Jiseok isn’t here today, and his group has scattered without telling me,” He bit the inside of his cheek and looked around. It was painfully obvious that he had caught a glimpse of what he was watching.

“So what are you doing here?”
“You’re the only other friend I have,” Jeno sat on the desk and drummed his fingers.

Jaemin swallowed and stared at him. Jeno considered him a friend? A great person? One that was delightful to be around? That was the highest that anyone - maybe even compared to his mother - had ever looked up to him as. He felt a lump in his throat and a tight feeling in his chest. Was he blushing? All the blood was most certainly rushing to his face.

“Do you.. Have any food?” Jeno waved his hand in front of his face.

“I do, I do,” He snapped out of his thoughts and pulled his lunch box towards him from where it was on the desk. “You should come around, so that nobody bumps into you or anything.”

Jeno nodded and swung his legs over the desk, rather than using the entrance to the back. “I remember seeing you here once, so I didn’t know if you still would be.” He didn’t bother looking for a chair and opted to continue sitting on the desk. “Are you allowed to eat in here?”

“I am,” Jaemin took a bite of the sandwich from his opened lunch box. “The librarian is scared of me. I offered to watch over the library while she’s eating with the other teachers, so it’s a win for everyone.”

“Isn’t that a little insulting?”

“Why do you think I offered to help?” He looked down at his phone on the ground. “It makes me feel less bad about the fact that this is out of fear.”
“I really like that song,” Jeno pointed to his phone on the ground, where the paused image of the video was displayed. “But I see your point. An eye for an eye.” He grinned and raised his eyebrows.

Jaemin pouted at both remarks as he picked it up. “Perhaps you have some taste.”

“Was that funny?”

“Not your joke. Your jokes are tasteless,” He smirked as someone walked by and slid a book onto the desk. “Your music taste. The song is really good, and it seems generic, but has a bit of heart put into it that makes it unique. The singer is really talented.”

The two of them slightly gazed at each other, ignoring the obvious disregard they were exhibiting towards the music video. Since Jaemin had been ignoring that for years, the video had only tacked on to his list yet another part of himself he had to discover and face, this being the most terrifying.

“Knowing the storyline of the video gives it the raw emotion that it lacks,” Jeno said in a hushed voice.

The black-eyed boy grabbed his drink in an attempt to possibly cool down his purely embarrassed blush. Surprisingly enough, Jeno wasn’t teasing him for it. “Y - Yeah.. I - I…. It..” He couldn’t find any words to define how it made him feel without outing his forbidden thoughts.

“Jeno!”
Jaemin and the other snapped their gazes over to a girl approaching the desk. It was one of Jiseok’s friends, more importantly, one that he was a little more handsy with. She looked like she had been running around in a frenzy, since her normally cutey bob was sticking out in some places. “Jeno, I’ve been looking for you everywhere. I need to talk to you.”

“Aera, what’s wrong?”

Her eyes darted from Jeno to Jaemin, and back to Jeno. “I know we’re supposed to have the whole ‘haha No-Face’ agenda, but Jiseok is home for a reason- His mom kept him home because he apparently was talking to Daeshim-” Aera was rushing her words, and grabbed onto Jeno’s arm. “And he was saying that he was actually going to get violent- And I know that everyone else would be willing to join in, but I’m really not looking to be tied into this, as much as I am scared of you.” She looked at Jaemin.

“Violent? What do you mean violent?” Jaemin’s eyes widened.

“That he was actually going to hurt you, hurt you,” Aera looked him straight in the eyes, out of both pity and inquisitiveness at how she was actually seeing his eyes for the first time. “Jeno, I know you hang out with him, so he must not be that bad, and I’m not looking to ruin my reputation, you know? I have good grades, and I’m lined up to go to college, I don’t want anything bad on my record,” Her eyes teared up.

“Aera, shh, it’s fine, we don’t have to hang out with Jiseok anymore.” Jeno pulled her into a hug to keep her from crying. He made eye contact with Jaemin, sighing.

“A - Aera,” Jaemin cleared his throat. As suspicious as he had to be when it came to other people, this wasn’t a time to treat her as a suspect, since this was a serious threat to him. “Can you.. Hang out with him again? Just to see why?” He looked down. “He’s never felt inclined to threaten me like this before, and I’m scared.”
The girl lifted her head and looked and Jeno for a bit, then at Jaemin. “Please don’t take this harshly, but I’m fucking terrified of you, and I have been for three years.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything else.”

“But if Jeno is fine hanging out with you, then maybe I shouldn’t listen to Jiseok,” She wiped her cheeks. “Especially if he’s like this, now. Maybe I should be open to considering you a friend, like Jeno does.”

Jaemin looked her in the eyes and nodded his head slowly and timidly. Another friend?

+++ 

Chapter End Notes

did i just make this jaemin's true awakening of his sexual orientation? yes. bonus points if you can guess what song im referring to lmao

also i felt that a third friend would be a cute addition to the story, and yes she will add to the plot hehehe aera rights ! (even if jaemin doesn't consider her a friend yet)

End Notes

Hi! I'm Marcie! If you want to follow me / talk to me / stalk me / roleplay (i rp bts and nct pls rp with me lmao) my twitter is here , my curiouscat (to leave me feedback and suggestions) is here , and my kakaotalk is marciexbam! :) 

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