# ink and bloom

by petaljimi

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**Summary**

He recognizes young chrysanthemums, light-yellow and fresh, blanketed by branches flowering a deeper gold.

Taehyung's heart stutters when he sees what's written across the ribbon itself.

*for you*

(or, the one where photography student taehyung meet-cute, cute-meets jeongguk, a handsome, tattooed florist.)

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**Notes**

hello! the one truth about this fic is: it really was genuinely supposed to only be a short (super short, extremely short) drabble, but after seeing a picture of jungkook's beautiful tiger flower tat... this happened

hope you enjoy!
There’s a difference between being reckless and spontaneous.

That’s what crosses Taehyung’s mind, anyway, as he weaves through the lines of traffic and dodges the string of curse words impatient drivers are sending his way as he makes a run for it. Technically, he shouldn’t be jaywalking like this, but this had been a split-second decision and he was going to be even more late to class if he didn’t hurry up so… bend the rules and endanger his life it was.

Reckless, he reasons, would be walking into the streets, blindfolded, not looking both ways or at all.

Reckless, and cruel, would be leaving Jimin alone after the latter had texted him just one sentence earlier that morning.

soulmate (3:17am): < it’s not gonna work out between me and hyung after all >

That’s all it took to have Taehyung packing his bag quickly, stopping by the grocer downstairs from his closet of an apartment to fill up his mesh bag with flat peaches. Then, he had set off on foot, making his way a few blocks down to Jimin’s place, which he shared with Seokjin, a well-mannered senior who had unofficially taken them both under his figurative wing.

Taehyung had been furious, nearly tripping over a step on his way up to the third floor of Seokjin and Jimin’s building because honestly, who would have the audacity to hurt Jimin?

Luckily, he’d see Yoongi soon since they shared a class on Mondays and then he could help them straighten this whole thing out.

Jimin had been the one to answer the door, face crumpling at the sight of the bag Taehyung had offered to him in greeting. Immediately, Taehyung had reached for his hand and pulled him into a hug.

His morning was spent just like this - consoling his closest friend, making sure he remembered to take deep breaths and drink water, as they tried to untangle the web that was Jimin’s relationship with Yoongi. Seokjin had left already for class, leaving the pair to set up camp in the small living room. Sitting cross-legged against the sofa and shoulder-to-shoulder, Taehyung was relieved to hear Jimin’s breaths begin to even out.

This had begun last year after Jimin and Yoongi had met a kickback and clicked, to mostly everyone’s surprise. One glance at the marks spread like a constellation on Yoongi’s neck the next morning told Taehyung all he needed to know.

I might like him, Jimin had confessed in a drunken haze at a different party altogether, clutching onto his arm like a lifeline.

Taehyung knew he was afraid, could hear the honesty melt into fear in his voice.

“He doesn’t want anything serious, Taehyungie, and it makes sense. He graduates soon and I’m still gonna be here, you know?” Jimin said this morning, releasing a watery chuckle and smiling in
a way that hadn’t reached his eyes in the slightest.

“That’s bullshit and you know it,” he had countered, slicing a peach open a little haphazardly. Jimin let out a *tsk* of worry before motioning for the knife. “If you really like someone, you’d make it work. You’d at least give it a chance and Chim, *anyone* can see that he likes you. Hyung just needs to seriously reevaluate before I rearrange his guts —”

“No, don’t. I’ve thought about it, and you know I would just—”

“If you were planning to say anything about ‘holding him back,’ don’t. You know that’s not true,” he had placed the slices down firmly, squeezing his friend’s knee before pulling him into another embrace. “I’ll talk to him.”

He’s pulling the door to the lecture hall now with a lot of gusto and spots the head of mint-colored hair up ahead and suddenly, Kim Taehyung has a mission.

“Hyung, I need to talk to you.”

Not one to waste time, he slips into the seat next to Min Yoongi, uttering the words under his breath. They hit their intended mark, if the way the older boy’s shoulders stiffen was any indication so Taehyung twirls a pen and bides his time.

Yoongi looks down at his notebook before licking his lips. "Taehyungie—"

"It’s Taehyungssi to associates... and people who mistreat my best friend," he remarks lightly, uncapping his pen before straightening in his seat.

To his credit, Yoongi's baffled face soon morphs into one that's filled with unmistakable shame and Taehyung raises his eyebrows. *Ah-ha.*

"I didn't mean to—" Yoongi doesn't get to finish his thought as their professor clears his throat, sound catching all their attention, and pipes up with an announcement.

"—Right, so the final, independent portfolio of this semester, I will be allowing you to use a medium of your choice, but please note that you must have a consistent theme. I will not be permitting duplicates so please email Joohyun your topic as soon as possible. You all know the drill as my most seasoned students. You must..."

Here comes Kwon's dramatic pause, as always.

"*Must* claim your theme, alright?" With a flourish of the arms, he nods in that satisfied way, peering over his glasses to make eye contact with each student. "Good. Today, we will be discussing different photographic processes that were developed and used over the course of time. You may recognize some of them as relics, no longer used since we have the digital forefront of technology fully capable of supporting any individual's artistic visions, but I challenge you to see past any stigma associated with their age..."

By the time class ends, Taehyung jostles Yoongi's shoulder to wake the older and sure enough, Yoongi grunts softly in response before blinking his eyes open. He still says nothing.

Thankfully, Taehyung's in no real rush, opting to pack his canvas tote bags, fingers extra slow and careful.

"Look, I maybe hadn't said the right thing to Jiminie," he finally hears, looking up to find Yoongi shouldering a backpack strap, expression morose.
Taehyung smiles small, resisting the urge to pinch his hyung's cheeks. "Later, hyung, you owe me food first. What do you say? Should we get out of here?"

Taehyung is a firm believer in the fast lane.

During their semi-weekly check-in calls, in between half-stern reminders to eat properly and sleep as regularly as he possibly could, his mother also liked to remind him to slow down every once in a while, that there was time for everything, that he didn't need to be in a rush all the time, but with all due love and respect, he'd disagree, go as far as to insist that he's doing just fine.

University had taken him halfway across the country, farther from his family than he's ever been, and it had taken a couple of years, but he had finally settled into a rhythm all his own.

Life waits for no one, and he certainly wasn't going to stop and smell the roses waiting for it to happen.

It's this same philosophy he applies here, advising Yoongi as best as he can.

"What you need to do," Taehyung's saying earnestly between mouthfuls of tteokochi, "is to tell him the truth. Tell him exactly what you just told me, Yoongi-hyung."

It's warm outside and the picnic table they've settled at is precarious at best, one of the legs wobbling with the slightest movement.

The best food, everyone always said, is found downtown, in the heart of the city, and basking in the fragrance of it all, Taehyung finds that he can't disagree. He picks at the nearest tray, grabbing probably too much at once as Yoongi chews quietly, pushing a small plate of their remaining kimbap towards him. When the older swallows, he seems to come to a crossroads and folds his arms, looking doubtful.

"Right, and where did you want me to begin, Taehyung—the part where I said 'I'm pretty sure I've liked Park Jimin since the beginning' or 'He's the first person in a long time I'd want to pursue something more with' or 'I don't want to hold him back because I'm leaving soon'?"

To an inattentive ear, Yoongi might've sounded incredulous, but Taehyung can hear the real melancholy in his words, can feel the poorly disguised desperation, and knows better than to comment on it.

"All that is a lot closer to your truth than what you apparently did say to him," he says instead, gulping down a particularly large piece of rice cake before fixing Yoongi with a steely gaze. "'We're better off like this, Jimin-ah' isn't it, hyung."

The older boy breaks eye contact, cheeks flushing. "I—"

"You and I both know you'd raze these streets for Jimin. Now quit thinking with your head and move with your heart instead."

The streetlights above them flicker on as Yoongi sits back, resignation written on his face. "Where did you learn that one?"
Taehyung only laughs, wiping the corner of his mouth. "Talk to him, hyung. It's in your best interest."

"Maybe I could get him flowers," Yoongi nods, musing out loud as he picks up his chopsticks again. "To show him I'm sorry."

"That's the spirit," he pats the older's back consolingly. He reaches over to grab the last piece in Yoongi's tray. "Just don't break his heart again or you'll have to answer to me."

"Is that a threat?" Yoongi playfully blocks Taehyung's chopsticks.

"Yes," Taehyung says serenely, easily flicking the utensils out of the way. He pops the dumpling in his mouth, smacking his lips briefly as he chews. With one hand, he's handing Yoongi his phone. "Those flowers better be beautiful."

He swears he's never seen the older move faster.

 scrollTop

With the window open like this, the smell of fresh rain from this morning comes in gentle waves.

It's no secret to anyone he knows that he's a little more sensitive to smell than is considered normal, so it’s unsurprising that Jeongguk finds himself welcoming the clean scent.

Plucking a few bells and sprigs of ruscus from his row of vases, he's careful to scatter the stems throughout the bouquet before leaning back to inspect his work. The final order of the day had been last-minute, one for another long-standing customer who had caught wind that this storefront would be closing soon. It had been Hoseok's plea-and-pout that had sealed the deal and Jeongguk had only rolled his eyes playfully before giving in.

"Miss Lee, I'm happy to see you! Jeonggukkie should be right out with your order soon. How are your puppies..." the conversation filters into his station, Hoseok's voice bright as ever.

He could do this with his eyes closed, Jeongguk thinks warmly, as he reaches for the Bloom signature paper and begins wrapping the flowers with ease. The soft-pink pom poms mixed rather well with the fire-red of Miss Lee's favorite carnations, filling out nicely, and with a bit of a flourish of hand, Jeongguk finishes the order, tearing the clothespin note above him to sign off.

Wiping his hands clean, he reaches for one last touch included in all orders today and today only: a thank-you-forever kind of card that marked the end of Bloom's run in their small town.

Bittersweetly does he walk up to the counter with his latest in hand, smile growing across his own features when he spots the elderly woman.

"Miss Lee, you look radiant as ever," he greets with a small bow before handing her the cluster of flowers.

In return, Jeongguk receives a soft pinch to the cheek (from Miss Lee) and an approving smack on the butt (from Hoseok).

"Jeon Jeongguk, my sweet painter boy," she clasps his hand with both of hers. Miss Lee always
smelled so much like the vanilla cookies from Jeongguk’s childhood, he fights to suppress a smile. "I hate to think that this might be the last time you might ever flirt with this old woman."

"Ah," Jeongguk shakes his head, grinning. "I won't forget someone like you so easily, Miss Lee. We'll be sure to visit."

"You must, and you must update me with your art," she insists, putting a hand to her forehead dramatically. Over the years, she’d given up on dying her hair jet-black, heeding Jeongguk’s request and opting to let the silver-white grow out. "How I hate to see Bloom go."

"We appreciate you sticking with us from the beginning, Miss Lee. Moving to the city seems daunting, but we're hoping for the best," Hoseok shares as he rings her up.

"The city will be lucky to have you and your beautiful flowers," Miss Lee dots the receipt and slides an extra bill across the grain, much to Hoseok's protests. "Please do come back to visit soon."

By the time she takes her leave, the last inkling of sun has nearly disappeared from the horizon ahead and Jeongguk's flipped their COME ON IN! sign around, signaling the end of their work day. As the streetlights begin to flicker on, he pauses in brushing the dust away from the shelves and sighs.

"Do we really have to move, hyung?"

Jeongguk cringes, hearing the whine in his own voice, but Hoseok play-tackles him from behind and laughs right into his ear.

"Afraid so, Jeonggukkie. The city will be different, but our storehold will be bigger and we'll make the best of it like we always do," Hoseok rubs Jeongguk's arm in consolation. "C'mon, it's time we finish packing."

With a final squeeze, Hoseok moves away, chattering about how Namjoon would arrive next week to help them load the moving truck before their big trek to the city.

Under the glow of their stringed lights, Jeongguk hums under his breath as he wipes the last of his stem cutters. Placing them in a box filled with an array of knives and shears, he flexes his hands in an attempt to fight the chill of the night and watches as his inked lilies expand in view.

The black lines, curving to form some of his own favorite flowers, are comforting, reminding him of the one night he had spent after-hours in this very shop doodling something that would later on become part of his skin.

He had added and added and over the years, his hands becoming a sort of personal canvas. A sign of permanence in the light of all the change.

He spots the last of some old canvases, a jar of small paintbrushes, before he sweeps them all into the same box. It's been a while since he'd last touched his paints.

The move would mark the start of something new, he reminds himself, as he shuts the door behind him.

His heart has yet to decide if he's more excited than nervous.
Taehyung's battling a vending machine the next time he sees Yoongi and this time, the older is wearing a grin that could beat the sun at its own game.

"You don't have to say a word, hyung," he laughs, holding out a hand for a high-five which Yoongi completes.

It's kind of endearing how wide the other's cheeks can actually stretch, but then again, Jimin had been wearing a similar smile this morning, clutching a small bouquet of yellow and winter-white daisies like he couldn't quite believe they were real and in his hand. Both in a rush, they hadn't been able to stop and chat, but Jimin was beaming. It hadn't taken much for Taehyung to put two and two together.

"It's a nice day, Taehyungie," Yoongi says casually, chin jutted out as he approaches. Taehyung's taken to giving the machine a little love tap because he did just punch in C2 and needed his chips desperately.

"I bet it is," he replies, cheek in tongue, biting back a laugh. "The flowers were beautiful after all. Nice choice."

Yoongi nods shyly, hand rubbing the back of his neck until the skin turns a soft pink. "I think Jiminie really liked them."

"That's what's important," Taehyung winks before turning back to the vending machine and giving it a swift kick. He's unsuccessful in rescuing his packet of potato chips and emits a small huff of frustration. "Say, Yoongi-hyung, I have a favor to ask..."

Yoongi chuckles lightly before extending a hand to the keypad. There must be some secret code that Taehyung's not aware of - instead of emitting a metallic groan like it's been doing for the past half-hour, the thing comes to life and beeps happily before pushing his food out and through.

The older drops the snack into Taehyung's hand and nods in affirmation. "Favor good. You're welcome."

"Huh?" Taehyung's caught mid-crunch, savoring the salty-sweet burst of flavor on his tongue. "No, this wasn't the favor, silly hyung."

He swallows before digging in again. "I wanted to ask if you had any film left. I'm using my old film camera for the project."

"Oh? Is Vante finally making a comeback?"

"He is," Taehyung confirms, smiling at the reference. It'd been a while since he had heard the self-assigned nickname, which had cropped up during his first year. Infatuated with Badzim's work in media and photojournalism, Taehyung had taken inspiration from a great, always holding a camera with what he hopes is also a thoughtful hand.

Photography, at the end of the day, isn't just a hobby. It's capturing moments and telling stories, a lifeline tethering the best of us to the world, you know?

And now he's going back to his trusted 35mm after a long stint with the digitals. But first:
"I need a refill. I found out that Namdaemun's closed a while back, so I'm trying to find another shop," he mourns. The shop had been his go-to and he'd been surprised to call the other day only to find that it had closed down unexpectedly mid-way through the year.

Yoongi nods in understanding. "I've been hearing of a new place that has all the typical gear and equipment not too far from here. Joohyun-noona mentioned it a couple of times during class, remember? The one a couple of blocks away. There's a good chance they'll have refills for any film camera."

Shrugging off his backpack, Yoongi takes out a piece of paper and scrawls something quickly. "Think this is the address."

"Thanks, hyung," Taehyung says gratefully, scanning directions. He's delighted to find that the location wasn't too far from the main campus at all.

He offers the bag towards the older, shaking the chips inside. "Want one?"

"I'm good," Yoongi waves a hand before peering down at his watch. "Hey, do you think I'd be able to catch Jimin-ah before his Organic Chemistry class ends?"

At that, Taehyung doesn't hide his smirk. "Oh, so you know his schedule now too?"

"Okay, it's not what you think, w-whatever you're thinking."

"I wasn't thinking anything, am I supposed to be thinking something, hyung—"

"Kim Taehyung, you—"

"Have fun!"

enuous

A bead of sweat travels from his forehead all the way down his nape and it tickles.

Jeongguk musters all the strength he has to not laugh because he has several boxes in hand right now, smaller items stacked haphazardly, and he really doesn't want to drop anything when he's already come so far.

"Over here, Guk!"

It's early Tuesday morning and the city is just waking up, roads finally illuminated by the grace of the sun. Jeongguk, Hoseok, and Namjoon have made fast progress, already a little closer to halfway in unloading everything that would go into their new building. Clipped onto the back of Hoseok's trusty mini-van, the small moving truck they had rented stands open as they move back and forth.

"Joon-ah, drop that one off here and we can help Jeongguk with the baskets," Hoseok's voice travels to where Jeongguk is. He's careful to sidestep the small incline of the sidewalk on his way to the front door, tightening his grip on the boxes.

"I think I'm okay, hyung," he calls out as he pushes through the entrance, hearing the small bell above him tinkle in greeting.
"You can't be human, Guk, how on earth did you carry all of this?" Namjoon comes to relieve him of the small containers on the very top, balanced on a pile of vases that had been in danger of falling. Jeongguk leans over to place his set on the ground before he dusts his hands off, exhaling in relief.

"Our trusty Jeonggukkie. What would I do without you?" Hoseok joins in, handing each of them a water bottle. "Not too bad, right?"

The space had been unoccupied for some time, was the story, and Hoseok had enthusiastically showed them the floor map and pictures as they brainstormed a possible layout over dinner one night. It'd be bigger and there would be room for more than one cooler this time, Namjoon had suggested, much to Hoseok's happiness, and the opportunity to expand their selection of flowers.

Standing in the middle now, Jeongguk thinks that the nice pictures really hadn't done it justice: the air seeps into the space like it belongs and already, he can envision placing their shelves along the white wall. His station would be larger too, in the back still where he preferred to work, and he'd be able to elevate his containers to minimize strain. All in all, it's...

"Not too bad," he echoes, meeting Hoseok's proud gaze. "This place has potential."

"Not to mention..." Namjoon interjects, grinning, "We'd been meaning to mention it, Guk, but you could pick up school again if you'd like. The art community's bigger in the city."

At that, Hoseok's eyes land on Jeongguk meaningfully. "That's right. You could do what you'd like, Jeongguk-ah."

It was a topic they'd breach carefully every so often - this time last year, Jeongguk had offered to take over for the florist that had unexpectedly resigned and while Hoseok had been reluctant to let him do so, it hadn't been easy to find a replacement.

At Jeongguk's gentle insistence, he'd been instated as a part-time florist, but he learned the ropes too quickly to be considered a novice for long. Arrangement, he discovered, wasn't so bad, and then he had officially decided to take a break from his studies to help Hoseok full-time when demand skyrocketed. Even in their old hometown, its population a fraction of what the bigger city had, orders had kept coming and they had done their best to hold their own.

"I'm doing what I like right now, hyung," he says, and he means it. Thoughts of art school could wait, and anyway, he'd hit a block that seemed like it might last forever. Ultimately, right now, he was standing in the middle of his brother's dream come true and wanted nothing more than to relish in a successful move.

Hoseok tuts good-naturedly, hands quickly swiping at his eyes before turning away. "We need to buy a new duster, there's so much dust here because it's an old place, you know... bad for my allergies."

"You have no allergies, hyung—" Jeongguk protests, hiding his grin.

"There's just so much dust, let's clean, yeah?" Hoseok waves him off, pulling Namjoon to his feet. The latter winks at Jeongguk and holds out a hand.

"You heard the boss, Jeongguk. Time to get settled."

“Roger that,” he says, grinning ear to ear.

The morning had finally announced itself, golden sun surpassing the line of large, looming clouds,
and as Jeongguk steps outside to grab their last few boxes, he finds that the air feels new and crisp in the city.

♀

He really didn't want to seem like he was begging, but desperate times calls for desperate measures.

"Please, noona, you have to let me slide. I know I emailed you my theme earlier than that asshole, c'mon—"

"If you're trying hard to convince me, it's not working," Joohyun sing-songs, not sparing him a glance. "He emailed a full day earlier than you did, I'm sorry to say."

He hadn't meant to fall asleep so early the other night and submitted his theme proposal for the final portfolio too late. Taehyung had groggily woken up to an email from Joohyun saying that his original idea had regretfully already been claimed.

If he were to be honest, the idea would have been a personal revisiting of a photojournalism project he'd completed first year. He had been looking forward to a different planned approach this time and now that wasn't looking like a possibility at all.

Taehyung tries to sit down coolly to hide the slight flutter of panic he feels, but instead nearly knocks over an organizer overflowing with past portfolios. Her office was a shared space with three other TAs and four desks clustered as closely as theirs was kind of overkill, but as Yoongi had once said, the arts aren't a university priority. Still—

"You don't even like Jaehwa," he half-heartedly accuses, flashing her his most pitiful eyes yet. "You don't remember what happened last semester, do you? He plagiarized—"

"Liking him has nothing to do with it and what happens in another class doesn't come into play here, especially when that had been cleared up. I'm being fair, Tae, and you know it," she sighs, pausing in her sorting to peer at him over her glasses sternly. "The deadline is coming up soon, so you had best submit a different theme and do it soon so someone doesn't claim a similar idea."

Deep down, Taehyung knows she's right, but it doesn't stop his pout from growing in size.

"Now what do I do?" he asks mournfully, more to himself than anything. "I didn't have a backup."

Joohyun laughs, but it's soft, fond, and definitely not out of spite. When Taehyung looks up, she smiles and shakes a fist vigorously. "Taehyungie, you're a fighter. You can do this, okay? I have faith that you'll come up with something amazing like you always do."

The words do the trick and comfort him.

He just needs to clear his head. He'd come up with something else and it would work out.

Taehyung huffs, crossing his arms playfully. "How do you know that, noona?"

The corners of her eyes crinkle in amusement. "Because you're you. No one else has an eye for life like you do. You'll find another story to tell, that I'm sure of."

He leaves her office still wounded, but in slightly-better spirits, wracking his mind for another
theme. Taehyung's steps quicken as he approaches the barbecue place where he's set to meet Jimin for dinner, shivering when a gust of wind opens his coat by sheer force.

One look at his face and Jimin had already looped an arm around his as they're seated and soon enough, Taehyung's lamenting out loud.

"It'll work out, Tae," Jimin's reassuring him, patting his hair with one hand and turning over the brisket on the grill with the other. "You'll find something. Inspiration just hasn't struck yet."

Taehyung nods a little woefully before sighing. He just needs to refocus and find his bearings again.

"Enough about my struggles as a sad photography major, Chim. Did anything exciting happen today?"

Like Taehyung, Jimin had a damn good poker face.

He had a good poker face... except when it came to Yoongi.

His cheeks turn an absurdly cute pink and Taehyung's eyebrows shoot up in recognition.

He waits exactly ten seconds before he pounces.

"What did Yoongi-hyung do this time?" Taehyung leans in, grinning.

"He didn't do anything, I don't know what you're talking about," Jimin fiddles with his thumbs, reddening further.

"So these are nothing then?" he taps Jimin's half-open backpack, where a mix of light- and dark-orange flowers are tucked away safely in a paper pouch. "I take it he got you flowers again. But these are different, right?"

"He's trying to guess my favorite flower," Jimi mumbles, looking down, unable to fight his smile and Taehyung almost coos out loud.

"What was that? I couldn't quite hear—" he says, teasing, and then a light smack is delivered to his head.

"Don't."

"You both are cute in the nauseating way, I must admit," Taehyung sighs loudly, releasing enough air to blow strands of hair up and away from his forehead. "I give him props. How is it being in love, Jiminnie?"

He doesn't ask it mockingly - would never play around to that extent anyway - but when Jimin answers, the affection is real. Untouchable.

"It's nice, Tae. Yoongi-hyung... he's-he's really good to me."

The smile on his own face grows and he nods once. "I'm glad, Jimin-ah. Just know that I'm not afraid of taking on Yoongi-hyung if he hurts you. Mark my words."

"C'mon, eat, the meat's ready," Jimin laughs, hastily dropping slices on his plate. "It's your turn, you know, don't think I've forgotten."

Taehyung groans. "How many times do I have to tell you I'm not going on one of your voodoo set-
up dates—"

"It's through an app, Taehyungie, these guys are screened, oh my god—"

"Nope, no—"

Jimin's lips curl in a silly smirk and Taehyung resists the urge to wipe it right off his face. "One of these days, you're gonna on a blind date and come out of it, happy, in love, and I'm gonna stand right in front of you and tell you 'I told you so'—"

"Over my dead—"

"Those words exactly: I. Told. You. So."

The laughter that erupts between them does more than ease the worry in Taehyung's chest and by the time they leave, he feels lighter, the smile on his face genuine.

Taehyung knew he was in the wrong place the moment he stepped foot into the shop.

For one, there were too many boxes scattered here, some half-open, some still sealed, carefully pressed down with brown packing tape, a roll of which still lay atop one large carton nearest to the door.

Second: if this was really Holo Films, the photography studio Yoongi had highly recommended and scrawled the address of on a piece of paper for Taehyung, why was it so incredibly empty?

Where was the display case of digitals that his hyung hadn’t stopped raving about? The collection of standard black and silver tripods, the boxes of film that he was here for?

Shifting his messenger bag to his hip, Taehyung brings the worn leather case housing his beloved camera to rest on the one thing that was up—a mahogany-colored butcher block countertop.

Taehyung clears his throat and pushes his glasses up before looking around one last time.

“Hello? Is there anyone there?”

He’s greeted with silence.

Probably the wrong place after all.

Sighing, Taehyung grabs his camera case and swipes a finger across the windowsill on his way out for good measure. There’s an array of small vases lining the very top and he doesn’t leave without taking a quick picture. He smiles to himself, seeing the capture of kaleidoscopic colors.

The sun greets him like an old friend as he shuts the door behind him.
Taehyung's sorely tempted to mess with Jimin, especially considering the circumstances.

They're in the quad, the central campus hub, and all around them, familiar faces and those they
don't recognize at all zoom past quickly. In the middle of the middle sits a grand and ornately
formed fountain that reflects sunlight with ease, shining a deep gold, and standing on its rim is Park
Jimin.

To be clear, it hadn't been his idea in the slightest, but perhaps he had complained one too many
times and pushed Jimin to his breaking point.

"Let me be your subject, Taehyung-ah, look, I'm practically a model, I can be your muse—" Lifting
one leg, Jimin's assumed an impressive Arabesque, mouth pursed in a funny way, and Taehyung
indulges him, bringing his camera to his eye before pressing down on the shutter.

*Click!*

Post-midterm, post-deadline hysteria maybe, or maybe they were both just too impatient for their
own good, waiting for Seokjin's class to end.

They were planning to go karaoke hopping tonight as a start to their weekend and as they waited,
Taehyung had confided in Jimin about his lackluster ideas for the final project. After a few days,
he was still drawing blanks and the desperation to have something original, something unique and
genuine, was very real.

"When you develop that, you'll realize I'm the one," Jimin jokes. "Give me a call and I'll help you
out, Tae, free of charge. Best friend privilege."

Taehyung caps the lens as he laughs. Undoing the satchel's lock, he nestles the camera back inside.

"What are these?" Jimin sticks his head atop Taehyung's shoulder, grabbing the few films sticking
out from the pocket. He'd developed them a week ago, this time at the right place. "That one is
really pretty."

In between spine close-ups of old, weathered French textbooks that were honestly more for
aesthetic than anything is a photo of diffused light. The composition is nice, if a little unexpected,
and the angle captures the number of vases that had caught Taehyung's eye from the other day.

"This one?" he asks Jimin, who merely nods. "Ah, this one is a funny story. Yoongi-hyung... he
gave me the address to that flower shop instead of the address to the photography studio. I think
this was when they maybe hadn't finished setting up."

Immediately, Jimin adopts a half-silly look on his face and Taehyung flicks his forehead,
unimpressed. "Quit daydreaming about Yoongi-hyung, you literally saw him not a full hour ago—"

"Point taken," Jimin's eyes clear just as fast and he laughs. "I have a feeling about this one. Doesn't
it look like there might be something here?"

Taehyung turns the photo between his fingers. "Maybe I could stop by again. See if inspiration
strikes."

Jimin removes his head and clicks his tongue in approval. "Now you're talking. You can do this.
You're Kim Taehyung."
"And you, Park Jimin, need to get off the fountain before we get busted. For all I threaten Yoongi-hyung, you forget that he might just act on his own threats towards me if I let his precious treasure get hurt."

"Who is ready to sing their hearts out?" Seokjin comes from behind, sliding an arm around their shoulders.

The yelps of shock Taehyung and Jimin let out are enough to break glass.

衿

Jeongguk never claimed to be a morning person, but some days, he had to admit that waking up before the city did have its perks.

For one, there's peace during dusk. Though he hadn't ever voiced it, he'd been nervous about the move and had only known the city through short, sparse visits here and there. In a way, it hadn't lived up to its film stereotype portrayal at all: the streets weren't overridden by artificial lighting, loud, unwelcome voices, no. Their block housed buildings from decades ago and businesses just like Bloom, brick-and-mortar, small but big in intention.

The sun sets the same here, even if a little obscured by the long-standing citiescape, but rest assured the pink rays still felt welcome on his skin.

Second, it's satisfying in knocking out a few tasks, no matter how small. Moving had meant potting and re-potting flowers and plants of their own and currently Jeongguk was giving his oldest peperomia a leaf-cut before shuffling around their apartment for a good relocation.

"Shade, but you still want sun, don't you, little guy?" he murmurs, shaking back the hair that had fallen into his eyes. He needed a better hairband, maybe, because he definitely wasn't due for a haircut soon no matter what Hoseok said.

Before the shop, both Hoseok and Jeongguk would have been hard-pressed to be up before noon, but now... now, Jeongguk didn't mind so much. Especially if it meant that Hoseok could catch a few more winks of sleep.

Maybe he'd become the main florist for Bloom on accident, but Hoseok was its face at the end of the day and the brainpower, keeping track of the numbers, strategizing and working smart.

Jeongguk gladly left the numbers to his older brother.

Nowadays, he's happily in charge of starting up and refilling the coffee pot in the kitchen.

Jeongguk concentrates all his attention on the pour of milk in his makeshift Americano, planning to surprise Hoseok, when he feels something latch onto his arm.

"Did I scare you, Guk?"

"Hyung, don't do that unless you want me to punch you on accident."

"My little—not-so-little bunny brother. You wouldn't harm a fly."

"On purpose, Hobi-hyung. On accident, especially if startled, anything goes."
The leaf he'd been trying to draw looked more like a blob and Jeongguk sighs heavily before passing it on to his brother, who plops a messy kiss near his ear.

"Thanks for this, we're gonna need it today."

When Jeongguk raises his eyebrows, unable to recall if they had any orders early today, Hoseok pats his butt cheerily.

"We have fifteen arrangements due by ten, special request on the pebbles in those marble vases. For a 'small' engagement party. Now c'mon, up and at 'em. The day awaits." Hoseok downs the still-steaming cup like nothing and briskly starts clearing the counter.

Jeongguk balks. Fifteen for a 'small' gathering? Wasn't that almost an entire wedding's worth of...

On second thought, he was technically still a night owl, maybe he could get out of—

"Don't even think about it!"

The next time Taehyung steps foot in the shop, his senses are filled with flowers and he nearly gasps out loud.

The piles from before have disappeared and the assortment of containers that had since peeked out from packing boxes are lined up neatly against the wall.

Dappled in warm, golden light, the inside is decorated with bouquets and sprays of all kinds of artfully placed florets. If Taehyung thinks long and hard enough, he'd be able to name some of the flowers, but at the moment, it's enough to admire their beauty.

It's green and lovely, and as the door clicks shut, the sounds of the city bus and rushing cars on the street become muted until all that's left is Taehyung and the sweet air of the shop.

He'd taken Jimin's advice to revisit and tried his best to ignore the impending deadline looming over his head. Joohyun's second-to-last reminder had come in just a day ago and he had procrastinated. In truth, he has no real game plan and is running on sheer panic.

"Hello, can I help you?" A pleasant voice travels to where he waits by the countertop, fiddling with the photograph.

A man comes around from the back-shop, donning a dusk-orange apron and an even more pleasant smile. Taehyung's nerves melt away as he straightens and offers a slight bow in greeting.

"Hello, I was wondering if I could speak to the owner?" he asks politely.

The man nods, proud smile growing on his face. "The owner of Bloom? You're speaking to him already."

Day has broken through by the time he finishes explaining to the owner - Hoseok is my name, it's nice to meet you, Taehyung-ssi - why he's here and Taehyung feels relief flood his system when Hoseok claps his hands in understanding.
"You'd like to make Bloom the subject of your photography portfolio?"

He nods and feels for the picture tucked away in his pocket. When he unfolds it, Hoseok examines it only to laugh softly. "Those vases have relocated to the back where our resident florist works his magic. You must've visited when we hadn't finished set-up yet."

Taehyung returns the smile. "I had been looking for a photography studio a friend had recommended, actually. Got a little lost and ended up here."

"Well, we're honored you decided to come back and even more honored to be considered for this. Your project seems really promising."

The dulcet tones of wind chimes outside make their way inside as they exchange more words.

"You're more than welcome to photograph the flowers we care for. Weeks in, and they're already celebrities," the man jokes and Taehyung laughs.

"My hyung has already ordered more than a few bouquets for his special someone," he offers. "Your flowers are beautiful and have done a lot of good already."

He shakes Hoseok's hand, promising to be back with more official details and a disclosure for the man's records that this wouldn't be for commercial purposes, that Bloom would serve only as a creative focus and muse.

The gears in his mind are slowly turning and for the first time in a long while, it's not caffeine-induced.

That first day, he buys tulips for himself, exiting Bloom with a smile on his face.

⚘

To his credit, Jeongguk completes the order in record time, even going as far as to locating crisp rolls of twill tape to affix to the marble vases. They pack the delivery boxes quickly, taking great care to place enough space between each arrangement, when the front bell tinkles.

"Let me see who's at the front. You got this?" Hoseok asks, standing to full height and wiping his hands on a towel.

"Yeah, no problem, hyung," Jeongguk nods, flashing a thumbs up.

The centerpieces were really no problem this time around. At least the order hadn't been too complicated and the customers, a pair of seventy-somethings getting married, had called in early to confirm pick-up so everything is set.

Jeongguk rises slowly to stretch and grabs his mug before rinsing it quickly and filling it with water to drink. Moving towards the door, he catches bits of the conversation outside and it's a deep, rich voice this time.

He pauses in his tracks when something enters his field of vision.

It's the beret that catches Jeongguk's attention first. Then the rest of the details slowly fill in: a well-worn mustard yellow sweater, half-covered wavy hair, and a picture-perfect side profile.
He tries not to gape.

Deep Voice was speaking earnestly about something, pretty hands gesturing all around them, and now Jeongguk could see their face from the front.

There's a moment where time seems to freeze, Jeongguk remaining right where he is, hidden in part by the back-station's door and a couple of ferns, because then they smile.

He can't remember how long he stands there, looking (not staring, he wasn't staring), but soon they're plucking a few tulips from the display in front and stepping through the entrance and exit, waving.

Jeongguk doesn't realize his mouth has been partly open for the better half of about twenty minutes until he feels the need to cough, throat completely parched.

By the time Hoseok returns to the back to transport the boxes, Jeongguk's turned his attention to cutting the lilies in front of him, assuming the image of calm, but even then...

Even then, he can't unhear the steady thrum-thrum-thrum of his heart.

 الغربية

It shouldn't have come as a surprise, really, that Hoseok had warmed up to Taehyung fairly quick.

Taehyung surmises that it might have more to do with the man's outgoing, friendly personality than anything, but he finds that every time his cheeks are fondly pinched, he has to suppress the warm laughter bubbling within him.

"My sunflower bro!" Bloom's owner greets him happily as he enters the shop and Taehyung gives him a mock-salute of the fingers. "You look well, Taehyung-ssi."

Taehyung grins, letting his eyes crinkle naturally. "As do you, Hoseok-ssi."

As he places his satchel down to take out his camera, he recounts the week to Hoseok who listens attentively. Despite the onset of reviews and near-regular reminders to not wait until the last-minute to complete their portfolios, Taehyung had eased into a dependable schedule, mapping out his time so that he could finish everything he needed to.

Joohyun had been ecstatic to hear his revised submission in theme and since the approval, Taehyung had breathed easy. It hadn't - and it still wasn't - a cake walk, like some people might have believed it to be. Much of photography is logistics and in a way, beautiful shots that speak of someone's vision wasn't so much the result of chance or luck. They're carefully cultivated, and deeply thought out.

Half of photography, Taehyung iterates to himself as he crouches to capture young freesias peeking out in their basket, is the logistics.

An hour later, he's exhausted this corner of Bloom and sits back in a stool to survey his journal, drawing lines to the next stage of his assignment and then erasing them after another moment's thought. Bloom's scape was ever-changing and he wanted to preserve that in his work.
"Oh, Taehyung-ssi!"

He looks up from his gridded plot to find Hoseok's boyfriend, Namjoon, waving.

When they'd met for the first time, Taehyung had openly admired Namjoon's build - he himself was only slightly shorter than the man, but Namjoon occupied space a lot like Hoseok: a big presence, friendly, and intuitive. It wasn't uncommon to find him stopping by the store and since he'd been a regular presence at Bloom too, their paths crossed too often to not say hello.

"Hello," he greets.

"Still hacking away, huh?" Namjoon's eyes land on the pen and notebook and Taehyung nods before releasing a sigh.

"Trying to catch another point of view," he replies, twirling the pen in thought. "I'm already stuck though."

Namjoon's smile becomes deep-dimpled, and it's endearingly close to Hoseok's own grin that Taehyung warms instantly.

"My suggestion would be to go outside."

"That's what you always say, Joon-ah," Hoseok calls from the back before appearing. "Don't mind him, Taehyungie, my boyfriend happens to be mountain-minded. His first love was nature."

"Not true," Namjoon squawks in protest, but he looks far from offended. When Hoseok flicks the towel-in-hand, Namjoon catches one end easily before using it to pull him in. "You were my first and last love."

Hoseok nudges his boyfriend's nose away, play-miffed. "Taehyung, did you hear something?"

Taehyung wishes he had had his camera ready to capture the look on Namjoon's face.

They had ganged up on Namjoon, poking fun a little bit longer, but Taehyung had taken his advice and left his satchel and messenger bag indoors.

"We'd moved in and the first thing I told Hobi was that it made for a funny picture," Namjoon's saying conversationally. He finishes the last dregs of the coffee in his hand before placing the mug on the marble window sill. "A beautiful, little flower shop right in the mouth of Seoul."

Taehyung doesn't disagree.

It's like Bloom was a quirk caught in the middle, a stitch of color between faded bricks of red and brown, and by effect, the whole street seemed more open, friendly. The chill in the air disappears as he raises his lens and takes a test shot.

Namjoon lets out a small noise of approval and out of the corner of his eye, Taehyung sees him flash a thumbs-up.

A line of light cuts between where he and Namjoon are standing, and if Taehyung stands right at its endpoint and angles it correctly...

He flicks off the flash before pressing down on the shutter.

Excitement flutters in his chest at this moment and Taehyung knows he just might have something he can work with. There's a rush he feels playing with position and focus like this, and he stays
outside even long after Namjoon bids him a fond see-you-later.

Taehyung wraps up some time later, finally entering Bloom, which was now fully lit with its soft, day-white stringed lights. He hums, mentally calculating the time he has this week to see when he could stop by Holo to get a roll of film developed.

Taehyung spots his satchel where he had left it, neat and untouched in a small cubby that Hoseok had offered to him for use and doesn't think twice before grabbing the strap.

His fingers brush against something cool and soft, and it's reflex that saves it from falling to the ground completely.

His heart races, then slows when it registers that he's holding some stems that have been ribboned off prettily.

He recognizes young chrysanthemums, light-yellow and fresh, blanketed by branches flowering a deeper gold.

Taehyung's heart stutters when he sees what's written across the ribbon itself.

for you

"Hoseok-ssi?" Taehyung calls out quietly. He had to leave soon for a late-night meeting, but he wanted to thank the man for gifting him with something so lovely.

No one answers him, the shop suspended in a moment of inactivity, and Taehyung glances to the back to which Hoseok always disappears. On the wood of the door is a printed sign reading Be back in 5 mins!

Beeping sounds, one after another, break him out of thought.

With a twinge of regret, Taehyung looks around one last time before deciding to take his leave before he was late.

Wrapping his hand fully around the flowers, he steps away from the counter and smiles to himself.

He'd have to thank Hoseok in person the next time he visited Bloom.

ジョンク had fallen out of a tree, he hadn't cried. Not a single tear had escaped him even as he sat there recovering from the shock of the pain.

Instead, he had dusted himself off and wobbled to the back entrance of their home, passing by the netted sliding door and quietly pulling it shut.

The first thing he did was tell Hoseok, who had risen in panic first, jumping into action and inspecting him for signs of cuts and bruising. Jeongguk had gotten an earful of be-more-careful 's, Mom-would-have-killed-me-Guk-don't-do-that-again's, I-have-to-protect-you's, and nodded in slight shame. That night, he had fallen asleep to the sounds of the Avengers saving the world, and to Hoseok's breathing, feeling safe and sound again.
In fact, he'd grown up like that, confiding in Hoseok about anything under the sun and in return, he'd receive affirmation, he'd get sound advice.

When the world was loud and Jeongguk felt too quiet to stomach it, it was Hoseok that urged him to speak up for himself no matter what, in his own way.

It was normal though to keep some things to himself.

He hadn't, for example, told Hoseok that he was planning to get a tattoo the first time, and then another after that, until his own dreamt-up designs were already etched onto his hands and arms. Hoseok had found out a week into Jeongguk's recovery, when a slip in memory had caused the latter to forget to wear a long-sleeved shirt.

In his defense, it had been too hot, but god, did he pay for it. He had had the lecturing of a lifetime, one that would have made their grandmother proud had she had lived a little longer.

Jeongguk hadn't asked for forgiveness, knew he never needed to, and he knew that Hoseok knew that too. Instead, a few minutes passed after Hoseok had said his piece about not telling him in advance of plans like this, and then, Hoseok had huffed out a laugh before socking him gently in the shoulder.

They spent a good hour before Hoseok had to report to the office he worked part-time at at the time just admiring his earliest swirls of ink on skin. Some secrets were better off not being secret for too long.

This was maybe a little different from all of that.

Heart hammering in his chest, Jeongguk washes his hands twice, just taking his time. He cranes his neck just a little and waits for the tinkle of the bells affixed to Bloom's entrance. Sure enough, the light, airy sound makes its way to the back and he exhales.

The photographer was gone, and so was the bundle of chrysanthemums.

Some days classified as 'bad' and other days classified as 'exceptionally bad.'

Unfortunately, Taehyung was experiencing neither.

He was having an exceptionally bad week.

It's foolish, really.

Taehyung brings a frustrated hand through his hair, shaking out his brown locks. Beside him, Jimin squeezes his knee in reassurance, but there's no tamping down the feeling of mistake, mistake, mistake in his chest or ignoring the X-ray in front of them now.

"It's only proper that you sought medical attention straight away because this could have been worse," the doctor is saying. "And Taehyung-ssi, as inconvenient as this may be for you, the important thing is, it will heal, do you understand?"

He nods forlornly and murmurs his thanks as they rise from their seats. Together, they make their
way through the student health center and Jimin doesn't let go of Taehyung's remaining good arm, tapping a rhythm of comfort against it.

Even that can't stop the whine building in Taehyung's throat and as soon as they meet the sunlight outside, the ball really gets rolling.

"How *dumb* do I have to be to get my hand smashed like this, Jiminie? What am I gonna do?" He extends this vowel in desperation because the last few hours had been excruciatingly annoying, but he had no one to blame but himself.

"It's not your fault, Tae," Jimin, his voice of reason, sympathizes well as he pulls his sleeve to get him to move from the sidewalk. The hand on the streetlight seems mocking now because at least it was full, all fingers and bones intact, and presumably functional—all of which couldn't describe Taehyung's left hand. "You were working with really heavy material, and accidents happen. Just be glad it wasn't so severe... you might've had to get surgery."

"I'm an *art* student. My hands are *life*," he refutes, petulant to no real avail. Jimin only shushes him as they cross.

"At least it hadn't been your right hand," the other says as a final offering, straightening Taehyung's collar for him.

He sighs strongly enough to lift the hair from his forehead up and away.

These next weeks were going to be a nightmare.

Still, he’s going to try to make the best of it.

He wakes up Wednesday morning because of the itch making its way up his arm and ultimately decides to skip class in favor of visiting Bloom. Doing everything one-handed proves difficult and twice as time-consuming, which just meant yes, he just burned himself with the toaster. Twice.

Munching on a slightly-burnt piece of toast, Joohyun's words come to mind and he sighs. Realistically, he knows he could've gotten an extension on the project, but it was a matter of pride, wasn't it?

A deadline was a deadline, he reasoned, and spring was here and now. He had wanted to capture as much of it as he could on film, broken arm, no broken arm.

Taehyung steps into the shop as unceremoniously as he can, bringing with him a larger tote that has all his equipment, including a small pillow Yoongi had given him and a tripod he'd use for today's shoot. He'd been thinking of doing tight shots for a while, aiming to capture stills of the flowers on display.

He elevates his left arm a little to relieve some of the pressure and adjusts his lens as best as he can with one hand. As rare as it is for him to use the timer on his film camera, it's necessary now. He only hopes the end results will be good.

At some time, the cast starts to feel a little bit like dead weight and Taehyung attempts to ignore the numb feeling creeping up to his neck.

Taehyung startles and almost knocks over an arrangement when he hears a small thump.

"Hello? Is everything alright?" he calls out, leaning sideways to peer into the back-shop, but he can't get a proper angle.
Taehyung leans over more, lips pursed in concentration as he tries his best not to fall off.

The door is closed halfway, but he can still see the slight movement from where he sits.

Taehyung thinks he can hear sounds of guitar-playing, musing over the faint notes until he finally stands, unable to stave his curiosity.

He'd call out like he's done in the past, but there's something about the peace that he doesn't want to disrupt.

Taehyung approaches slowly.

Through a clear, empty vase, he sees hands appear to pluck a choice few evergreen stems and white-petaled flowers and then disappear and appear again. It's systematic and deliberate, he could count seconds between each flick of a wrist, and Taehyung gets a little lost admiring.

They're pretty hands.

*Flowers*, he registers. There are flowers all over.

Each glimpse he gets is a piece of the map inked on this stranger's skin.

Taehyung doesn't think too much when he lifts his camera, capturing a moment of the real flowers being ribboned off.

The bell announces an arrival.

"Taehyung-ssi, is that you?"

The hands suddenly still before quickly pulling back, gone from sight.

Taehyung blinks in recognition.

"Oh—Hoseok-ssi," he turns to greet the owner, but he lifts the wrong arm to wave. The owner's face falls, and in an instant, he's crowding Taehyung's space.

"Before you ask, it was an accident," he says sheepishly. "I'll be okay."

"Sunflower bro, you have to be more careful," the older chastises and Taehyung tries to not laugh, both endeared and touched. "Do you need help?"

He gestures dolefully to the camera in Taehyung's good hand before wiggling his eyebrows.

Before Taehyung can get a word in, there's a series of nearly indistinguishable knocks, the sound light, but enough to grab attention. Hoseok excuses himself before heading to the back.

Taehyung leans back.

He doesn't see the hands again before he leaves later.

†

Jeongguk exhales deeply before bracing himself.
Gripping the box in his hands tighter, it’s like time has come to a stop now that he was out in the open like this.

He’s resigned to telling himself that this is no big deal. He signed up for this; this wasn’t out of the ordinary.

But really, Hoseok sometimes had horrible timing. Jeongguk seriously needed to have a word with him about that soon, because maybe if his brother hadn’t left so early for another one of his date nights with Namjoon, Jeongguk wouldn’t be in this position in the first place.

“What do you say?” an anxious voice says. It’s unnerving, the way he can hear her chewing her lip. “Jeongguk?”

“Ah—”

That’s his name, alright. Jeongguk gulps.

A month in and already, Bloom had a couple of set peak times through the day and early evening. Like from before, Hoseok was still their frontman, the one good with people, with initiating small talk that wasn’t really small with customers, both returning and potentials. Had this been just half an hour ago, it would have been Hoseok who could have gracefully ended this conversation.

But this isn’t half an hour ago.

This is now, and right now, Jeongguk was manning the store until its close, which means greeting everyone that comes in, answering any questions about arrangements, taking orders, and… politely declining Jia’s advances (“advances” had been a Namjoon word).

He’s saved by the bell because then a face he recognizes and doesn’t have to reject walks through the entrance.

“Guk,” comes the friendly greeting and Jeongguk doesn’t brush Jia off necessarily, but he probably can’t hide the relief on his face now. He bows a little awkwardly and mumbles something along the lines of *catch up with you soon, Jia, see you next time* before turning his attention to Min Yoongi, one of their new regulars.

There’s comfort in the grin Yoongi’s giving him — all in all, a far cry from his first visit to Bloom when he’d struggled to place a clear order for flowers. Jeongguk tips his head before mouthing a *thank you* and the twinkle in Yoongi’s eye deepens.

*You’re welcome.*

Jia takes her leave sometime after, while Jeongguk’s in the middle of suggesting daffodils to an amused Yoongi. As the door clicks shut, he releases a pent-up sigh before peering at the man.

“You saved me, did you know that?”

“Was that the infamous—“

Jeongguk nods fearfully just once and it’s enough to have Yoongi’s grin stretch widely.

“I told you, Guk, you’re Seoul’s new heartthrob. You look like trouble, but you’re anything but. That means you have all kinds of people at your feet, but don’t let all that power go to your head,” he deadpans. Yoongi clicks his tongue expertly before adding, “I’m Jiminie’s only heartthrob though. He told me so.”
“I take it he liked the last ones?” Jeongguk decides to ignore the first remark, ears warm.

“He did, but he’s a tease,” Yoongi replies, forlorn. He’s taken a seat on a stool and leans an arm thoughtfully on the counter. “I’m getting warmer though. I know it.”

“Until then, your business is ours, Yoongi-ssi,” he jokes. “You’re here to get another small for Jimin?”

“Yeah, and—“ Yoongi pauses before pressing his lips together in a serious line. “I wanted to see what you had for condolences. Wanted to have something delivered to a friend down Hyehwa Street.”

Jeongguk brings himself to look at Yoongi as he acknowledges this. “Think some orchids would be nice. I can show you what we have if you come around back. Sorry to… to your friend.”

“Me too,” Yoongi’s rueful, smile far-away and sympathetic. “Address it to Kim Taehyung, will you?”

The name is familiar and he swallows his surprise.

That was the photography student that came around, wasn’t it? Hoseok had mentioned his name over dinner and the pieces had clicked. He was the boy in the beret.

Suddenly, his mind is filled with little glimpses of the face and profile. Jeongguk feels a small twinge of sadness before he comes to.

“Yeah, will do. This one’s no charge, Yoongi-ssi,” he finds himself saying, heart turning in sympathy to Kim Taehyung, “…and I’ve got lilies too. We can add those.”

By the time he finishes both bouquets, he’s closed up shop already and outside, the sky has darkened. Jeongguk’s dusted the shelves, hands ready to flick the lights off when he feels an idea begin to take form and shape in the crevices of his mind.

It’s been a while since he’s sketched for anyone but himself, but the first blot of watercolor on this parchment card quickly becomes two, then three, and so on until a picture forms.

Across a valley of painted lilies, he writes it again.

for kim taehyung

Taehyung has a bad habit of leaving his phone on silent.

Yoongi’s called him out on it on more than one occasion, and Jimin once jumped in fearlessly to support, only to be rebutted by Taehyung pointing out that he was just as bad.

The overarching point to this was, calling is inconvenient. Calling involves interrupting the flow, the ringtone shrill and usually unwelcome. A text is more considerate.

A text can be put off, if your mind isn’t ready to process the immediacy of a voice over the line saying things that you don’t agree with, things that you can’t even begin to fathom.
Things like loss.

_She passed away this morning, Taehyung-ah._

_Don’t worry._

_It was peaceful._

His feet dangle from where he’s perched on the ledge now with Yoongi and in a few minutes, Jimin and Seokjin would be here too. There’s no rush to clear the funny little lunch boxes they’d bought from the coffee shop and had left scattered across this landing.

_This_, he thinks, _might be the trouble of living life in the fast lane._ In getting things done, you can make mistakes. You can miss the point.

“What’s the point of all this anyway, hyung?” he asks, spite in his voice he can’t hide. He feels the urge to shower, scrub away the disgust and truth of today, wash away unshed tears because right now, they threaten to spill over.

To his credit, Yoongi doesn’t flinch at all.

Instead, he reaches out with one hand, not looking at Taehyung. It’s a warm weight on his shoulder and Taehyung wants to sink into the feeling until he disappears.

“She was taken from you so early, Taehyung-ah. But at least she’s at peace.”

There’s another hand that lands right on his other shoulder, then another, soft on his head.

“We’re here for you.”

Seokjin, and then a squeeze that could only come from Jimin.

His vision blurs, until the sun on the horizon becomes indistinguishable from the clouds above them.

Taehyung convinces himself that he’s fine to walk back alone, and he parts ways with the three later on.

He drags his feet along the pavement, hoping for a rewind—something to take him back before all this—and by some small miracle, he reaches the door, a solid olive-green frame that opens to his apartment.

The handle feels cold and Taehyung casts his gaze down, looking at his feet, when a flash of white appears like lightning, except this doesn’t fade.

When his eyes focus, they finally hone in on a spray of bright-white lilies propped against the door.

They’re beautiful, and seeing their petals flutter with the wind undoes something in Taehyung.

Holding them close, he inhales and remembers his grandmother.
Some nights feel more quiet than others, Jeongguk thinks.

If there was ever a time to raise hell, it would be right now. Behind him, the only clock he had let Hoseok convince him into installing in their whole place chimes faintly, announcing midnight.

Jeongguk isn’t really going to cause mayhem, and anyway, the chaos was already in his hands—in the form of a slew of paintbrushes he holds against a multicolor-streaked cotton surface. He hadn’t intended on painting whatever this was, but it’d been a struggle and maybe that was to be expected.

On all accounts, he’s rusty. Incredibly so.

In hindsight, he should have jumped back in with digital. Jeongguk had always felt more comfortable working with his tablet, old as it was—presets weren't complicated to work with, any mistakes were easily erased.

Maybe he should’ve also worked on something small-scale, like a portrait and not the full, whole canvas in front of him now.

Every other small noise breaks his focus and while he’s not hiding his supplies, Jeongguk’s ears burn at the thought of anyone finding him in the middle of Bloom like this. He knows he must make a sight, arms and legs folded funnily and bent at the oddest angles. He tries not to think too much about the pamphlet placed strategically on top of the nearest counter, but Hoseok had always been sneaky.

The joke would be on his brother anyway, he thinks weakly. Jeongguk wouldn't admit it anytime soon, but he had leafed through it with quiet interest, reading and re-reading the same words printed at the top.

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From a few feet away, Jeongguk’s phone suddenly lights up. Scrambling just a little, he grabs it with one hand before peering at the caller ID and pressing ‘answer.’

“Hyung,” he greets. “Where are you?”

“Guk!” There’s a sound of rustling and the low static clears. "Have you closed shop yet?”

“I—yeah, yes,” Jeongguk coughs, glancing at the mess around him. It wasn’t so bad, but he’s silently praying Hoseok wasn’t going to turn up at the corner any time soon.

"Great, great," he hears. "Come join Joon-ah and me. We finished dinner, but the city has a night market on tonight. Are you in?"

Jeongguk wipes his hand free of the shimmer paint and looks out the window. Skies clear, not a cloud in sight.

"I'll be there, hyung. Will you buy me dalgona?"

"You got it. Just hurry up and come," laughs Hoseok before hanging up.

Grinning widely, Jeongguk tosses his phone onto his bag and clambers up, using the counter for
leverage. He wraps up the tubes of paint, relishing in the strong scent of turpentine deeply embedded in the fabric of his shirt.

By the time he pulls the door shut behind him, the night air grows sweeter by the second.

He was down to his last candle.

If Taehyung sniffs hard enough, he could maybe still detect the mix of lavender and chamomile, but he’s bothered and restless seeing the soy wax drip down to its last drop like this.

Groaning, he rises from his bed and drops the magazine in hand on his bedside table. Taehyung toes on his slippers before he walks over to the door of his small balcony, hand reaching to slide it open. In an instant, he’s hit with the cold of the light breeze outside.

The skyscrapers off in the distance used to intimidate him, but in the end, he’d moved for this and for the view.

It's funny though, how quickly grief works. How quickly it robs you of light.

It's been one week, exactly, and he knows he should get back to it, whatever 'it' entails, just so he could feel some semblance of normalcy again. Taehyung tries not to think of the few read-unread messages from Jimin and Yoongi, even Seokjin; the email from Joohyun just to check in—no, no, he's not thinking of these at all.

From up here, the city appears connected only by its lights, all coming together at the epicenter, and suddenly a memory flickers on like a light in the back of his mind. Taehyung leans forward, exhaling through his mouth, and sees the breath take form in front of him.

Tonight had to be the opening night of Seoul’s market.

He’d gone to the past two, once with Jimin, the last year by himself. Taehyung drums his fingers along the rail and the street music floats to him easily that the decision is made before he even looks up.

On his way out, he grabs a long overcoat and puckers his lips to blow out the last ember of light.

--

By some small miracle, Taehyung manages to take the elevator to the ground floor of his building and make his way down the street, all the way to the avenue where the market is.

His feet really had a mind of their own.

Rows of both hung lights and tall street lamps make the path easy to see and even from a bit of a distance, Taehyung can see that it’s a little bigger this time around. For just one weekend, this part of the city hosted merchants and small businesses and the brightness of it all is enough to warm even the coldest of nights.

At the first corner, he recognizes a grandmother from the market held last year who had sold him
sweets and when their eyes meet, he’s flocked down immediately. Soon enough, his right cheek has slightly pinked from all the fond pinching and he’s sent away with a couple packets of the best honeycomb toffee he’s ever had in his life. The burst of sugar on his tongue soothes him like no other.

Slung around his neck, the camera is a welcome weight and he’s relieved to have had the sense to bring it tonight. Before he strays too far, Taehyung decides to turn back to snap a picture of the scene. The wind sweeps some of the hair out of his eyes and as he breaks off another piece of toffee, he feels his mind clear little by little.

There's even street music tonight and at the end of one set, Taehyung pushes only slightly through a crowd to drop some bills in the pinstripe hat when all of a sudden, he hears his name.

"Taehyung! Taehyung, is that you?"

"Oh—" he turns around to find none other than Hoseok approaching him, waving an enthusiastic hand. He's tailed closely by a panting Namjoon and he feels himself smile in greeting. "Hoseok-ssi, Namjoon-ssi!"

"I think we might be past that, Taehyung. You can call me hyung," Hoseok returns it full-force. He gestures to the smaller cast wrapped around his arm still. "Is that still giving you some trouble?"

He shakes his head. "No, just itches once in a while. I'm alright though, promise."

"Yeah?" The look in Hoseok's eyes is searching and filled with concern. "We miss you at the shop."

Namjoon confirms the sentiment, nodding. "We do."

"The shop misses me? How lucky am I then?" he offers a more apologetic smile this time, vowing to himself that he'd pay a visit soon. From a few feet away, another performer takes the makeshift stage before beginning to pluck the strings of what sounds like a violin. "I miss Bloom too. How's she doing?"

"Pretty good, which is surprising for winter, right? Just the other day, we were making wreaths for the upcoming holiday and Jeongguk had a hard time packing them away in one box," Hoseok's saying, chuckling brightly. "Speaking of which, where is—"

He’s interrupted by Namjoon who erupts into a series of loud coughs and Hoseok frowns, but Taehyung doesn't notice.

"Jeongguk?" Do they work at Bloom too?" he asks, not recognizing the name, and looks to Hoseok who parts his mouth to answer. Instead, the owner shakes his head in amusement before pressing his lips together.

"You should meet each other soon, Taehyung. I'll make it happen." There's a glint in Hoseok's eyes that Taehyung doesn't understand, but Namjoon hastily tugs on his boyfriend's arm and it clears in an instant.

“Stop by Bloom soon, Taehyung,” Namjoon gently pushes Hoseok. “We’ll see you then.”

“Will do,” he nods and with a salute, Hoseok turns to leave.

Namjoon grins at Taehyung before waving.
He knows that the lights are automatic—that somewhere, someone’s timed them to switch on exactly at seven o’clock, but Jeongguk thinks there’s a certain charm to the city anyway.

In their old town, night would slip into the skies, slow and steady. The moon, like everyone else, was never in a rush.

Here, he’d wake to morning clouds blushing the softest pink, then blink again to see the light scatter before fading completely.

The big city just didn't power down the same way that their old town did. Following the path of lights to the market, Jeongguk thinks it really only came alive at night.

He'd arrived earlier than Hoseok or Namjoon and simply stood idly at a ticket booth, waiting for time to pass. As he walked from one stand to the next, there's a skip to his every step. It's late, but he's feeling energized and completely awake.

It seemed like every able body had flocked here - all around him, families, swarms of students, couples, even large, unleashed dogs with their owners were lost in a flurry of activity. At every corner, it was impossible to not hear the sizzle of food being pushed onto a griddle to cook, the excited murmur of visitors walking back and forth, exclaiming for their friends to try this, or taste that—there was something everywhere.

He loses himself in a painting of a peacock hung up in one of the stalls, studying the multi-colored feathers in awe. Jeongguk only remembers to close his mouth when he realizes that the artist is a few feet away.

He tries to muster up the courage to ask them a question when he suddenly feels a warm hand on his shoulder.

“We found you at last. Are you going to redeem the dalgona now?”

Even before he turns around, he recognizes Hoseok’s voice and turns to find Namjoon, shaking his head a little.

“For making me wait that long, I think you owe me three.”

“Nice try,” Hoseok scoffs lightly, knocking a fist against Jeongguk’s shoulder and the latter grins. “Ready to go?”

Jeongguk nods, turning to glance at the art one last time. He feels inspiration take root in his chest.

“Yeah, let’s go.”

--

Nothing could possibly break his concentration. Nothing.

He’s gonna sweep this entire thing.
He’s got this in the—

“Jeongguk. Jeongguk, psst, hey.”

He nearly drops the last dart in his hand when he hears Hoseok and Jeongguk’s jaw slackens.

He takes a little step back and glares at his brother.

“Hyung, I’m about to win you and Namjoon-hyung this plushie, what are you—” Jeongguk says, widening his eyes for emphasis, but Hoseok only shakes his head.

“Seriously, you’ve got to stop winning all the games, Guk. We just got here, and I don’t want to get kicked out,” Hoseok replies in a semi-hushed tone, looking to the side meaningfully.

Jeongguk suddenly feels heat from his right-hand side.

When he looks up, he sees that the attendant manning this station isn’t hiding her look of impatience and he’s confused… until he notices the line behind him.

After them is a small child clutching the hand of who Jeongguk thinks might be their disgruntled mother and peering at him with a mixture of fear and awe.

So he misses the last shot and wordlessly lets himself be dragged away to the next stall by an amused Hoseok and Namjoon, but not before he hears a small “Y-your drawings are pwetty.”

The child steps up to take Jeongguk's place and they're pointing to the tattoos on his hands, to the petals not covered by his sleeves, and offers him a bright smile. "Flowers are cool."

Jeongguk feels warmth from the inside out and returns the grin. "Thank you. I'm cheering for you and I hope you win."

"Thank you!" the kid gushes before pulling on their mother's sleeve, and slowly, the feeling builds in Jeongguk's chest until he can't feel the winter cold anymore.

It’s nearing midnight when the three of them find something called 'ramen burgers' and exchange bites, closing their eyes in exaggerated satisfaction.

Hoseok's taking pictures of Namjoon, accidentally setting off the flash every time, but it's too funny and Jeongguk can't be bothered to fix the settings because he’s just as lost in laughter as the two.

There’s a break to the light music playing overhead, but the air isn't empty in the slightest. Murmurs of different passing conversations fill the air and Jeongguk relishes being out in the open like this.

After they've eaten, he walks a little ways behind Namjoon and Hoseok, pausing every so often to look at the different knick-knacks on sale display. They approach the part of the path that splinters into a small stage and the art walk and then, Jeongguk sees him.

Jeongguk thinks he can hear Hoseok exclaim before he ducks his head between two amber tapestries, turning around and clutching the edge of the table nervously.

It'd been a while since Bloom had seen Kim Taehyung, even longer since Jeongguk had left him the flowers from each time before.

Why was he so nervous?
He has no reason to feel this way—they technically don’t know each other at all, had never met face-to-face, and even if they had... would he still be this nervous?

Chewing his lip, Jeongguk turns back around and pulls the thick fabrics apart.

Sure enough, it's him. He recognizes the soft, light-brown hair, the high bridge to his nose, the golden skin, and watches as Taehyung stands to full height. The photographer's eyes are large and searching and when they land on Hoseok, a boxy smile forms, spreading beautifully across his cheeks.

A large, brown overcoat sits on Taehyung's frame and tonight, he looks soft around the edges.

There's a peek of a blue silk collar underneath his layers and his expression only grows more and more animated as he speaks to Hoseok and... no one else.

Jeongguk squints, leaning forward. Where was—

"Jeongguk!" Namjoon is a growing dot, running towards him, and Jeongguk feels panic surge through him.

"Hyung, no, no, go back—"

"Wait, what? What are you doing there—"

Jeongguk can see Hoseok twist his head, no doubt to look for his boyfriend, when he decides to pull the tapestries together to hide his face again. He holds his breath, craning his neck to listen for Namjoon's footsteps, but instead of an increase in volume, there's a pause before Namjoon heaves a sigh.

"You really should come say hi," he hears faintly. There's a laugh tucked in the way Namjoon says it, but Jeongguk is busy trying to keep still that he doesn't respond. "Suit yourself, Guk."

Namjoon's steps pick up again, building to a brisk jog away, and it's finally silent.

Jeongguk's breathing hard, heart racing like a complete fool.

Even from a distance, he thinks he can hear Namjoon laugh aloud again.

--

The lanterns overhead feel warm beneath his fingers.

He's a little ahead of the curb now as they walk home from the market and following close behind is Hoseok and Namjoon who have their heads huddled together, lost in conversation.

Jeongguk feels a little silly, swinging out his arm to touch the lanterns like this, but he's feeling restless. It's quiet, save for occasional honks and light sounds of street skids, so he should be thankful. To his relief, Hoseok and Namjoon had said nothing about earlier.

If he were to be honest, he's not so sure how to explain it to himself either.

Kim Taehyung had stood underneath the same lights as everyone else, but Jeongguk's eyes hadn't once strayed from the way his cheeks were lifted in a smile, crescent eyes a little sleepy around the edges.
Almost unconsciously did he catalogue the shades of brown in Taehyung's hair and worn coat, and then came to, chiding himself for staring.

Jeongguk suddenly feels the onset of a blush returning as he reaches the door to his shared apartment with Hoseok. Sloting in and turning the key, he opens the door and the three of them clamber inside, toeing off their shoes.

Jeongguk's quick to launch himself onto the couch, letting out a stream of air. Next to him, Namjoon groans, stretching out his long limbs. "That was fun, wasn't it?"

He lets out a noise in assent. If something like this was held every year, he definitely wants to go again and maybe then, he'd have the courage to talk to some of the artists there next time.

Jeongguk sheds his jacket, flicking hair that's fallen into his eyes as Hoseok pads over from the kitchen. In one hand, he's holding a mug of something that smelled suspiciously like chamomile tea and in the other, he's miraculously holding two other mugs without much difficulty.

Namjoon exclaims, rising to help him, when he pulls back. "Not coffee?"

"No, you baby, it's tea. It's late and you shouldn't be drinking anything caffeinated," Hoseok presses the mug into Namjoon's still-outstretched. His smile stretches mischievously and Jeongguk huffs back a laugh, knowing Namjoon's lost.

The laughter is gone when he sees his own mug is filled with Hoseok's tea too. "Hey, hyung—!"

"You too, Jeongguk," the older tsks, unrelenting. "You've been staying up lately, haven't you?"

"Nah, not later than usual," Jeongguk begins, but Hoseok shakes his head before gesturing to him with his mug.

"You're back in it, aren't you, Guk?"

His eyes are shining.

"Hey, Guk… we have a question for you," Namjoon says a little tentatively. He glances at Hoseok, who's taken a seat on the futon.

Placing his mug on a coaster, Hoseok fixes him with a knowing look, but Jeongguk only tilts his head in confusion when he feels Namjoon chuckle beside him.

"You've been considering the program, haven't you?"

Suddenly, he can see the folds of the pamphlet, can feel it where it's tucked away in his pocket, and his hand finds the back of his own neck, rubbing in embarrassment. Then, Jeongguk sees the streaks of dried paint along his forearms, lines of a terra-cotta red, of a soft mustard, of a dragonfly blue—all colors he'd used hours before, but hadn't completely washed away.

He'd hidden what was left with layers. Now, without his jacket—

"You're painting again."

And this one isn't a question.

It's Hoseok and Namjoon looking at him with the kind of hope he hadn't felt in a long time.

This time, Jeongguk has an answer and it's one that brings the night full-circle. He lets himself
smile.
"I am."

"Consider it a peace offering, hyung."

Taehyung's arm, cast-free now, started to feel like dead weight about six minutes ago, but still, he holds out the coffee to Hoseok in the hopes that the older will take it soon. Next to him, Jimin has his lips pressed together in amusement and Taehyung resists the urge to kick him while simultaneously trying to maintain his pleading look.

He'd woken up much earlier and had rung Jimin on a whim to see if he'd like to come with him to Bloom—harmless, all things considered, except he should have known that they would end up conspiring against him.

Hoseok easily dodges his reach, carrying two large planters. He wears a deep-set grin. "Peace offering for what exactly?"

Jimin elbows him in the ribs lightly. "Yeah, for what, Tae?"

He sighs, conceding. "For not visiting sooner when I said I would visit sooner."

The beginning of a month meant inventory day. Inventory day at Bloom meant the shop's lights were on before its opening time, with Hoseok already fully awake and a frenzy of motion as he rearranged potted plants and fresh-cut flowers, placing those of similar sizes and colors together. Standing in the middle of the disarray now, Taehyung doesn't fight his smile.

He'd be lying if he said he hadn't missed the flower shop.

"I'm here now though," he says weakly and thrusts the tumbler in Hoseok's face when he comes close enough. "And I brought Jimin."

"Nice to finally see where Yoongi-hyung gets all the lovely flowers," Jimin chirps shyly, looking around with awe.

"Yoongi-hyung? Our regular, Min Yoongi?" they hear from behind the counter. Hoseok reappears with a few rolls of ribbon and a block of foam. "You wouldn't have happen to be the 'Jiminnie' he talks about all the time, right?"

Jimin's cheeks pink and he quickly looks down, mumbling something incoherent. He busies himself with the larger stalks on display and walks a few feet away, the teasing look in his eyes long gone.

Taehyung tries not to laugh too hard.

Hoseok finally sets down a large silver bucket to take the drink, ruffling Taehyung's hair with his other hand. "And tell me, Taehyungie, what brings you?"

He releases a breath and unclasps his messenger bag to grab a gray envelope.
Some days ago, after the last round of assessments, Joohyun had caught him on his way out from class and slipped it to him. She had only said one thing, smiling discreetly.

"It's an invitation.

"We have an exhibit soon," Taehyung says simply, holding it out. "Next week, if you can make it."

"Oh?" Hoseok wipes his hands before taking it.

"Bloom was selected, hyung," he says, quiet pride and some disbelief still in his voice.

It clicks then and Hoseok exclaims, pulling Taehyung in for a brief squeeze. "You're telling me that your project was chosen? Bloom gets a premiere?"

When he nods, the owner laughs, full and bright. "Taehyung, congratulations."

"I'm, um, here to say thank you to you too. For letting me do this. And for my own flowers—a-and all. They were all really nice, and I was surprised."

He takes out some prints clumsily packaged with twine before offering them to Hoseok. Every arrangement, including the one that came after his grandmother's passing, is captured in a photo.

Together, they're a gradient of soft color, ending in the last bouquet of cornflowers and baby bluebells.

"Your own flowers?" Hoseok glances at the pictures.

"Yeah, you have to let me pay you for these, hyung—" Taehyung says earnestly, but he's interrupted by the front bell and the sounds of a door opening and closing quickly. Beside him, Jimin lets out a small noise of confusion because no one's entered or left.

Hoseok releases a deep sigh, but it sounds fond. Knowing.

"You don't have to pay a single thing, Taehyungie. These were for you, but they're not from me," he ambles away, lifting the bucket up and over the counter.

"Then who—"

The bell rings again and Namjoon walks through with surprising ease (considering he'd tripped over the step every time he came to Bloom, going in and out). This time, he's not alone.

Objectively, the newcomer was a photographer's dream.

Subjectively, the newcomer seems like every single one of Taehyung's dreams come true.

He's handsome and tall, with long hair, slightly wavy as it falls into his face, and large, deep-brown eyes that seemed shocked to find Taehyung there. Under a puffy coat, the stranger's wearing a fitted, fuzzy sweater and dark pants, look finished with black combat boots.

Past his sleeves, Taehyung sees the beginning of ink of the same color.

Then, he remembers.

"Oh—" Hoseok brightens, lifting a hand in greeting, but he's too fast, this newcomer.

In just seconds, he's waved back and walked past them all, Namjoon included, and closes the
backdoor behind him.

Hoseok stamps a piece of paper on the counter twice before shooting him another grin.

"Well, I think you might just find out sooner rather than later."

--

They stay in Bloom for a little longer and Taehyung has his camera out to snap a few pictures of the shop’s new layout. Jimin was engrossed in serious discussion with Namjoon over which bouquet he should surprise Yoongi with, eyebrows furrowed as he debates his selection of flowers. Up front, Hoseok's diligently greeting the first stream of morning customers.

Kneeling in front of the windowsill, Taehyung takes a photo of the baby tulips stowed carefully in a vase, admiring their fresh, white petals and the way the daylight brings them to full blossom.

He's distracted though, and awfully so.

His back has been purposefully turned away from the doorway that the stranger had disappeared into, trying not to think too much.

Bloom's hidden florist.

Jeongguk.

That was his name, wasn't it?

He fiddles with the shutter speed dial, unconscious to anything else and unable to name the feeling in his stomach.

Every single bouquet had come as a gift, unexpected and beautiful. But why?

"—wanna come over later? Seokjin-hyung texted and says if we want dinner, he'll make us bossam —"

"Tae?"

He feels a hand on his shoulder and startles.

Jimin's looking at him, a small arrangement of pink hibiscus in his hands, expression knit in concern. "Are you alright? I have class so I said 'bye to Hoseok-ssi and Namjoon-ssi already."

"Huh?" Taehyung rises quickly, clearing his throat. His gaze darts to the door before he turns to Jimin. "Yeah, I'm good. Let me say 'bye too, then."

A look of sudden understanding crosses Jimin's face, but before he can speak, Taehyung shoulders his bag before catching Hoseok and Namjoon's attention.

He half-yells a goodbye and makes another split-second decision to circle around.

Taehyung can hear his heartbeat loud and clear as he places the pictures from earlier near the door frame and turns back only once as they leave to see his own hasty scrawl on a new Post-it he’s placed beneath the knot of the twine.

*Thank you*
In hindsight, Jeongguk knows he should’ve come to expect Kim Taehyung to return to Bloom at some point.

Still, there was no real way to prepare for the sight of the photographer in the middle of their shop, this time looking right at him. His lips were parted in an 'o' shape, hair tucked away neatly in a beret, and he appeared every bit like a portrait.

They'd never met and while Jeongguk knows what he looks like, Taehyung had never once seen him, so the look of recognition that flits across his face makes Jeongguk more than nervous.

He hadn't understood why Namjoon had suddenly pulled him so suddenly into Bloom earlier, but upon seeing Hoseok's shit-eating grin and Taehyung's surprised face, Jeongguk felt warmth flood his cheeks.

Naturally, he had made a run for it.

His heart had raced a million miles a minute as he closed the backroom door, thinking through every possible scenario.

Had Hoseok found out?

Did Taehyung know?

There's nothing outside but the murmur of words and there were no audible steps leading to his workstation so Jeongguk exhales.

As he begins the first pick-up order of the day, he brings a hand to his chest and tries to will away the thump-thump in his chest.

--

The day only slows late in the afternoon and while there had been no customers outside perusing their displays, Jeongguk had steadily worked through their last requests of the week.

One set of arrangements for an upcoming banquet, one full-rose bouquet for an engagement proposal, and—

"Jeongguk-ah, can you pass me the tape?"

Jeongguk blinks sleepily before he reaches for it, handing the roll of green tape to Hoseok. He feels his brother silently chuckle next to him as he takes two begonias at a time, looping the stems carefully so they stick together.

"Is that for an order, Hobi-hyung?" he yawns, stretching a bit, ready to help.

"Not this one, no. I'm making a crown," Hoseok says easily and Jeongguk sits up a little straighter before looking at him.

"Just for fun?"

"Just for fun," the older confirms. He lets out a noise of satisfaction before lifting the wired crown above his head for inspection.
Jeongguk has his eyes shut when he feels something feather-light land on his head.

"Jeongguk-ah."

"Mm?" he opens them again slowly.

"I'm glad you're putting yourself out there again."

He'd finally braved it earlier this week—paid the program offices a visit with Namjoon, had asked his questions, had decided to go for it and register. And it had felt exhilarating.

There's the sound of the bell, announcing someone's arrival.

Hoseok tickles his chin briefly before standing and Jeongguk huffs out a laugh. "I am too, hyung."

He feels like he's still in that in-between of sleep, dream, and life, until he hears Hoseok speak again.

"Now, about your little crush on Kim Taehyung-ssi..."

His eyes open wide at that. "Huh?"

Hoseok just smiles, before walking over to place a stack of photos on Jeongguk's table.

"Think maybe it'd be worth putting yourself out there one more time."

◊

"Pretty sure Taehyungie has an admirer."

"Jimin-ah, tonight is 'the night' and you're out here gossiping. What did I expect?"

To his credit, Jimin jumps only a little, but he does nearly drop the flute of champagne in his hand.

"Careful, baby," Yoongi's hand shoots out on instinct to steady him and when he glares at Taehyung, the latter only dissolves into giggles. "Watch it, Taehyungie."

It was always strange to see Min Yoongi dressed up like this and Taehyung bites back the playful jab he has in mind in favor of flicking imaginary dust off his jacket and grinning.

"Congrats to you too, Yoongi-hyung."

Yoongi's shoulders loosen before he looks down, grinning too.

Tonight was the culmination of every long night spent reviewing and compiling their portfolios and Taehyung was still bewildered that he had made it to the exhibit.

"Congrats to you both, this is really amazing," he hears behind him.

"Seokjin-hyung! You're here too," Taehyung says happily, leaning into his hyung's hug. Seokjin had followed the semi-formal dress code too. "You cleaned up nicely."

"I had to show up for my roommate, who wouldn't stop griping about how his boyfriend managed
to invent photography, can you believe that?” Seokjin laughs. He mentioned you too, Taehyungie, don't worry.”

"I'm heart-broken, Chim. After everything we've been through—"

"Shut up," Jimin laughs. "All this is beautiful, Tae. You really brought Bloom here."

He'd aimed for it to be immersive, capturing moments of the stages of bloom for different flowers in the shop. It'd been tricky to find the balance between light and dark with the sensitivity of the film, but it had pulled together in the end, with some guidance from Joohyun and listening to his own instinct.

Bloom is one-of-a-kind, a locket experience in a big city, and his corner here tells only part of its story.

"Taehyungie!"

A familiar voice carries across the foyer and when Taehyung turns, he's blinded by just how bright Hoseok's smile is. Beside him, Namjoon laughs, reaching for Taehyung's hand and shaking it.

“Hobi-hyung, Namjoon-hyung, I'm happy to see you here," he feels part of himself curl in, half in embarrassment, and half in delight.

"We wouldn't have missed it for the world."

The circle expands just a little, introductions going around, and the conversation picks up again before their group travels a little to where Yoongi's photos are framed and presented along a neighboring wall. Shot in black and white, it's a revolution titled Motion and some, maybe predictably, are of Jimin caught second by second in dance. Together, it comprises a cross-display of mind and music - nothing short of Min Yoongi's genius.

"Like I was saying, Taehyungie definitely has an admirer. I was explaining to him the flowers he's been getting aren't just friendly, you know? They must have intent—"

Yoongi and Seokjin shake their heads at Jimin's conspiratorial tone and Taehyung forces himself to shoo Jimin away before he can finish that sentence.

"He might be right," floats words from Hoseok, who's taken Namjoon's hand and pulling him along so they could walk along more of the exhibit, and they're casually said that Taehyung does a small double-take, torn between asking what he means and staying quiet.

Hoseok only shakes his head once, smile growing by the second, before turning away.

Taehyung exhales in mild confusion before deciding to turn to look at his work, preparing his spiel for the next visitor with a question.

Then, suddenly, there's movement.

In the periphery of his vision, an arm appears next to him, hand reaching out. All at once, Taehyung’s vision is filled with an array of violet, some dark shades of purple, and some muted lavender and lilacs, all from petals clustered together, wrapped neatly with cream wax paper and tied off with an ivory-white ribbon. The ends curl in a way that sends Taehyung’s heart into overdrive because he recognizes those loops and...the hand.

Black lines of vines, beginning from the tips of each slightly calloused finger, weaving until they
make up the blade-ribs of small butterfly leaves, which then comprise stalks of baby’s breath and long lilies, a most intricate picture on its own - all inked on gold-dusted skin.

His breath catches.

In front of him is the stranger-not-stranger from days ago. Still handsome, hair a little more undone, and tonight, he doesn’t look like he’ll run.

Taehyung raises his head fully to meet the gaze of none other than Bloom's florist.

“Jeongguk-ssi.”

He says it without thinking, flushing immediately when he realizes he’s revealed himself (maybe) and also because his mouth’s been open this whole time. And Jeongguk. Jeongguk’s eyes widen slightly, ears picking up on Taehyung’s utterance.

“Wait, you know my name?” the boy coughs into his other hand.

Taehyung is slow to nod, his own nervous hands going straight to his hair.

“Y-you know mine,” he decides to brave, after a moment, and Jeongguk looks like he might protest, but Taehyung beats him to it by pointing to his name written neatly on a small, laced card tucked in between the stems. The other boy licks his lips before pressing them together into his own anxious line.

He seems to come to some kind of decision and his next words knock the wind out of Taehyung.

“You come to the shop all the time. How could I not notice someone like you?”

The honesty is in his eyes, in his voice, and Taehyung feels warmer and warmer from the inside out.

“Someone l-like what?”

“I-you must know,” Jeongguk says a little flustered, scratching his head. Taehyung has a feeling he knows exactly what Jeongguk wants to say because it’s how he feels about him, but he wasn’t about to make the first move when all this time—

“If that’s the case… I mean, all this time, you hadn’t ever said hello?”

Jeongguk visibly deflates, losing a little bit of his bravado from earlier. "I was never really sure how to."

He lowers his hand, nearly bringing the flowers down too, but Taehyung’s reflexes are quick.

He’d swear later that he’d been trying to grab the tied stems, but instead… instead, his fingers become tangled in Jeongguk’s inked ones.

They’re warm, and careful, and when Jeongguk breaks out into a smile, Taehyung thinks it might be an end-all. Nothing could have prepared him to be so close to something so bright and beautiful.

“I wanted to give you these in-person instead,” and then the bouquet is pressed into his palm shyly.

“Congratulations, Taehyung-ssi.”

"I-thank you, Jeongguk-ssi. The flowers... they all meant a lot to me. It's, um, good to finally meet you,” Taehyung pats himself for not stumbling, but his heart is in danger of actually beating out of
his chest.

"You're welcome," Jeongguk smiles, and there's a hint of a dimple there. "I was wondering if you would maybe want to get coffee s-s sometime?"

Taehyung's eyes widen slightly and he must look reproachful because then Jeongguk's hastily taking it back. "There's no pressure, it's alright—"

It occurs to Taehyung that this exchange is being monitored diligently when he catches sight of several arms in the air, waving in approval. Behind Jeongguk, Jimin jumps in glee, and Hoseok and Namjoon are peering over with nothing but fondness in their eyes.

He closes his eyes, smiling.

Before, he'd gotten lost in every petal of every gifted flower he received, and in the ink on Jeongguk's hands and arms—and now?

He thinks he might want to get lost in Jeongguk himself.

Clutching the bouquet a little tighter, Taehyung nods.

"I'd love to."

End Notes

[small, sad violin string sounds] i truly adore taekook

i'm on twt too - pls stop by and say hello if you like!
i also figured out cc in case you have any questions ♡

thank you for reading!

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