Where The Heart Is

by roachprince

Summary

If home is where the heart is, then we're all just fucked.
(Fall Out Boy - 27)

Yoongi tries so hard to come home. Taehyung is already there.

(Or, to be less dramatic: Taehyung needs someone to play his boyfriend, and Yoongi lets himself get talked into one hell of a ride.)

also available in spanish

disclaimer about the child abuse tag, if you're unsure about that.
Taehyung has a problem. Jungkook is super helpful. Hoseok also has a problem, while actually (doing his best at) being helpful.

(Heads up for mild homophobia from Taehyung’s parents. They mean well. It still sucks.)

With every Skype call they have, Taehyung’s skin gets a little more bronzed, the tan a little darker. It’s fun to watch, especially when he shows them his tan lines from diving or falling asleep on the beach with a book on his face (Jimin’s personal favorite), though it also kind of makes them jealous a lot. Jimin is pale for his standards, wrapped up in a huge blanket on his bed after giving his hoodie to Jungkook. It’s still cold in South Korea and late summer in Australia, so it’s no surprise to Jimin that Taehyung looks even sweatier now than he did an hour ago, when he excused himself from their conversation to call his parents instead, because he’d finally worked up the nerve to come out to them.

Which is kind of a huge deal, so Jimin is metaphorically on the edge of his seat, sitting cross-legged on his bed with his laptop in front of him, Jungkook rummaging around his room while they’re waiting for Taehyung to dish.

“So how’d it go?” Jimin blurs out eventually, after a few more seconds of Taehyung just sitting in front of his webcam, spacing out. “You’re not crying, are you? Your face looks wet.”

“It’s sweat,” Taehyung says automatically, snapping out of it very slowly. He runs both his hands down his face, glistening weakly in the poor video quality. “It’s really hot here, and I’m stressed. The back of my shirt is, like, soaked. It’s gross.”

“Take it off,” Jungkook says from the other side of the laptop, making Taehyung squint at his camera and Jimin roll his eyes.

“Shut up,” he says quietly, before turning his attention back towards Taehyung, worrying his bottom lip. It seems like a bad sign that he still hasn’t told them anything, and Jimin’s stomach hurts. “So? Are you gonna be okay?”

Taehyung takes a deep breath, staring out the window for a couple of seconds before he turns back towards his webcam, stare blank as he says, “I need a boyfriend.”

Jimin just stares back. That doesn’t tell him anything. Jungkook finally plops down next to him again, watching Taehyung with a tentatively amused frown. “We all do, man.”

“No, I mean, I really need one,” Taehyung says, and there he is, mouth hanging open, staring at them with his eyes wide. He looks like Kim Taehyung again, Jimin guesses, but he still has no idea what’s going on. “My parents, they’re -- uh, they’re pretty much alright with it, I guess? Mom got a little weirded out at first and I explained like a thousand times that I’ve known for years and that it’s normal and that I’m not the only one and yes I’m really sure, blah blah. And they didn’t get mad or anything, they seemed pretty willing to accept it. But they kept, like… They kept worrying that I
wouldn’t be able to find someone now, you know? I guess because they don’t know any gay people or whatever, they thought we’re so rare I’d never be able to find a boyfriend and they were legitimately concerned for my happiness and all, so I…” Taehyung shrugs, still staring right at them, looking like he can’t quite believe what he’s saying himself. “I told them I already have a boyfriend.”

“Oh,” Jimin says. From the corner of his eye he can see Jungkook try his hardest to suppress a laugh.

“And of course,” Taehyung continues, a hint of terrified amusement now in his own voice, “they asked where he’s from, because they’re still old and a little conservative, so I couldn’t just tell them he’s Australian, some guy I met here. They wouldn’t have liked that. So I said he’s in Korea. Told them we skype almost every day, made it sound really romantic.” Jungkook is pressing his lips together firmly at this point, but the next sentence sends him over the edge. “They wanna meet him.”

Jungkook dissolves into giggles even as Jimin shoves his shoulder so he faceplants into the mattress. It would be kind of a horrible reaction to all this if they weren’t such close friends, and in fact it seems to loosen Taehyung up a little, since there’s a tiny grin tugging at the corners of his mouth now. He still seems borderline horrified, but it is kind of funny, and Taehyung is usually the type to rather laugh about the shit he does than fall into a pit of despair and self-pity.

“Just tell them you broke up,” Jungkook says, though it comes out muffled because he’s still making out with Jimin’s mattress. Too muffled for Taehyung, trying to understand them all the way from a different continent.

“What?”

“He says you could tell them that you broke up,” Jimin translates, and watches Taehyung’s brow furrow in consideration. “You know, right before you come back here, or something. Just tell them you’re sadly not together anymore, and they won’t want to meet him.”

“Yeah but…” Taehyung chews on his lower lip again. “The whole point of this imaginary boyfriend is that they need to think I’m happily taken and stuff. If I break up with him that’ll just prove their point that being gay means being unhappy, and I’m back to square one.”

Jimin doesn’t have an answer to that, other than Taehyung’s parents do kind of sound like dicks right now (though he supposes it could have gone worse). Next to him, Jungkook sits up again, wiping tears from his eyes with an index finger. “I can be your boyfriend,” he says, wiggling his eyebrows at Jimin’s laptop.

Taehyung laughs. “No, they know you. I thought about it, you know, but they know both of you, and that would be weird. If one of my best friends was my boyfriend, I would have just told them his name. I need someone they haven’t seen before.”

“Have they seen Hoseok?” Jimin asks pensively, going through all their friends in his head.

“I think so.” Taehyung sighs, fiddling with the hem of his shirt with both of his hands. “Plus, uh, it has to be someone small.”

“What?” Jungkook looks dangerously close to his next giggle fit.

“I don’t know, okay?” Taehyung says defensively, and louder all of a sudden, throwing his hands up at them now. “They asked me what he’s like and I just sort of imagined some random cute boy and told them he’s small! I need a small guy with a cute nose who likes music and anime and is willing to play my boyfriend in front of my parents.”

And Jungkook’s gone again, diving into the mattress all by himself this time as even Jimin is fighting
to hold back a laugh. He and Taehyung just sit there grinning stupidly at each other, both trying to process this situation somehow, until Jimin reaches for his phone.

“I’ll ask Hoseok, okay? He knows a lot of people. He’ll find someone before you’re back.”

Jungkook just laughs a little louder, turning on his back now to make sure Taehyung can hear him. “You two are actually gonna do this? Get some random dude -- a random small dude, sorry -- to play your boyfriend to prove a point to your parents? Like, how’s that gonna work? What’re you gonna do if you actually fall in love?”

“If I find someone else I can still imaginarily break it up with my imaginary boyfriend and get together with the other one,” Taehyung shoots back immediately, almost pouting now. “As long as I’m still happy then I don’t think my parents would mind. They just don’t want me to be alone --”

“No, no, Taehyung, I know you.” Jungkook props himself up on his elbows so he can stare at the webcam, with both Taehyung and Jimin watching him warily. “You’re gonna fall in love with the imaginary boyfriend. And what then?”

It’s kind of a mean thing to ask, Jimin thinks, but it’s not like Jungkook is wrong. Taehyung falls in love with every cute boy he sees, crushing on people he meets on the train but never talks to, rambling on for days about people he just barely knows. He frowns softly at Jungkook, then turns his attention back to Taehyung, who’s squinting at his camera now.

“Then I’ll date him,” he says flatly, “without having to worry about introducing him to my parents. I don’t know where you’re seeing a problem here.”

“Oh my god.” Jungkook puts both hands over his eyes, still laughing a little. “You guys watch too many dramas.”

“Leave us and our fairytale fantasies alone,” Jimin says gently, relieved that Taehyung seems a little sarcastic himself, solemnly nodding his head, instead of taking Jungkook too seriously. Their entire friendship builds on not taking each other too seriously. “I’ll text Hoseok and tell him to ask around. We’ll work it out. It’ll be fun.”

He really hopes it will.

Hoseok stares at the cigarette between his fingers like it personally hurt him. Which, he guesses, is kind of true. It’s not healthy and he knows it, and he should stop, he’s a professional dancer and needs his body in best possible health, and so on. Right now he teaches street dance to teenagers that came here to learn freestyling but still act like it’s all too embarrassing in front of their peers to actually fucking freestyle, even though they’re in a goddamn practice room with nobody else watching and everyone looking equally ridiculous, so that’s how being a professional dancer is going for him, and that’s why he still hasn’t quit smoking. He likes teaching and he likes dancing and he even likes the kids, but he also likes some damn peace and quiet once in a while. Not that he’s getting any of that.

He’s meeting up with Namjoon and Seokjin in a few minutes, already standing around at the street corner waiting for them so they can go to their usual bar and have their usual conversations about nothing at all, really. It’s nice. It’s socializing, and no peace and quiet in his own apartment all by himself, but it’s nice. Hoseok has to force himself to not avoid any and all human contact -- if he’s being perfectly honest, he’s been having trouble even connecting with Namjoon and Seokjin ever since it’s just the three of them, but maybe he’s getting the hang of it. Maybe he just has to keep
trying. It’s probably better than being home alone all the time.

He’s scrolling through the contact list on his phone while he waits, occasionally checking his Kakao chat with Jimin as if he’d forget the description of Taehyung’s dream guy he was given. Small with a cute nose. A lot of people should look small next to Taehyung, you’d think, but apparently Hoseok knows less short people than he’d thought. The ones he does know probably aren’t up for the task. Or they’re just plain assholes. Many short people are assholes, Hoseok has figured out over the past few days.

He likes Kim Taehyung, only really knows him as that one loud guy Jimin always hung out with because they’re practically joined at the hip (they somehow still manage to come off that way now that Taehyung is in fucking Australia doing who knows what), but Hoseok likes him. If he’s going to get him a fake boyfriend, it’s going to be one that isn’t an asshole. There has to be one short person with a cute nose in Seoul that isn’t an asshole.

Someone pulls the cigarette right from the fingers of his other hand, and Hoseok is ready to punch a dude before he realizes it’s Namjoon. He just frowns at him instead, though it might look more like a pout. “I was smoking that.”

“You weren’t,” Namjoon says, taking a drag and giving it back to Hoseok afterwards because he wasn’t raised in the jungle. “You were just holding it there while staring at your phone. Someone send you nudes?”

He cranes his neck to look at Hoseok’s smartphone screen, but it’s still just his contact roll so he doesn’t even try to hide it. “No,” he deadpans, shifting his attention to Seokjin and returning the smile he gets from him at least. “Hey, Seokjin.”

Hoseok had briefly considered telling them about his new mission, but decided against it. The fewer people know, the better, he guesses, as always with secret missions, and the two of them would probably let everybody know and constantly talk about it to each other and the thought alone is enough to make Hoseok feel like throwing up in his mouth a little. Namjoon swears that he and Seokjin aren’t a couple, but Hoseok has been third-wheeling for months now and knows better. It’s like they’re married, but a weird kind of married, where they’ve been living together for thirty years and raised three children and a dog together and still try to tell people they’re just friends. Hoseok’s not telling them jack shit about Taehyung’s fake boyfriend.

“Hey,” Seokjin replies, putting an arm around both of their shoulders as if trying to disprove Hoseok’s secret thoughts. “Let’s get inside. We’ve got something to tell you.”

Hoseok blinks at him, then squints at them both, because that does not sound like he’s trying to disprove anything Hoseok has been thinking about the two of them for a while now, it sounds more like the opposite. “Are you two finally moving in together?” he asks, jokingly of course. Of course. “Adopting a cat? A dog? A child? Because yes, I’ll be the godfather, it’s so touching of you to ask me. But only if you’ll call it Hoseok. I don’t care what gender it is or if it’s an actual kid now or a puppy. It’ll be Hoseok and it’ll be amazing.”

“Why would I want you to be a godfather to a cat?” Seokjin asks calmly, while also squeezing Hoseok’s arm through his sleeve so hard it pulls a rather unattractive squeal from his throat. He’s pretty sure that’s gonna bruise.

“Monster,” Hoseok grumbles, though not even trying to get farther away from Seokjin. “So you are adopting a cat?”

“No.”
It’s the only answer he gets until they’re inside their booth at the bar, and it’s nicely warm inside and the beer tastes a little like home and after his frustrating dance lesson and a walk in the cold this is actually nice enough to make Hoseok forget what they were talking about anyway. But of course his friends can’t let that happen.

“So you haven’t heard?” Namjoon asks, leaning over the table towards him conspiratorially. Hoseok just blinks at him, fingertips playing idly with the sticker on his beer bottle.

“Haven’t heard what?”

Namjoon just grins, and so does Seokjin, which is a little creepy, but at least Seokjin is leaning back all comfortably and not half-laying on the table like his not-boyfriend. “Guess who’s back in town,” he sing-songs, and okay, that does make it creepy again.

But Hoseok just continues staring at them with a puzzled expression, gaze shifting from one to the other and back, and he shrugs. Some part of him actually believes himself, maybe. That he has no idea who they’re talking about, that there’s any possibility it’s not who he thinks it is.

“He really hasn’t heard,” Namjoon says helpfully, turning a little to shoot Seokjin a look, who smiles back at him and shrugs.

“Hmm. You tell him.”

So Namjoon turns back to him, expression almost gleeful, and Hoseok notices just now how his own free hand has wandered under the table to grip at the bench he’s sitting on, trying to brace himself for what he’s about to hear, still praying to every god out there that he’s wrong, that Namjoon is about to say something entirely else --

“Yoongi’s here.”

Fuck.

“Here?” Hoseok croaks. “As in --”

“In Seoul,” Seokjin says quickly, barely hiding the smirk around his lips. “Not here at the bar. God, Namjoon, look at how scared he got.”

“Shut up,” Hoseok says, voice a little too small for his liking, and clears his throat. “You sure? How do you know? Did he tell you?”

“I found out,” Namjoon says, sounding smug. “I don’t think he wanted to tell me, but he sent me a picture and I recognized the subway station in the background. He’s confirmed it by now. So yes, he’s here and we’re sure. We’re meeting up with him this Saturday, lunch at the usual place.”

Hoseok doesn’t know why he’s telling him this. Can’t imagine why he’d want to be there, why Yoongi would want him to be there.

“He already said he’s looking forward to seeing the three of us again,” Seokjin says softly. Hoseok can feel his eyes on him, and tries very hard not to look like he’s about to pass out. “He said that, Hoseok. So he’s expecting you to be there.”

“Yeah, yeah, I got it.” Hoseok’s voice is just hoarse now. He swallows around the tightness in his throat, nodding more to himself than to his friends before he looks up at them again. “Saturday, yeah?”
He guesses he’ll just have to be ready to see Yoongi again, whether he feels like it or not. Who knows how long the guy will stay this time, and it’s not like Hoseok doesn’t want to see him. He wants to. There’s barely anything he wants more right now, he’s just… scared, he guesses. Which should be normal, right? It’s always scary to meet an ex-boyfriend after not having seen each other for a year.

It’s just twice as scary if said ex-boyfriend is Min Yoongi.

It only dawns on him much later that day, when he’s at home and in bed already, scrolling through his phone again, re-reading Jimin’s messages.

[09:48]  : Ok so it has to be someone small or just smaller than tae thats not the hard part
[09:48]  : He says he needs a cute nose????? Idk what noses his parents find cute but yeah
[09:49]  : Just find someone cute! And he has to like music and anime
[09:49]  : Or I guess
[09:50]  : You know he just has to be patient enough to put up with taetae. Someone nice
[09:52]  : Like me, but cuter

It’s not a complete match. Hell, it really isn’t, but he’s already given up on finding a complete match on Taehyung’s fairytale prince, so he’s grasping at straws here, but it kind of maybe somehow adds up, if you squint.

The anime part is a little questionable. But the rest? Stoic patience, the willingness to put up with someone loud and weird like Hoseok or Taehyung, *music*, small, cute… It’s Yoongi. Taehyung’s fake boyfriend is Yoongi.

Hoseok locks his phone and drops it on his chest. He’s not going to tell him. Fuck no. As far as he knows, Yoongi and Taehyung don’t know each other, and he’s not about to drop that bomb on his ex. Besides, maybe Yoongi is patient, maybe Yoongi has played along with some of Hoseok’s more unconventional ideas in the past, but he can already imagine his face if he asked him to play some guy’s boyfriend and introduce himself to his parents all nice and well-behaved. It wouldn’t work out. It would be a nightmare, actually.

He’s not doing this.

There has to be another short non-asshole guy that would fake-date Kim Taehyung in this hellhole of a city.
Breakup Duckies

Chapter Summary

Yoongi returns apparently only to torture Hoseok, and Jimin is a hero when he's drunk.

(I SWEAR this isn't a yoonseok fic....... there will be more Taehyung soon, I promise.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Their usual lunch place is a small ramyun shop close to where Seokjin lives. Once more, Hoseok gets there first, and once more, he waits outside with a cigarette in his hand, and his phone in the other, going through conversations. Namjoon messaged him to talk to him about etiquette, like Hoseok doesn’t know Yoongi inside and out, like Hoseok doesn’t know perfectly well what to say to him and what to keep to himself. No questions about where he was, no questions about how he’s been, no questions about what he’s going to do now. If Yoongi wants to tell them, he’ll tell them without anyone asking. Hoseok knows. And he hates that Namjoon thinks he doesn’t.

He had actually hoped he might get here last, so he doesn’t have to be the one awkwardly standing around while his ex approaches, but he guesses that didn’t work out. The others are late, actually. He hates that too.

What he hates most is that Yoongi is already with Namjoon and Seokjin as they arrive. Hoseok feels weird and awkward saying hi to them all, trying not to act any differently with Yoongi. He’s glad that they’re not the sort of friend group that hug it out every time they meet up (he watched Jimin and Taehyung meet one time and felt like he was interrupting some heartfelt reunion even though they had met the day before) so he doesn’t actually have to touch Yoongi, or anyone else for that matter, but it’s still vaguely uncomfortable.

Yoongi looks good though, even shoots him a smile. He seems tired, but that’s nothing new, and overall he looks good. Better than last time Hoseok has seen him, hair soft, hands still and not shaking, clean clothes, and what the shit, are those freckles? Hoseok isn’t sure and kind of just hopes he’s wrong. He can’t see them well anymore in the light of the shop and isn’t about to just lean in close to stare at Yoongi’s face, so he’s just going to assume he was hallucinating those freckles on Yoongi’s cheeks and nose. Definitely.

“Ah, it’s good to be here,” Yoongi sighs, sliding onto the wooden bench, making Hoseok face him of course, because Namjoon and Seokjin need to be facing each other too, being absolutely not in love with each other and all. Yoongi gracefully ignores the way they look at each other and swats Seokjin’s arm to get his attention and throw a smirk at him that makes Hoseok’s insides boil. “You’re paying, Jin, right?”

Seokjin’s eyebrows shoot up and disappear under his bangs, then he snorts. “Well, I guess I am now. It’s so good to have you back.”

“I know. I’m a delight.” Yoongi shrugs his jacket off, forcing Hoseok to look away so he’s not staring at the movement of his slim shoulders under the fabric. He joins Namjoon’s hungry stare towards Seokjin instead.
Seokjin stares back, scandalized. “I’m paying only for Yoongi, you animals.”

They laugh -- they all do -- and it all gets a little easier for Hoseok after that. He still can’t bring himself to talk to Yoongi directly, but it’s the four of them talking with each other, and it’s better. It’s good. It’s almost a little like it used to be, only there’s a stinging sensation in his stomach, an acidic taste in his throat even through all the ramyun he’s been shoveling into his mouth. He’ll get over it eventually, he supposes. It’s like exposure therapy, or something. Plus, Yoongi doesn’t actually seem like he wants to skin him alive anymore, he seems calm and collected and like he maybe possibly still likes Hoseok a bit.

It’s when Yoongi comes back from his bathroom break that Seokjin and Namjoon are in deep conversation with each other about something Namjoon said with his patented philosopher voice, so Yoongi and Hoseok are left to shoot them awkward glances and wait for the other to say something. It’s when Hoseok waits for Yoongi to say something, that he does.

“How you been?”

It’s quiet, and quick, and suddenly Hoseok’s heart is in his throat at the thought that apparently Yoongi cares about how he’s been, and he has to actively convince himself that the question was actually directed at him, not at Yoongi’s bowl of leftover soup he’s calmly putting rice in now, because that’s certainly where his gaze is fixed.

“How you been?” Hoseok hears himself say. That’s mostly the truth, he thinks. “You?”

Namjoon told him not to ask, Hoseok told himself not to ask. But Yoongi asked first, so maybe he can ask too, now. His relationship with Yoongi is different than Yoongi’s relationship with Namjoon anyway. That’s the entire reason for the sting in his stomach.

Yoongi shoots him a look, quick but scrutinizing, and offers a one-shouldered shrug. “Okay.”

Okay. Hoseok lets out a breath he didn’t realize he was holding. He smiles at Yoongi, and Yoongi does this thing with his face where he’s not exactly smiling, but not scowling either, just letting him know he’s in the clear. Hoseok can still read him, if he tries. It’s sort of a terrifying realization, but a nice one too.

“Where are you staying?” Hoseok asks, after shooting Namjoon and Seokjin another look, but they’re still gazing deeply into each other’s eyes while discussing the universe, or whatever.

Yoongi answers, but he does so very quietly and with a mouthful of rice, so Hoseok doesn’t catch it. “What?”

He swallows, not meeting Hoseok’s gaze. “Hostel.”

And then they do look at each other, Hoseok giving him a worried stare, a frown almost, and Yoongi shooting back a borderline challenging glare. Hoseok knows where the challenge is, though. The challenge is having Yoongi look at him like he’s daring him to be nice, like he’s going to punch his teeth in if he invites him over, and still acting on his knowledge that he’s bluffing. That someone nice and a warm apartment is exactly what Yoongi wants. He just can’t say that.

This time, Hoseok suppresses his smile, and shifts his gaze back to his own bowl. “Stay at my place,” he says, quietly. Yoongi’s voice is even softer than his own when he answers.

“Kay.”

They realize too late that Namjoon and Seokjin are watching them with stupid, shit-eating grins.
Obviously no one questions them when Yoongi starts following Hoseok as soon as they part for their ways home. Namjoon is following Seokjin, too. Hoseok doesn’t question that, either.

Yoongi does. Hands stuffed in the pockets of his jacket, he stares over his shoulder until they can’t see the two of them anymore. “What’s with them? They dating or something?”

“Nah.” Hoseok snorts to himself as he pulls a pack of cigarettes from his pants pocket. “They’re pulling the biggest no homo in the history of mankind.” Yoongi snorts too now, and Hoseok ignores how proud he feels of making him laugh a little. “If you ask them, they’re just friends. You ask me, they’re already married and talking about which minivan they should lease.”

“Disgusting,” Yoongi says heartily.

Hoseok offers an affirmative grunt and lights his cigarette, blowing out the smoke as he waits for Yoongi to ask for one too, but he doesn’t. Hoseok raises his brows at him. “Did you quit?” Yoongi nods and his brows go even higher, making Yoongi bite back a smile at that impressed stare. “Shit. Congrats. You want me to put this out?”

“No, it’s cool.” Yoongi shrugs. “I’ll be fine.”

And maybe he will. Hoseok still makes an effort to blow the smoke to his other side so Yoongi doesn’t have to breathe it in, and Yoongi leads him to the subway station they need to get to his guest house, so they can pick up his stuff. They’re quiet, mostly, but Hoseok thinks it’s comfortable silence. Now and then Yoongi points out a café he hadn’t seen before because Seoul is an ever-changing city and if you leave for a year you’ll miss out on three different cafés all trying their luck in the same spot, rising and falling in the span of months. Hoseok likes it. Things never stand still here.

Yoongi’s room in the guest house is tiny and looks practically unused, and he has nothing but a backpack, though comically large on his shoulders. He pays for his stay in cash, pointedly not looking at Hoseok, but Hoseok wasn’t planning on saying anything anyway. Yoongi could have picked worse places to stay and Hoseok wouldn’t have been surprised, but apparently he doesn’t do that anymore.

Hoseok’s apartment is still the same as when Yoongi left, and he seems to relax a little as they step into the building and wait for the elevator. Hoseok wonders if it feels like home to him, at least a tiny little bit. He figures it’s not his place to know.

They step inside and Yoongi drops his backpack in the living room and Hoseok doesn’t realize the consequences of leaving his bathroom door open until it’s too late.

“Hoseok,” Yoongi says, very slowly. He’s standing right in the middle of the living room, staring through the open door with an expression that looks like he’s not quite sure if he’s supposed to be worried or really, really amused. “What the fuck is that.”

Hoseok freezes. He follows Yoongi’s gaze, something cold running down his back, then something warm creeping up his entire face, then he takes a giant step through the room to throw the bathroom door shut, as if that could still help him now. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he says loudly.

“You know I’m gonna have to go in there to, like, pee and shower eventually, right.”

“You’re not simultaneously peeing and showering in my apartment, Min Yoongi.”
“That’s not what I meant and you know it. Don’t change the subject. What the hell was that.”

Hoseok takes several breaths, fiddling with the door handle behind his back. There’s a laugh bubbling up in his throat because it’s ridiculous and kind of funny, but his ears are burning because it’s also incredibly embarrassing. “Okay so,” he starts, then stops again to take another breath, because apparently he’s currently in dire need of oxygen. Yoongi watches him with a tentative smirk that makes him a little dizzy. “Don’t laugh, okay? Shit, you’ll laugh. Never mind. Just… I was a little… You know. You left, back then, and I was, uh, I mean I wasn’t in a good place, but like, nothing super dramatic, just the kind of place people are in when they break up and stuff, you know? I wasn’t feeling so hot, I mean, is all, and I had to give myself something to do so I wouldn’t just sit around at home all day. And Namjoon and Seokjin were always glued to each other so that pissed me off and I didn’t want to hang with them all the time, and Jimin -- oh you don’t know Jimin, forget it. Anyway, this other friend I have was always with his other friend because he was about to leave the country, so I had like nothing to do, and I’d just sit here feeling stupid and --”

“Hoseok,” Yoongi says, a laugh in his voice. “Hoseok, just tell me why there is an entire cupboard filled to the brim with rubber ducks in your bathroom.”

“I, um, I bought them.” Hoseok lets go of the door handle to rub his neck instead. “I didn’t know where to go so I just drove around a little and ended up at, like, flea markets and garage sales and stuff, way outside town. At first I bought just one, then I found another that looked exactly the same and thought that was funny, and then eventually I just … started collecting them. To, uh, pass the time. Or something. They’re my breakup duckies. I don’t really know what to do with them now, so I just keep them in there.”

“Breakup duckies,” Yoongi echoes, and he’s chuckling to himself, though Hoseok only calls it a chuckle in his head because Yoongi would never want him call it what it is, which is practically a giggle. He shakes his head, and throws himself on Hoseok’s couch. “Man, I really did a number on you, huh?”

“Shut up,” Hoseok snorts. They both did a number on each other, and he’s glad they’re just laughing about it now. It’s been a year and Hoseok very obviously had or has some issues with the whole thing, but Yoongi talks to him like they’re still friends, so he supposes they can still work that out. It feels nice. Casual, easy, like being together still comes natural to them, even though it doesn’t feel romantic in the least, which is good too, he thinks. Probably. Maybe.

Hoseok gives up on guarding his bathroom door and follows Yoongi to the couch, plopping down next to him with a bit of safety distance between them, fiddling with the hem of his shirt until he can’t keep the question to himself anymore. “Why are you here?”

Yoongi turns his head to look at him. “You invited me,” he says flatly, though if the glint of amusement in his eyes is anything to go by, he knows that wasn’t what Hoseok meant.

“No, I mean, in Seoul,” Hoseok says, waving his hand around vaguely to indicate that he’s talking about the entire city, not his apartment. “You’ve always hated this place.”

“I hated living here with my parents,” Yoongi says. “But they’re gone now.”

It takes Hoseok a second. Yoongi’s mother has been gone for a while, died in a terrible car accident that was nobody’s fault and left Yoongi bitter and angry and scared of traffic, though Hoseok doesn’t think anyone else knows about that last part. It’s the fact that he seems to be talking about both of his parents that startles him. “Gone?” he says, staring at him. “Gone gone? Your dad’s dead?”

“Yup,” Yoongi says, the smile pulling at the corners of his mouth disturbing to anyone that doesn’t

Hoseok lets out a laugh then stops himself, because that’s weird, but maybe it’s not, so he laughs again. “Jesus, I don’t know what to say. Congratulations?”

“That works. Thank you.”

They just sit there and grin at each other, Hoseok practically beaming with how happy he is for Yoongi. It makes more sense now, him returning to Seoul, and he deserves this. His friends are still here, but he couldn’t comfortably live here while his father was still alive and very present in his life, and maybe it’ll all be easier for Yoongi now. God knows he needs it.

Eventually Yoongi leans to the side, almost gingerly, shoulder bumping into Hoseok’s, and Hoseok doesn’t even flinch. He puts an arm around Yoongi’s shoulders and Yoongi doesn’t flinch either, just pulls his knees to his chest and grabs the remote to turn on the TV and watch whatever’s on while leaning on Hoseok, like they always did. Hoseok can feel his head turn to the other side again soon though, trying to ignore the feeling that he’s staring at his bathroom door.

“You can’t keep all those rubber ducks.”

Yoongi sleeps on the couch, after politely declining Hoseok’s offer to switch places with him and take the bedroom, because “who knows what weird shit you’ve collected in there to get over us. Breakup dildos.” It’s a big couch anyway, and it’s not like Yoongi takes up much room. When Hoseok stumbles into the living room around eleven the next morning, he’s curled up into fetal position under two blankets, the only thing poking out being strands of chaotic black hair. Hoseok thinks it looks a tiny bit lightened, maybe by that same sun that put those freckles on his nose that Hoseok definitely did not see yesterday.

He cleans himself up a little in the bathroom, giving his rubber ducks an unhappy look, then he pads into the kitchen to fix them both some breakfast. The rice cooker is still full enough for two, so it’s a quick, uncomplicated session of throwing rice into the pan with some eggs, ham and kim, only takes him a few minutes, and Hoseok is surprised to see that the scene in his living room has changed drastically when he comes back.

Yoongi sits cross-legged between his bundle of blankets, in boxer shorts and an oversized shirt, a tiny laptop that looks like it might fall apart if Hoseok stares at it for too long perched on his knees, apparently reading something. “Morning,” Hoseok says tentatively, and Yoongi answers with a grunt that could mean practically anything, so everything is perfectly normal. This is the Min Yoongi he knows, and it’s kind of soothing that he’s still there. On his couch, without so much as looking at him. Soothing, yes.

“I made breakfast.”

Another grunt.

“You’re welcome.”

With this, Yoongi finally looks up from his laptop, gifts him with a Min Yoongi Death Glare™, and wordlessly extends his hand so Hoseok can give him one of the bowls he’s holding. He does so with an overly polite smile before sitting down at the other end of the couch to eat, because he knows Yoongi wouldn’t want him too close while his laptop is open. Obviously, Hoseok has made enough
jokes about him watching porn on there all the time, but Yoongi just likes his privacy. And Hoseok likes not pissing Yoongi off (too much).

The dark, apocalyptic aura around him fades slowly with every bite he eats, and by the time he leans forward to put his bowl on Hoseok’s couch table, he looks almost peaceful. “That club in Itaewon you work at,” he says, leaning back and glancing towards his laptop again, “is it any good?”

Hoseok blinks at him. He can’t remember telling Yoongi about his second job, and back when Yoongi left, he was still just teaching kids at the dance school (which ended up not being enough to pay his bills).

“Seokjin told me.”

Oh. Right. Hoseok wonders briefly what other things Seokjin has told him, but there’s probably nothing worse than the breakup duckie collection. Hoseok shrugs. “It’s not bad, yeah. I like it. They play good music, I know that’s all you care about. Why?”

“He and Namjoon are going tonight, asked me if I wanna come. Some guy named Jimin’s coming too. Is that your Jimin?”

Something terrifying settles down in the back of Hoseok’s head, but he can’t quite put his finger on it, so he ignores it for now. “Yeah, probably, he goes there a lot. I got work tonight, so I’ll be there too, actually. Just, you know. Sober.”

Yoongi gives a thoughtful hum, nothing more, but Hoseok supposes the fact that he’s not going off on a rant about how much he hates parties and socializing means he’s probably going to come. What he actually hates, after all, is boring music and shitty people, so going to a club that plays good stuff with his friends probably won’t piss him off that much.

Hoseok has a whole bunch of classes to teach that day, one breakdancing class and two hours of street dance for kids that are younger and thus much more openly enthusiastic than his grumpy teenage freestyle class, leaving him a little giddy himself as he returns home for a quick shower and some more rice before his shift at the club starts. Yoongi’s gone, but before he can worry he spots a post-it note on the closed laptop on his couch table, just reading *With the No Homo Couple*. Hoseok smiles, both at the brandnew inside joke they apparently have now, and at the thought that Yoongi left this to make sure Hoseok doesn’t think he ran off again. And he also smiles a little at Seokjin and Namjoon. Because he loves them, and they love each other, and that’s nice.

The club in Itaewon started out as a gay bar before expanding spectacularly and turning into an impressively big LGBT club instead. Hoseok works there as a bartender a few nights per month, and usually gets to watch his friends have intense makeout sessions on dancefloors. It’s where he met Jimin too, coming here with Taehyung and their friend Jungkook to celebrate Jungkook turning twenty, and to make everyone else’s eyes bulge out of their heads with how the boys were dancing. It ended up with Jimin drunkenly flirting with Hoseok for half an hour before Taehyung and Jungkook dragged him home. They haven’t flirted since, Hoseok thinks. He’s not completely sure, actually. The way Jimin sometimes looks at him when he does his bodyrolls sure does some thing or other to him.

Jimin shows up at the bar with Jungkook while Hoseok is still in deep discussion with his three friends about who among them has vomited just outside this club more often, so he’s actually quite happy to tear himself away from that topic since his face is already starting to hurt from all the disgusted faces he’s pulling at them. He saunters over to the two younger kids and gets them their
usual stuff, barely noticing how they’re both watching Yoongi until Jimin asks.

“Who’s that?”

“Min Yoongi,” Hoseok says airily. “He’s a good friend of m—”

“Have you asked him?”

Suddenly Jimin’s eyes are wide on him, and Hoseok remembers that terrifying thing nesting in his head, and right, this was it. Jimin and Yoongi being here at the same time. Jimin still being on his mission to find a fake boyfriend for his bestie.

“Asked him what?” Hoseok says, feigning ignorance in the hopes of somehow stopping this entire thing from happening.

“He’s short!” Jimin says, leaning over the counter towards him, and Hoseok wishes he wouldn’t say that this loudly. It’s dangerous. “And he looks cute. Taetae would like him, I can tell that from all the way over here. You have to ask him!”

“No.” Hoseok shakes his head fervently now. “No, Yoongi wouldn’t say yes. He doesn’t do shit like that.”

“No body does shit like that,” Jungkook says, and Hoseok thinks he’s helping him, until he sees his borderline provocative glare. “Not unless you convince them. You won’t know for sure what he’d say until you ask him.”

Hoseok stares at him for a second, then he just continues shaking his head a lot. “I am not asking Yoongi. You guys can do that yourselves if you really want to.”

Fuck.

Fuck, he shouldn’t have said that.

“Okay!” Jimin chirps, turning away from the bar with his drink in hand -- and looking lost. As Hoseok follows his gaze, he breathes a sigh of relief, because Yoongi is gone, and so are Seokjin and Namjoon. He assumes they went out to the dancefloor, which is a sight he really does not want to see, so he just turns back towards Jimin and Jungkook with a merry smile.

“Pity.”

Jimin squints at him menacingly, which is outrageously adorable. Before Hoseok can tell him that though, he grabs Jungkook by the arm and drags him off, too, punishing him very severely by leaving him here to actually work and, what’s way worse, watch Jimin dance.

He loses sight of them occasionally as the night goes on, though Yoongi, Seokjin and Namjoon show up at the bar every now and then to chat with him some more. Eventually though, it’s just Yoongi showing up there, saying that Seokjin and Namjoon “went somewhere together” with a nauseated kind of look on his face, so Hoseok doesn’t ask about them any more. He doesn’t want to know.

What he finds much more interesting is the writing scrawled over the back of Yoongi’s hand in black ink. There’s something like jealousy mixing with Hoseok’s curiosity, but they’re not together anymore, they’re certainly not in love anymore, and it’s alright. He’s cool.

“Wow, first night out back in Seoul and you’ve already scored a number?”
Yoongi looks up at him, grinning, the alcohol having painted his cheeks a soft pink, and shrugs. “I know, right. It’s weird though. He’s just trying to set me up with his friend, or something. I’m not sure I’m gonna call.”

Once more, Hoseok feels something cold run down his back as he makes a connection he tells himself very hard cannot be true, and spends the next five minutes talking to Yoongi about how very weird that is and that this friend is probably a creep and that he really shouldn’t call.

It’s so warm in Taehyung’s room that he feels like he could be melting any second now, half of the heat coming from the laptop on his thighs. He doesn’t have the energy to move it to his desk though, so he has to stay on his bed with the thing on his legs and his pillows around him, making him wonder if this is what it’s like to be in an oven.

Maybe it is. Though in an oven you probably wouldn’t get to hear the unnerving melody of Skype trying to connect a video call. Maybe he’d rather be in an oven right now.

He wouldn’t. It all gets better the second Skype actually does manage to connect and he can see a pixellated version of Jungkook grinning at him. Jimin isn’t online yet, so he’s probably still asleep after the night they’ve had yesterday, without Taehyung, which sucks big time, but Jungkook told him he has good news, so maybe he’ll forgive him.

“We might have found someone,” Jungkook says.

Hell yeah he’ll forgive him. Taehyung’s eyes go wide and he automatically leans in a little closer, as if that could make him see that someone Jungkook is talking about. “Really? Who?”

“One of Hoseok’s friends. Met him at the party yesterday, but he hasn’t confirmed anything yet. Jimin gave him his number and got texted a couple hours later, so we got a name and a number, but he hasn’t said yes or anything. Hasn’t said no either, though.”

“Is he cute?” Taehyung blurts out. Maybe that shouldn’t be his top priority, but he did tell his parents that he’s adorable…

Jungkook shrugs dismissively. “I guess. Jimin says he’s your type.” Taehyung’s face lights up at that, because if Jimin says that, he’s most probably right. “He’s about as tall as Jimin actually, I think. Maybe a little shorter? Dunno. He looks shorter, I mean, one of my thighs is probably just as broad as his shoulders.”

“Awww.”

“Yeah, whatever.” Jungkook snorts. “He’s a bit creepy too, though. I think it’s just resting bitch face. But Jimin had to get pretty drunk to get the balls to talk to him after he looked him in the eye once. Thinks he’s kkangpae.” Jungkook actually giggles to himself, and Taehyung snorts loudly. Poor innocent ray of sunshine Jimin has no idea what Jungkook’s and Taehyung’s families are up to. “He’s not, by the way. I checked.”

Taehyung blinks at his webcam. “You background checked him? Already?” He tried to sound a bit pissed off, because Jungkook’s not his mom, but really he just finds it kind of funny.

“Listen, your dad would have my ass if this ends up working out and I let you date someone from another clan or something,” Jungkook says, grinning almost apologetically now, and Taehyung has to admit that he’s right. “But he’s clean. You wanna hear more stuff I found out?”
“No,” Taehyung says quickly, scowling at the way Jungkook’s brows shoot up and he smirks at him. “No, if he does agree, I’ll get to know him myself, like a normal person.”

“Suit yourself.” Jungkook shrugs, and Taehyung immediately feels a little bad, because background checks are a lot of work, really.

“Okay, is there anything, like, super bad about him?”

“Hmm.” Jungkook seems to consider this briefly, scrolling through his phone with a light frown, and shakes his head. “No, don’t think so. No criminal record, at least. Seems pretty normal to me.”

“Nice. Good.” Taehyung feels inappropriately happy, he thinks, considering they didn’t even get him to definitely agree and he himself hasn’t even seen or talked to him. It’s a recurring theme in his life that he gets too excited for things that’ll disappoint him in the end, but he has a good feeling about this one. And it’s absolutely not like all the other times he had a good feeling about things that ended up disappointing him.

“Thank you,” he says, which gets a grin and a curt nod from Jungkook. It feels a little weird that he did a background check on a guy that’s friends with Hoseok, but Taehyung still appreciates the thought. Jungkook is younger than him, but he looks out for him a lot, because that’s just the way he was raised. With Taehyung’s father being one of the major bosses in the city and Jungkook’s father being his first and most important advisor, it’s no wonder their sons ended up at least a little like them. Jungkook takes care of him, be it for illicit activities, personal security issues, or possible fake boyfriends.

Chapter End Notes

i saw this and i had to.
"You'll love him."

Chapter Summary

Professional gold digger Min Yoongi falls in love with a pair of legs and makes a decision.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

If he’s being completely honest with himself, Yoongi doesn’t really remember why he texted Jimin. Well, a good chunk of the reason was probably that he was pretty drunk, but it also just seemed like a really good idea.

Hoseok had spent several minutes talking to him about why being set up with a total stranger was weird and creepy and how he should wash off the number and never think about it again, and Yoongi had, even through the hammered mess of his thoughts, managed to never once let it slip that he was perfectly aware that it was Jimin’s number. If Hoseok wasn’t going to say anything about it, then neither was Yoongi, so they had talked about it like it really was some random guy in the club that had scrawled his number on the back of Yoongi’s hand, not the kid Hoseok had been staring at for half the night. He’s pretty sure Hoseok must have known it was Jimin’s number. He actually hopes so, since it’d be kind of sad if Yoongi had gotten Jimin’s number before Hoseok, albeit for strange reasons.

So, with Hoseok hellbent on convincing him to not text Jimin, naturally the first thing Yoongi did when Hoseok wasn’t looking was pull out his phone and text Jimin.

He was curious, he guesses. Hoseok practically loves the kid, so he can’t really be all that bad and probably doesn’t have any creepy serial killer friends either that are trying to hook up with him through Jimin. Maybe Hoseok’s jealous, maybe it’s something entirely else, he has no idea. So last night, he was curious.

Today, he’s back on Hoseok’s couch, wondering what the hell he was thinking. It’s not bad, really, he’s made worse drunk decisions and he still kind of wants to know who this friend of Jimin’s is, but the whole thing also really doesn’t sound like something Min Yoongi does, and if there’s one thing he didn’t think he’d be doing this soon after coming back to Seoul, it’s giving his number to some bubbly kid wanting to set him up with his best friend.

He doesn’t think too hard about it, though. Not yet. He’s tired, his head is throbbing very softly, painkillers only just setting in after he found them in the exact same spot they were over a year ago, blanket draped around his shoulders and holding onto the water glass in his hands. He’s enjoying the quiet while Hoseok is still asleep, the constant honking and screeching of tires outside not quite reaching his apartment, dim light seeping in through heavy clouds and dirty windows. It’s peaceful. Yoongi needs peaceful, but he needs something to balance it out, too.

The typo-riddled text he got back from Jimin last night, telling him they’ll talk this through once they’re sober, for example. Or the way Hoseok’s bedroom door flies open with no warning, making Yoongi flinch and almost drop his water and shoot him a dangerous glare.
“Whoops!” Hoseok says, beaming at him. “I was gonna tell you to rise and shine, but you’re up already! That’s good. Means you won’t kill me for telling you to rise and shine.”

Of course, Yoongi only answers with a grunt, because it’s too early to speak and also his throat feels like he farted into his mouth. Hoseok happily disappears into the bathroom, then the kitchen, Yoongi just staying put and slowly emptying his water glass so he can forget he ever had a thought about farting into his mouth.

“You wanna eat something?” Hoseok asks from the kitchen, and Yoongi shakes his head before he realizes he can’t see him.

“Not yet,” he answers. His voice isn’t as croaky as he had thought. That’s good. He has things to say to Hoseok.

With a plate of toast in one hand and more water in the other, Hoseok finally settles down on the couch next to Yoongi, pretending not to notice Yoongi’s borderline predatory gaze. Yoongi empties his glass and puts it on the couch table, picking up his phone instead and just twisting it between his fingers calmly before he speaks up.

“Your Jimin,” he says, watching Hoseok freeze for a split second. “He gets pretty talkative.”

Hoseok swallows the gigantic mouthful of toast he took and only shoots him a quick glance. “What’d he say?”

Smirking, Yoongi holds up his hand, reminding Hoseok of the smudged writing there, making him sigh quietly. “This came with a story,” he says. “Said he’s got a friend who needs a boyfriend. He admitted it’s kind of unconventional, but apparently this friend is super important to him, et cetera, and I -- I think I’m using his exact words here -- allegedly fit the profile. Only Jimin has to arrange this whole thing, because his friend is currently in Australia, and they’ve been trying for a while to find someone, even asked Jimin’s trusty pal Jung Hoseok, but they just can’t find anyone. Not even this Hoseok person, who normally knows so many people. So, that’s what you were trying to talk me out of last night. You knew.”

At this point, Hoseok looks ready to ditch his breakfast, get up and just go back to bed. He sighs around his toast, swallows, sighs again, then he shrugs. “Look, I just,” he starts, and stops himself again. “I mean -- Yoongi, does this sound like the kind of thing you’d be interested in to you? Would you have wanted me to jump you with that?”

Yoongi chuckles into his blanket. He’d almost forgotten how fun it is to watch Hoseok struggle. “No, calm down.” He’s not completely heartless though. “I’m not mad, I just think it’s funny. You didn’t think I’d think it’s funny?”

For a few seconds, Hoseok just watches him, a slight frown pulling on his brows. “Well, you’ve gotta admit,” he says slowly, “that whole thing they’re doing, it doesn’t exactly scream Min Yoongi.”

Yoongi stares back. There’s something about the certainty in Hoseok’s voice, the immediate assumption that Yoongi as a person just isn’t fun and spontaneous enough to let himself get set up with some dude in Australia, that pisses him off. “Maybe I’ve changed.”

He watches him a bit longer, then Hoseok turns back towards his toast and shrugs again. “Maybe you have.” There’s a pause, Yoongi wondering if he has, Hoseok nibbling gingerly. He’s a bit quieter when he speaks again. “I don’t know if Jimin told you, but they’re not looking for an actual boyfriend. Just someone his friend can pretend to be dating.”
Oh. Jimin did not, in fact, tell him that. Made it sound like it’s supposed to be actual romance or whatever. Yoongi has to admit that this version of things actually makes them sound much better to him.

“Oh,” he says, squinting. “But why? I mean, who the hell pretends to be gay?”

“Oh, no.” Hoseok waves his toast around. “Taehyung’s gay. Jimin’s friend, I mean. That’s not the pretend part. Oh my god, I can’t believe I’m about to explain this mess to you.” He closes his eyes with a sigh, leaning his head back against the couch. Yoongi watches his Adam’s apple bob when he swallows. “Okay, so, Taehyung came out to his parents a little over a week ago. Jimin says they’re mostly chill with it, they just don’t want their precious only child to be lonely because apparently they think that’s what gay people are doomed to be. I don’t know. Jimin explained this part better. Anyway, to ease their minds or whatever, Taehyung told them he’s in a fantastic relationship with a guy when in reality, he’s single. He needs someone to play that made-up boyfriend, meet his parents, act all heart-eyes with him and everything. Make his parents think their gay son’s got a happy and even gayer future. That’s the story, alright? That’s what Jimin is trying to get you to do.”

Yoongi stares at him. Hoseok was right, it is a mess. He’d probably laugh about it if it wasn’t for the homophobia and for the fact that he’s on the verge of getting involved. In his head, this Taehyung’s parents are monsters already, all parents are monsters in Yoongi’s head, and he looks away frowning, thinking that maybe they deserve to be played like this.

“What, in conning someone else’s parents?” says Yoongi, looking up at him again, the smallest hint of a smirk playing with the corners of his lips. “You think that doesn’t sound like me?”

Pause. It’s quiet for several seconds, while Hoseok just stares at him. “Holy shit.” He lowers the water bottle from where it was halfway to his mouth. “Holy shit, you’re considering it.”

“Do you know anything about his parents?” Yoongi asks. “Tell me about them.”

“I only met them once, briefly.” Hoseok finally takes that sip of water, frowning softly. “I just know Taehyung loves them to bits. He’s a real family person, you know. He still lived with them, too, before he left for Australia. Probably going to live with them again once he comes back. You’d have to put up with that -- just saying. Sit through family dinners, talk to his mom when you’re picking him up for fake dates. Conning someone’s parents is one thing, conning them by acting like you’re their dream son-in-law when I know you’re already considering ripping their throats out right now is another.”

Sometimes Yoongi honestly hates how well Hoseok knows him. Yoongi has issues with parents, and Hoseok is very aware of that, because Hoseok is very aware of Yoongi’s entire life history, except for the past year, and it’s his own damn fault for opening up and telling him about it, but he needed it. Hoseok gets it. And he’s just looking out for him now, he knows that, but it also kind of makes him want to prove him wrong.

“I could do it,” he says softly.

Hoseok gives him that look again, soft worry, doubt, and Yoongi wants to reach over, grab that water bottle and empty it over his head. “Don’t turn this into some sort of challenge you’ll hate yourself for later.”

Yoongi rolls his eyes. “I’ve gotten better at this … stuff, okay?” he gripes, realizing too late that calling it this stuff maybe isn’t exactly helping his cause. He sighs quietly, composing himself. “I
have. I don’t panic that easily anymore, I don’t lash out -- I mean, shit, you know I’ve stopped smoking. That was one hell of a challenge, and I did it.” He pauses, pressing his lips into a thin line because he hates talking about himself, even if it’s progress. “I wouldn’t have come back here if I wasn’t feeling better.”

That, at least, seems to hit the mark, and Hoseok looks back to his last piece of toast with a small nod. It’s quiet for a few seconds while he picks at it instead of eating it, and Yoongi is this close to telling him off for that, when he speaks up gently. “They’re also really loaded. Taehyung’s family, I mean. His dad’s some super influential businessman, or whatever. You still need a job?”

Yoongi stares at him, almost laughs about the way the air around Hoseok has changed to something borderline mischievous -- he loves it, of course. “I do, yeah.”

Hoseok just smiles at his plate. He finally finishes his toast when Yoongi’s phone vibrates in his hands, making him jump a little.

“Oh,” he says softly. “That’s probably Jimin.”

“You gonna tell him yes?”

Unlocking his phone, Yoongi shakes his head. “Not yet. Right now I know more about his family than about the guy himself,” he says, gracefully hiding the fact that he’s already forgotten the kid’s name.

“Oh,” Hoseok says, and Yoongi doesn’t look up fast enough to catch his facial expression when he gets up, which makes him frown deeply at what he says next. “You’ll love him.”


[12:44] you: i might be

[12:44] : Nice!!! If you want, you can come over so we can Skype Taetae and you guys can talk to each other!

[12:45] you: k sounds fair

[12:45] : :D

[12:46] : Ill send you the address! Just drop by whenever you like :)

By the time Yoongi is fed, showered, dressed, and has reached the address Jimin gave him, it’s past five in the afternoon already. He stops in front of the apartment building, craning his neck a little to inspect it fully. It looks nice, not too shabby, not extremely expensive either though. Jimin looks like he’s probably in college, and this is definitely a nice place to live for a college student. Though if the Australia guy is loaded, Yoongi supposes it makes sense that his friends would be loaded too. Yoongi doesn’t quite fit into that pattern, but he’s not talking himself out of it now. He’s here to have a probably groundbreakingly awkward Skype conversation with someone and then he can still make his decision.

A gust of cold February wind hits him and Yoongi shivers into his scarf, finally entering the building. He checks the apartment number on his phone once more before stepping into the elevator.
and pulling the headphones from his ears. He’s not nervous. No. He’s met Jimin before and there’s no reason to be nervous when meeting him again, and there’s especially no reason to be nervous upon the prospect of skyping his weird friend. It’s probably going to be some mediocre pimply guy in his early twenties, who else still lives with their parents at that age? Right. Nobody. And maybe Yoongi will turn him down, or he’ll play along with his fake boyfriend thing out of pity because obviously no one else is willing to pretend-date the kid, and there has got to be a reason for that, right? So Yoongi’s a good person for once in his life and also kind of does it to get to know his influential father and maybe score a job that allows him to vacate Hoseok’s couch again. That’s the plan. It’s a good plan, and he’s not nervous.

He frowns when it’s not Jimin opening the door, but the other kid that was with him at the party. Jung-something. He doesn’t really remember him being this unnecessarily tall and broad-shouldered.

“Hey,” Jung-something says with a smile and steps to the side to make room. “Come in. I’m guessing from the look on your face that Jimin didn’t tell you I live here too.”

“Nope,” Yoongi says, looking around the place. Neither of the two really looks old enough to be living here alone without having the apartment turn into a dumpster, but it’s cleaner than he’d thought. Even if there’s a dirty plate on a bookshelf for some reason. Maybe it’s art.

“Yeah, thought so.” Jungkook snorts quietly while leading him towards the gigantic couch in the living room and moving two PlayStation controllers out of the way. “Hungover Jimin’s a genius. Do you, uh, want something to drink? We have water, and… And coffee. I think that’s it.”

“I’m good.” Yoongi’s starting to feel pretty damn weird, but he sits nonetheless, because he’s not about to let a huge empty couch go to waste.

Jungkook shrugs, then turns towards a closed door, knocking on it with his whole fist. “Jimin! What are you doing? Get your ass and laptop over here.”

The door opens almost immediately, showing Yoongi a tired looking Park Jimin in boxer shorts and a giant hoodie, an open laptop perched on his hip under his arm, squinting at Jungkook. “You do remember that I’m older than you, right?”

“Don’t fight,” says a voice from the laptop. Yoongi guesses the video call with Pimply Loser is already on.

“We’d never,” Jimin chirps, waving hello to Yoongi with his free hand as he strides over and gingerly puts the laptop down on the couch table. “Ready?” he asks the screen, still turned a little to not face Yoongi just yet.

“God, I can’t believe we’re doing this,” Jungkook mutters, throwing himself on the couch with a polite distance to Yoongi, and Yoongi decides he likes him better than Jimin for now.

“Bring it on,” says Jimin’s laptop, and so he turns it, and Yoongi gets to look at the full-screen Skype call to Australia.

Shit.

What Yoongi had assumed was going to be some unfortunate lanky sunburnt loser stuck in his teens with puberty doing nothing to help him is actually one of the prettiest people he’s seen lately. His first thought is that he doesn’t get how they’ve been looking for fake partners for over a week without having the entire gay male population of Seoul jumping the kid, his second thought is that he could probably make unholy amounts of money with those lips. Then he remembers that he’s rich
already and thinks that he doesn’t quite look like it, he looks down-to-earth, in a simple white tank top (one of those with the comically large arm holes that make Yoongi get a glimpse of his ribs he wishes he didn’t catch) and tacky red shorts. There’s light brown hair falling into his eyes, complementing his skin tone nicely, which is… Yoongi can’t find words for his skin. It’s just the right shade of tan, and there’s too much of it, most of his legs exposed right up to his thighs, looking so long that Yoongi wants to yell at him to reposition his fucking webcam so he doesn’t have to see them anymore.

His smile looks stupid. But nobody’s perfect.

“Hi,” he says, and that one syllable is enough to make Yoongi pray to god that Jimin’s laptop’s audio is messing up his voice, because it cannot actually be that deep. “I’m Kim Taehyung. Yoongi, right?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, doing his best to snap out of it, at least focus back on his face instead of his legs. “Min Yoongi. Hi.”

He doesn’t know what else to say, just makes sure to burn that name into his mind instead of forgetting it again. For a few painfully awkward seconds, it’s terribly quiet, then Taehyung laughs. “Wow, okay,” he says, seemingly more to himself, shaking his head. “Uh, thanks for, you know, considering this. How d’you know Hoseok?”

“School.” Yoongi’s hands are in the pocket of his hoodie, fingers fiddling with each other before he forces himself to stop because school was very long ago and he’s not a goddamn teenager anymore. He’s an adult with his hormones in check. Kim Taehyung probably doesn’t even look as good anymore once you see him in real life and the video quality stops smoothing out his skin. “He’s my ex, by the way. Guess that’s fair to mention. We’re friends now, that’s it.”

“Oh,” Taehyung says, and nods a little too enthusiastically, trying hard to get the awkwardness away from them. “That’s cool. Same with Jiminnie.”

Yoongi shoots Jimin a look, who smiles at him, tries to picture them together, but doesn’t. “Okay.” He can’t remember the last time he actually tried to hold small talk with someone. There were things he actually wanted to know about Taehyung, he’s pretty sure, but fuck if he still remembers those after watching Taehyung’s thighs flex as he rearranges himself a little on what looks like a messy bed. “So -- what are you doing in Australia?”

Right. That was one thing he wanted to know, but now he still kind of wishes he hadn’t asked, because Taehyung beams at him. “Studying! I’m a bio major, I wanna get into marine biology, took the semester off to do some field work here.”

“Fourteen, as of yesterday.” For some reason Taehyung seems proud of this achievement. “If you count bites, too. Two different things, really. Anyway! Are you still in college?”

Yoongi shakes his head. “No. Got a degree in audio engineering though. I just got back from a longer trip myself, so I’m sorta just looking around right now.”

That’s the vague version of things Yoongi’s willing to disclose at least, though Taehyung doesn’t seem to be particularly bothered by him being cryptic. “Ohhh, that’s so cool! Where did you go? What’s audio engineering?”

Okay. Yoongi squints at him for a split second, because really, his degree sounds pretty self-
explanatory to him so what the hell kind of question is that even supposed to be, but before he even takes a breath to answer, Jungkook clears his throat. “Taehyung, how about you just tell him what he’s in for?”

“Oh right,” Taehyung says, sitting up a little straighter (not like Yoongi particularly notices or cares) like he only just remembered what they’re actually doing this for. “Okay, uh… How much have the others told you about what we’re trying to do here and why?”

“Hoseok said you need some sorta pretend-romance to make your parents happy,” Yoongi sums up, automatically trying to sound disinterested so he’s not coming off as eager or anything weird like that.

“Uh, yeah.” Taehyung shoots his friends a glance. “Wow, it sounds kind of terrible when other people say it.”

To that, Jungkook raises his arms in a huge shrug, mouthing *told you so* at Jimin’s laptop before pointedly getting up from the couch and disappearing into the kitchen. Taehyung doesn’t seem all too bothered by that, scrunching up his face in thought while trying to find words, and it makes him look like a child, and Yoongi needs to stop watching him like that.

“Um, so… I told my parents we got together right before I left for Australia, so they think it’s going pretty steady and all. The fake boyfriend and me, I mean, not necessarily you. Don’t feel pressured or anything.” Yoongi doesn’t say anything to that, just waves his hand around dismissively, and Taehyung nods. “I still live with them, but I’m out a lot too, plus our place is pretty big and they work a lot, so it’s not like they’re expecting to see you all the time. They *do* want to get to know you, but I’m guessing that’ll be one dinner and some cross-questioning and that’s it. They’re nice though! Like, they wanna know that I’m in good hands and stuff, but they won’t be super mean or anything. They’ll probably start liking you really quickly and then they’ll pamper you as much as they can. D’you like Jimin’s and Jungkook’s place? Because my mom practically got it for them, ‘cause they’re my best friends and my parents would probably buy them a small country if they asked them to.”

Yoongi’s brows have been on a journey north. He’s fighting to hold back the tiniest of grins, because that does kind of sound like something he could use right now. One dinner with the guy’s parents can’t be that bad, he can do that, he can make them like him. Hoseok’s parents like him -- actually, Namjoon’s and Seokjin’s parents like him too. Parents usually like Yoongi. Yoongi just doesn’t like parents, but he can probably make his way through this and get Taehyung’s parents to fall for him too.

Jimin is giggling to his left. “Taetae, are you trying to buy him in or something?”

“No!” Taehyung answers immediately, looking flustered now and throwing his hands up. “No I’m not! My parents are really great people once they know you, is all I’m saying, okay? I don’t want him to be scared or anything. See, Yoongi, all you have to do is pretend you like me and, like, let them think we do couple stuff now and then, I mean we don’t even have to actually do anything, just seem like we do, and they’ll be cool with you and we both get something out of it. Sound good?”

Part of Yoongi can’t really believe he’s thinking this, but it kind of does. “Sure,” he says. He’s not exactly the king of couple activities, but for all he cares he can let Taehyung take over the reins on that and he’ll just play along. He talks a lot and occasionally seems like he’s ten years younger than he should be as a biology major, but in between sentences he’s still horrifyingly pretty and obviously trying his best to please Yoongi, and he can work with that. It does sound good. “You want me to meet you at the airport or something when you come back?”
Taehyung’s eyes almost bulge out of his head. “Wait, you -- so you’re doing it? Was that a yes?”

Somewhere in the back of his head Yoongi remembers himself thinking that he’s going to take his sweet time with this decision, but right now his mind is occupied with a pleasant mixture of Taehyung’s tanned thighs and his parent’s bank account, so he doesn’t really care. “Yeah, it’s a yes,” he says, his voice calm and casual in contrast to Taehyung’s excited face. “I’ll pretend-date you.”

“Nice!” Taehyung says, loudly, and pretty much continues talking twice as fast. “Then, yeah, you can come meet me at the airport, if you want? My flight is in two weeks. My parents are picking me up, Jiminnie and Kookie are coming too, plus it’s super in the open so we wouldn’t be able to make a huge scene anyway, which is good, probably? Since it’s actually the first time we’ll see each other in person, so we can just, like, hug and pretend we missed each other so much, et cetera, I’ll tell my parents who you are and they’ll probably just take me home afterwards, so that works. It’ll look good. That’s cool.”

Yoongi bites back a snort, but Taehyung makes an urgent noise and continues speaking before he can say anything.

“Oh! I hope you’re not scared of dogs. We have a puppy at home.”

“Taetae,” Jimin says softly. “You have to stop telling people that Boop is a puppy when she’s a fully grown, twelve-year-old Doberman.”

Yoongi forces himself to inspect the pillows he can see on the screen when Taehyung pulls his lips into a real, actual pout. “She’s a tiny baby still and she’ll always be a puppy to me.”

“You have a twelve-year-old Doberman called Boop,” Yoongi recaps. Taehyung flashes him a grin that makes his mouth look like a rectangle and, okay, now he’s seen it all. He lets out his snort now, shaking his head. “I’m not scared, no.”

“Good! Great,” says Taehyung, grin still in place and Yoongi decides that he hates it. “You should get my contact info from Jiminnie’s Skype so we can talk more in the next two weeks. I mean, we should know at least some stuff about each other, right? To make this look plausible. Is that okay?” And now the grin is gone, and he looks worried instead, like he’s scared he’s pushing himself on Yoongi too strongly. Yoongi just nods calmly.

“Sure, that’s reasonable. I’ll hit you up.”

He doesn’t know why he said that. He hates messaging people first.

“Cool, then maybe we can continue this without my best friend watching us like a hawk while we’re basically in his apartment,” Taehyung giggles (he giggles. Yoongi hates that too), shooting Jimin a look who in turn tries to act like his face didn’t just turn several shades darker.

“I, uh, I mean I can leave you guys alone, if that’s --”

“Nope,” Yoongi says, getting up already. “I like Taehyung’s idea. Message me his Skype and Kakao ID, we can handle the rest.”

He misses Jimin looking borderline terrified of him as he snakes his way out from between the couch and the table, turning only a little to wave at the laptop. “See you soon, Kim Taehyung.”

“See you!” Taehyung trills, and Yoongi, being the social butterfly he is, leaves the apartment without saying goodbye to the two people actually physically being there with him.
It’s not until he’s in the hallway that he remembers his ancient laptop doesn’t have a webcam.

It’s not until he’s outside in the cold Korean spring air that he realizes he just agreed to fake-date a guy that’s proud of getting stung by probably near-deadly animals, calls his dog Boop, and doesn’t know what audio engineering is.

Chapter End Notes

skype should pay me for every time i mention their piece of garbage messenger in this fic

hhh i have four assignments due next week and finals in july, so, you know what that means. this fic is my baby already and i have HEAPS of plans for these losers and i basically want to write this thing 24/7 so dont worry, there will be updates, just not as fast as they have been. i dont really know how ive been managing that anyway. probably because ive been mildly obsessed with taegi lately (shoutout to ninas yoonseok loving ass for putting up with me EDIT: AND FOR KUDO #100 YA NERD) anyway im really overwhelmed by how many people are liking this thing already, so, thank you so much. ill see you guys soon <3
(Jimin has a revelation,) Taegi text a lot and Yoongi doesn’t sleep.

Ten minutes after Yoongi has left his friends’ apartment, Taehyung is still sitting in front of his laptop, hugging a pillow to his chest, staring off into space. He vaguely registers Jungkook showing up on the screen again, a bag of chips in his hands as he flops on the couch next to Jimin.

“Has he said anything?”

“Nope.” Jimin giggles. “Not a word.”

Jungkook heaves a big, melodramatic sigh. “Uh oh.”

“You said,” Taehyung says slowly, making them both jump with fake surprise. He hugs his pillow closer to his chest, refocusing (somewhat) on his screen so he can narrow his eyes at Jimin. “You said he’s cute.”

Jimin’s eyebrows shoot up and disappear beneath his bangs. “You don’t think he’s cute?”

“He’s hot.”

Jungkook lets out an undignified, downright mean laugh, throwing himself against the backrest of the couch and enthusiastically mouthing I knew it! at the ceiling. Taehyung just makes a distressed noise into his pillow and hugs it tighter.

“There’s…” He says, begrudgingly lifting his head a little so they can understand him. “There’s puppy-cute, you know, and there’s hot-cute. I thought he was going to be puppy-cute. I was fully prepared for him being puppy-cute. Oh my god,” he whines softly, going back to burying his face in his pillow, “I’m so fucked.”

“What’s hot about him?” Jungkook asks, still staring at the ceiling, still laughing quietly to himself. He throws a lone potato chip into his mouth and talks while he chews. “I mean, really, you only saw his face. He was dressed like he’s going on an Antarctic expedition. All I saw was a face and some stick legs.”

“Stop being mean to my boyfriend,” Taehyung mumbles into the pillow, sort of hoping they won’t catch it, but they do. And they both laugh.

“Sorry, man.” Jimin shrugs. “I did say he’s your type though.”

Taehyung makes another strangled noise, looking up just in time to see Jungkook sitting up straight again, only to lean his elbows on his knees and stare at the webcam with a gleeful sort of seriousness. “You can’t bone him.”
Instead of answering, Taehyung scowls at him like he just told him to go to bed without dinner.

“You know what happens when you bone the cute ones.”

Taehyung mumbles something vaguely resembling *I crush on them like Bane crushed Batman* into the soft fabric.

“Right. You can’t do it. Sorry, Taetae.”

“Why are you so against me liking him?” Taehyung suddenly bursts out, raising his face from his pillow and squinting at Jungkook instead. “You keep saying stuff like this! Like, what’s the problem with him?”

He wants to ask if there’s something Jungkook knows that he hasn’t told him, but Jimin is there with them so Taehyung can’t exactly just ask him about that background check. Taehyung doesn’t want to know, anyway. He wants to find out about Yoongi the normal person way, the non-kkangpae way, but Jungkook being so insistent is making him suspicious.

Jungkook actually seems a little taken aback now, and even Jimin is watching him with a hint of curiosity while he leans back a little, fiddling with his fingers. “I, uh,” he says, frowning at himself. “I just don’t want you to get hurt, alright?”

Taehyung sighs, quietly. “You think he won’t like me back.”

“Look, I don’t know the guy! Neither do you. I’m just, what I’m saying is, he…” Jungkook makes a defeated noise at the back of his throat and falls sideways against Jimin’s shoulder. “He just didn’t seem like he’s doing this for the romance, you know, is all.”

“Well, neither am I,” says Taehyung. He crosses his arms over his pillow, which doesn’t make him look as mature as he thinks. “I’m doing this to make life easier, for me, and I guess for him too, but mainly for me. And if he wants to bone, then we’ll bone, because he’s hot. If not, cool. Either way I can do this without unnecessary feelings. Okay? Totally. Trust me for once.”

He and Jungkook stare at each other through the webcam for a little while, Jungkook nodding quietly, though Taehyung can’t tell if he believes him or if he’s just given up. It doesn’t really matter. He needed the pep talk himself, really. He’s not going to fall in love with Yoongi. That would be stupid. He’s hot, and cute, and Taehyung can acknowledge that with no strings attached. After all, he really doesn’t know him yet. He could be the world’s biggest asshole.

“I can’t believe Hoseok dated him.” Jimin breaks the silence, making them both blink at him. He’s the one staring off into space now, and it pulls knowing smirks from both Jungkook and Taehyung.

“They broke up though,” Jungkook sing-songs.

Jimin frowns. “I mean, do I even have a chance if he’s into guys like that?”

“Can I repeat that? Let me repeat that,” Taehyung says, and then continues in an almost perfect imitation of Jungkook’s sing-song. “They broke up.”

And with that, Jimin turns to face them, eyes wide. “They broke up.”

It’s unclear who exactly starts the giggle fit from there, but it hits them all. Somewhere in between, Jungkook rubs tears from his eyes and shakes his head, laughing half into his bag of chips and half into Jimin’s shirt as he predicts, “You two are so screwed.”
And they are.

They are so screwed.

The fact that so far, Hoseok hasn’t said anything about how Yoongi has kept the keys to his apartment even while he was gone for an entire year, reminds Yoongi of why he likes him so much. Which is a reminder he is in dire need of right now, because god fucking damn it, Hoseok could have warned him.

As Yoongi lets himself in, Hoseok sits on the floor in front of the coffee table, scribbling something on a sheet of paper that Yoongi recognizes as a choreography draft. He looks up briefly, then down again when he greets Yoongi, but Yoongi can hear the smile in his voice.

Fucker.

“When you said I’ll love him,” Yoongi says after having closed the door behind him, getting a drawn-out “Hmm?” from Hoseok, “you were being sarcastic.”

“Yup.”

“I fucking hate him.”

Hoseok laughs around the pen between his teeth. “Of course you do.”

“Are you being sarcastic right now?” Yoongi kicks his shoes off and downright stomps over to the living area, throwing himself on the couch to glower at Hoseok across the table. “You can’t be sarcastic when you say I’ll love him and when you agree that I hate him. Make up your mind.”

“You make up your mind.”

“The hell’s that supposed to mean? I have. He’s terrible.”

Almost carefully, Hoseok puts his pen away, looks up, and gifts Yoongi with the broadest of smiles, the one that outshines the sun. “Isn’t he just adorable?”

Yoongi scowls at him. He is, in a way, he guesses, but Yoongi doesn’t even actually like adorable. Yoongi has never cared about adorable. He can admit that some people are cute, but that’s not his type, cute people aren’t the ones he gets with, the ones he clicks with. Which is fine, because he doesn’t have to click with Taehyung, they don’t have to actually work out. So he wouldn’t care about who’s being adorable and who’s into it or not, if only Hoseok stopped looking at him like that.

“Sure he is,” he says slowly. “Like a toddler. Cute when he tells you his dog’s name is fucking Boop, gross once he starts drooling and screaming and being a general burden.”

“Well, good thing you don’t have to parent him.” Hoseok shrugs. “That’s his parents’ job. You know, the ones you’ll have sophisticated family dinners with.”

Yoongi doesn’t answer to that, just makes sure to glower even worse until he’s certain that Hoseok shrinks a little. It works, too, making Hoseok drop the topic and just offer a dumb smile instead.

“What’s his dog’s name? Boob?”

“Boop. It’s fucking Boop. At least I hope it’s Boop, not Boob.”
“Maybe we’re both wrong and it’s Pube.”

“Shut up,” Yoongi groans, rubbing his face with both hands. Closing his eyes was a bad idea, though. Against the black of his eyelids, he can still see Taehyung’s practically bare thighs flexing when he moves them, golden skin taut over muscle. He snaps his eyes back open to grab his phone. His thumb hovers over the Kakao ID Jimin has sent him on his way home, when Hoseok speaks up softly again.

“So am I right to assume you’ll turn them down?”

Yoongi swears his eye does that twitchy thing that only happens in movies. He keeps his gaze fixed steadily on his phone. “Already agreed.”

“Seriously?”

“God, you’re so loud,” is Yoongi’s only answer to that, muttered into the scarf he still hasn’t taken off.

“You’re fake-dating the toddler? You’re Kim Taehyung’s official boyfriend as of today?”

“Oh, no.” Yoongi shakes his head without looking up. “No, we’ve been going pretty steady since before he went to Australia for studies, you know. I’ve been Kim Taehyung’s official boyfriend for months now.” His eyes dart up only briefly to see Hoseok staring at him, a weird mixture of amusement and pure horror in his eyes that makes Yoongi grin as he turns back to his phone. “Can’t wait to finally meet his rich influential parents who apparently actually spend tons of money on his friends. It’s really just about the most wonderful romantic relationship I’ve ever had. No offense.”

“You are so scary,” Hoseok laughs, a little helplessly, still gaping at him. “I’m a little worried about the kid.”

“I won’t kill him,” Yoongi says simply, really the only promise he can make at this point. He’s still staring at Taehyung’s Kakao Talk profile. He’s saved him under his first name for now, briefly considered adding a heart or something weird like that, but if it’s supposed to be believable, he has to be natural too. He doesn’t put hearts in his phone contacts. For the longest part of their relationship, he had Hoseok saved under “assface.”

He’s still not messaging Taehyung though, and it’s not until he can hear the light scratching of Hoseok’s pen against paper that he speaks up again.

“He’s from Daegu.”

Hoseok looks up. “Yeah? Did he tell you that?”

“No.” At this point, really, the reason Yoongi is still holding his phone with both hands is so that he doesn’t start chewing on his fingers again. It’s one of many habits he’s still fighting. “Heard it when he talked. It’s not super prominent, I think he’s trying to hide it. You know. Takes one to know one.”

Hoseok offers an affirmative hum, and when Yoongi looks at him, he looks back with a soft frown. “Is that good or bad?”

It’s an honest question, because he wants to know how to deal with this, and Yoongi appreciates it, but he can’t bring himself to give a clearer answer than a shrug and, “It’s whatever.”

“Okay,” says Hoseok, nothing more, and Yoongi feels a sudden rush of affection towards him that’s bordering on weird. He goes back to staring at his phone, missing the way that Hoseok, too, is
staring at Yoongi’s phone now. “Jesus, Romeo,” he says, shaking his head as he refocuses on his choreography sheet, “text him already.”

Obviously, Yoongi blindly reaches to his side, grabs a cushion and hurls it at Hoseok, who in turn goes down screeching, and Yoongi uses the time he’s bought to finally open that chat window and text him already.

[07:47] you: hey its yoongi

[07:47] : !!!!!!!!!!!!!

Oh, god.

[07:47] : hi!!

[07:47] : this is so weird omg but hey at least jimin isnt watching anymore

[07:47] : do you have a nickname?? :0 something ur friends call you so i can use that as contact name??

[07:48] you: no not really. Its pretty much yoongi for everyone

[07:48] : well thats boring

[07:48] : im gonna just put a bunch of emojis

[07:49] you: do your parents check your phone contacts or what

[07:50] : no omfg thank god

[07:50] : but you never know!!!

[07:50] : anyway if you want you can call me taetae! everyone does

[07:52] you: k

[07:52] : :)

Yoongi stares at his phone, stares at the change of contact name he just made, then shoots his gaze up to check up on what Hoseok is doing. But he’s still busy scribbling away on the couch table. Not like that’s important. Not like Yoongi would care if he had seen him or whatever.

[07:54] you: im guessing we should do some sort of small talk session

[07:54] : yeah like..... get the basics and stuff

[07:54] : interests hobbies favorite color favorite plant etc

[07:55] you: who the hell has favorite plants

[07:55] : i do!!!! i have lots of favorite plants. ive got pics on my phone of them and everything. dont make me show u


[07:56] : ;(
Fuck that winky emote in particular. Yoongi runs a hand through his hair, then down his face, and tries to remember his favorite color. Or the last time someone’s asked him about his favorite color, which was probably one of the stoner parties in college that Hoseok kept dragging him to. He doesn’t have a favorite color and he hasn’t had one since high school.

[07:57] you: interests is mostly music really
[07:57] you: some traveling i guess. I take pics when i do
[07:57] : !!! me too!! you should show me ur pics sometime ill show you some from down under :D underwater shots and all
[07:58] you: sounds good yeah

(Yoongi is a little confused, at this point, because that does actually sound good and he really wasn’t expecting that. He wasn’t expecting what comes next either though.)

[07:58] : shit wait lmfao did that sound like innuendo
[07:58] : when i say down under i mean like
[07:58] you: taehyung i know what down under means
[07:59] : ok!!! just making sure
[07:59] : not about 2 send you dick pics
[07:59] : “underwater shots” fuck

Yoongi is not, in fact, shoving his face into his scarf to hold back the tiniest of laughs.

[08:00] : SO ANYWAY!!! hahahaha
[08:01] : lets forget that ever happened and move on my interests are biology duh and anime and ive been learning japanese but im way behind because obviously i had to focus on english here and i love traveling too!! australia is super cool but i wanna see even more places. and animals
[08:01] : my biggest dream was to see a rain forest irl
[08:02] : i like stargazing too i used to know like all the stars when i was little but now my brain is all citric acid cycles and amino acids and basically ive forgotten them all :(
[08:02] : oh yeah super cliche but i do actually enjoy walks on the beach i miss walking my dog. we can just go on boop walks a lot when im back
[08:02] : i mean ill just say we walk her together or something thatll be pretty credible
[08:04] you: we can walk your dog together
[08:04] you: i dont mind. My mom used to have one
[08:04] : :D!!
[08:05] : do ur parents live in seoul too??
[08:05] you: both dead
Yoongi’s fingers hover over his touchscreen. He is so very close to just outright telling Taehyung that he doesn’t miss them, definitely doesn’t miss his father at least, and usually doesn’t miss his mother either. Typing it all out, telling it to some half-stranger he still doesn’t know much about, telling him that they were bad people and bad parents and he’s better off without them so he doesn’t need condolences, he needs a fucking party. Because maybe that would help. It kind of sounds like it would. Telling it to someone who doesn’t know him, who’s not his friend, who doesn’t feel obligated to pat his shoulder and tell him it’ll all be alright. Someone who can just listen and tell him how fucked up it all is.

But he doesn’t.

So Taehyung does. He tells him about the daily Skype calls they've been having so Yoongi tells him about his centuries-old laptop with no webcam but also says that he could have just skyped him from his phone whenever he had wifi on his own travels. Taehyung says that makes him sound even more dedicated which is great, and that his parents probably think he's been exaggerating with the daily calls anyway, so it's cool. It reminds Yoongi to add him in Skype too, so he opens the app and does just that, and they continue chatting there, luckily still in text form. Yoongi doesn't think he has the mental strength to see him again just yet, plus it's getting dark and he's still pretty tired. It's weird to think that the party was just last night, just a few hours ago, really.

Taehyung says that his parents are still a bit conservative and stuck up (of course while also assuring him that they're still really nice and great and he loves them) so there won't be much need for any PDA because they wouldn't want to see that anyway. “Not even from straight people,” Taehyung adds, and Yoongi has to admit he kind of agrees on that one.

They just have to seem happy with each other in front of his parents, that's the only really important thing, Taehyung says, and Yoongi thinks he can probably do that. When he looks up from his phone, Hoseok isn't on the floor in front of the couch table anymore and he didn't even notice him get up and leave.

He finds him in the kitchen, doing a terrible job at concealing his grin as Yoongi walks in to get some water, phone still in his hand.

“Still hating him, I see,” Hoseok says.

“Yes,” says Yoongi, and that's perfectly true. He hates his legs the most, and he hates his nice supportive parents and his good life and he hates that he can't shut up for two seconds.

His phone vibrates. Taehyung has sent him a picture of an octopus.

The following two weeks pass quicker than Yoongi would have thought. He still sleeps on Hoseok's couch because he can't afford his own apartment yet and Hoseok stubbornly refuses to let him sleep in a hostel again, so that's fine with Yoongi. He does put in an effort to get some jobs at least --
naturally he still hopes that the whole Taehyung deal can score him something big, but he can't just stay at Hoseok's place and do nothing until then without feeling bad. Some clubs still know him from the jobs he worked during his college days and happily take him in to let him DJ now and then. He actually ends up working the same shift as Hoseok in the gay club in Itaewon once or twice, which makes him feel oddly warm and content, but he doesn't dwell on it. A drama group lets him jump in to work on their sound panel while their usual engineer is sick, and it’s enough money to at least buy his own food for Hoseok’s fridge.

Surprisingly to himself, Yoongi thinks to ask Taehyung what his parents think about dyed hair before bleaching his own, and Taehyung says that he made them love it back when he himself went with lilac pretty much the second he got out of high school. He floods Yoongi with proof of that in form of numerous selfies he never asked for and definitely doesn't look at for more than two seconds, and Yoongi goes back to a shade of blond that's so light it's almost silver.

Namjoon says it makes him look more like himself again when he meets up with him to hang out in Seokjin’s gigantic apartment. They talk about music a lot, Namjoon lets Yoongi look over his projects for college and Yoongi gives him the painfully honest opinions he needs to get better at what Yoongi already excels in. Seokjin joins them halfway in and gushes about the adorable student he tutors, and Yoongi watches Namjoon’s gaze go hard and then soft again when Seokjin stresses that the guy is still such a child and he’s developing motherly feelings whenever he’s not completely exasperated with him.

It’s all pretty much the way it used to be before he took off a year ago, only better because Yoongi isn’t the big mess he used to be anymore. He’s a small mess instead. He feels better, but he hasn’t healed completely yet, he can tell whenever his friends talk about their parents, whenever he lies awake at night staring at the ceiling in Hoseok’s living room, listening to the city outside, wondering how many people are having car accidents right this instant, or how many parents are ruining their child’s life forever tonight.

He does his best to feel at home. He really does.

In Seoul, on Hoseok’s couch, with him and Namjoon and Seokjin, their old habits and places unchanged. It should feel like home. Yoongi’s pretty sure about that.

But it doesn’t.

And the thing is, he doesn’t know where else home might be.

Taehyung is with him practically all the time. Yoongi can’t go anywhere without his phone lighting up with Kakao notifications, but he doesn’t even necessarily mind. Taehyung doesn’t push when Yoongi takes a while, hours sometimes, to answer, he seems content with just loosely staying in touch, exchanging tidbits about their days and they actually end up with some sort of routine. It’s all just to keep up the farce, of course. It’s good practice to make themselves look like a couple in real life soon, they need that.

[02:11] : why are you still online omg isnt it like 2am in korea did you leave your skype open
[02:12] you: cant sleep
[02:12] : :( 
[02:14] : i picked a random wildlife fact for you
[02:14] : you know how we call groups of wolves a pack
Practice that should make him less nervous when he wakes up on the day of Taehyung’s flight back to Incheon.

Of course, it doesn’t. Yoongi wakes with an uncomfortable ache in his stomach, his eyes burning, his laptop still whirring softly on the couch table, Animal Planet Live still open in one tab. He almost screams when he notices Hoseok standing in the doorway, eyes fixed on the laptop screen.

“God, I’m hungry,” he says quietly. “I could go for some fish today. Maybe I’ll get us some fish.”

With a low whine, Yoongi rubs his eyes, then reaches over to close the browser and shut down his already dying laptop. “You do that,” he says, throat feeling like he swallowed a handful of sand. “I don’t know when I’ll be back from the airport though.”

“Oh shit, is that today?” Yoongi has no idea if Hoseok honestly forgot or if he’s just messing with him again. He’s too tired to find out, and too tired to care. He’s too tired for Hoseok to be grinning at him like that, too. “Gee, time flies. Just like that, you’re gonna meet your Prince Charming. I mean, sorry, your boyfriend of more than half a year, whom you’ve missed dearly. You must be just so stoked to see him again. Him and his rich parents.”

During Hoseok’s soliloquy, Yoongi has gotten up from the couch, one of his two blankets still wrapped around his shoulders. He scuffs past him with a muffled “Fuck you, Jung Hoseok,” and disappears into the bathroom.

“Oh yeah, shower’s a good idea,” Hoseok calls out after him. “You’re gonna wanna look your best today! Gotta impress the babe. And by babe I mean Kim’s wallet.”

Hoseok ducks just in time to avoid the breakup duckie that Yoongi launched at him through the cracked bathroom door.

“Hey don’t throw those, they’re precious to me!”

Yoongi scowls at him some more through said crack, shoving a toothbrush into his mouth. Hoseok is cradling the rubber duck. Patting its head and everything. Eyes closed, Yoongi turns his head back to the mirror over the sink. Alright.

“Have you been sleeping alright?” Hoseok asks, quietly this time. Yoongi opens his eyes, doesn’t look at him though, just stares at his tired reflection. The freckles are starting to fade.

“You asking me or the duck?” he says around his toothbrush.

“You. Prick.”

He can’t see Hoseok anymore when he answers, though he still sounds close. Yoongi fights the urge
to kick the door shut and escape this conversation. “I’ve been fine.”

“How many hours?”

Yoongi rolls his eyes before he spits into the sink. “Six,” he lies. “Sometimes five. It’s fine though. You know I sleep during the day.”

“I know you take naps because your sleep pattern is shit. Hasn’t that gotten any better?”

Great. People who know Yoongi also know that he sleeps a lot. People who know Yoongi very well actually know that he keeps looking tired and passing out in weird places because his nights are bad. They’re bad. They’ve gotten better, but they’re still bad.

“Six hours is fine, Hoseok.”

“Stop saying fine or I’m shoving the duck up your butt.”

“Oh, it’s too late for that. It’s a breakup duckie for a reason.”

“Are you saying you would have let me put a rubber duck in your ass when we were still together? And you never told me?”

Yoongi kicks the door shut.

He stares at himself some more, shadows under his eyes, hair tousled. He does want to look good today, make a good first impression on Taehyung’s parents. That’s his whole job, really. That’s what Taehyung is relying on him for.

Maybe the shower will help.

Maybe he can sleep on the subway to Incheon.

(Four. He’s had four hours of sleep.)

[04:46] : boarding!!! see u in 11hrs ;)

Chapter End Notes

here you go.

APPARENTLY what i mean when i say ill focus on uni stuff is ill write the next chapter in a span of 5 days???
(i did get my assignments done. i swear.)
With the time difference being conveniently slim, Taehyung often forgets how far away Australia still is from South Korea. It’s a long flight, mostly north, and he can’t remember what he did on the first one to keep himself busy. He just knows he studied English a lot because he was nervous about not understanding anything, but he doesn’t have to worry about that anymore now.

This time, he has something else to be nervous about.

Something he can’t exactly study for. He can, however, keep scrolling up and down his conversations with Yoongi during the past few weeks. It’s mostly Taehyung talking, really, but he’s used to that, and Yoongi never seems like he doesn’t want to talk to Taehyung, like he pisses him off. He just seems like someone who doesn’t know what to say a lot, which is definitely something Taehyung can deal with. He knows enough things to talk about for two.

Yoongi is bad at smalltalk. He’s learned that much. He’s bad at smalltalk, and he hesitates with talking about deeper things too, probably because they’re not close enough. Taehyung gets that. He’s not stupid, and he knows how to read people, even if it’s just texting and some rare, short Skype calls. He knows what it means when Yoongi tells him he can’t sleep, but doesn’t explain himself any further; when he lets him know that both his parents are dead and then never mentions them again; when Taehyung has to specifically ask about even the small things in his life like what kind of coffee he likes and what he does for a living. Yoongi’s not a talker, and a lot of things are none of his business, so Taehyung can accept that.

It’s enough to act like he knows him in front of his parents, probably. While Taehyung may not know Yoongi very well, his parents know even less about him, so really, it’s basically a perfect crime. He would know, of course.

He opens the one lonely selfie Yoongi has sent him, the one that Taehyung practically got on his knees for, begging, because Yoongi had told him that he bleached his hair and didn’t have time for a video call. Taehyung could probably draw the thing from memory by now (not that his questionable drawing skills could do Min Yoongi’s face justice), but he still stares at it again, to make sure he is absolutely certain what Yoongi looks like. Because he has to find him at the airport and act like they’re lovers. Of course. It’s a perfectly rational reason to open Yoongi’s selfie on the plane for the fifth time.

They actually talked the whole thing through until they had something like a script. Taehyung will go for Jungkook and Jimin first when he gets out and the hug fest begins, it’ll be natural and give them both time to mentally prepare themselves. They’ll hug afterwards, no kissing because they’re in public, but it’s going to be a good tight hug with some mumbling about how glad they are, and so on. Taehyung’s parents are next, they’ll probably coddle him, Taehyung will briefly introduce Yoongi to them and that will probably be it. He’s driving home with his parents and Jungkook, and
they think Yoongi might maybe accompany him to the car, but it’s over after that.

It’s doable. Definitely. It’s just a hug, really, and Taehyung is good at hugs.

No need to be nervous.

Hours later, he’s made friends with two children in the row behind him, has talked to their parents about Australian summers and airplane food, has given the kids a lesson about how fish swim which they found absolutely mindblowing, and had the parents tell him that once back in Seoul, he can come by to babysit them whenever he likes, if he ever needs a job to pay for college. Taehyung didn’t have the heart to tell them that theoretically, he wouldn’t have to work a single day in his rich, spoiled life.

He’s watching every show the plane has to offer now, idly thinking about how most people usually like him. Sure, he’s been described as *weird* and the like before, but that hasn’t been a problem since high school. Most people he talks to now are older and more mature and don’t bully him for speaking loudly when he’s excited or leaving his mouth open a lot. Most people he talks to now find him pretty likeable, probably because he has some sort of social talent, or whatever. He can find something to talk about and make friends with anybody.

It’s new and a little frustrating that it doesn’t seem to work on Yoongi.

Of course, he does his best not to dwell on it. There’s undeniable nervousness settled deep in his chest, but by the time they start their final descent, Taehyung remembers that he’s also finally getting to see his family again, and his best friends in the whole wide world, and he’s giddy and warm and the Yoongi thing will work out somehow.

South Korea, on the other hand, is not warm at all. Cold air hits his face like a fist, and he’s not dressed warmly enough for this, but his mom promised to bring the coat he deliberately left here, so he hopes she hasn’t forgotten about that. The way back into the building, the walk with other strangers and the nice little family from his flight, the waiting for his luggage, all turns into an excited blur, Taehyung bouncing on his toes a lot, checking his phone a thousand times once he’s connected to the airport wifi, and he actually feels like he’s ready to scream when he finally has his giant suitcase and drags it out towards the waiting area for arrivals, wanting nothing more than to finally see them all again.

He gets a very short glimpse of his parents before everything is a rush of clothes and dark hair and he feels the warmth of a hug around his entire body, tight enough to almost break his ribs, but also distinctly gentle in a way that only Jeon Jungkook could pull off. Someone conveniently takes the suitcase from his hand right before Jungkook lifts him off the ground, spins with him once, twice, and then literally just throws him in the air. Taehyung shrieks as he catches him again, and Jungkook’s laugh is warm in his ear, and he can hear Jimin’s high-pitched giggle close to them, and he’s *home*.

“Welcome back,” Jungkook murmurs as he puts his feet back down on the ground, squeezes him one last time and lets go of him, only for Jimin to take his place. He’s the one holding his suitcase, so he snakes his other arm around Taehyung’s middle as Taehyung throws his arms around his shoulders, ruffling his hair with a happy sigh.

“Hi,” he says quietly, swaying a little from one foot to the other. “Hi, Jiminnie.”

“Hello,” Jimin mutters into the collar of his shirt, and Taehyung can hear the grin in his voice. “Can
“you see him?”

It’s then that Taehyung looks over Jimin’s shoulder instead of burying his face in his hair, and, wow, yes. He does see him. He’s not even standing that far away from Jungkook and his parents, hands in the pockets of his hoodie, in all his Antarctic expedition glory, and he’s looking Taehyung right in the eyes.

There’s a smile on his face, and maybe it’s just for show, but Taehyung’s stomach still plummets in a way that should not be this pleasant.

“I see him,” he breathes.

“Good,” Jimin says, and pats his back. “Go get him.”

He lets go of him, and Taehyung suddenly feels like he’s riding his bike without training wheels for the first time, like he’s in the water without floaties, because Jimin can’t just let go of him like that. He really hopes his steps don’t look as wobbly as his knees feel all of a sudden, and luckily Yoongi is coming towards him too, and the warmth of that hoodie is on him in a matter of seconds. There’s a hand on his back, and the other one is in his hair, combing through it softly with his fingers, and Taehyung holds onto the black fabric on Yoongi’s back for dear life, unable to say a word.

“I’ve missed you,” Yoongi says, on the off chance that Taehyung’s parents can hear him, and his voice is so close to his ear and sounds like he gargles with gravel every morning, and holy shit, what has Taehyung gotten himself into?

“Missed you too,” Taehyung somehow manages to get out, and then he guesses his brain sort of short-circuits, because as they pull apart again, he suddenly finds himself pressing the tiniest of kisses to Yoongi’s cheek. It’s what regular Taehyung would do with an actual boyfriend, he’s pretty sure, but he feels Yoongi stiffen in his hands and immediately wants to punch himself in the face. “I--”

But Yoongi just smiles at him, all composed, and Taehyung has no idea if he’s forcing himself to not kick his ass then and there, or if he’s always this calm about unplanned cheek smooches, and it’s killing him. Cold fingers squeeze his shoulders, and he nods to their side. “Come on. Go greet your parents.”

Parents.

Right.

Those are still a thing, and Taehyung turns to see them stand a few feet away, beaming at him, and suddenly he’s not all that worried anymore. About anything, really. His mother throws his warm coat over his shoulders, because of course she didn’t forget, and his father ruffles his hair and then they both hug him and Taehyung thinks he’d probably cry a little if Jungkook and Jimin weren’t watching.

“How was your flight?” his mother asks, after gently removing his face from where it was buried in her shoulder. “Are you hungry?”

“No, and it was good.” Taehyung smiles at her, then at his father, then he takes a silent breath and turns a little, so he can gesture towards Yoongi. “Mom, dad, this is Yoongi.”

His father chuckles, and his mother presses a kiss to the side of his head, which confuses Taehyung, until she speaks. “He’s already talked to us while we were waiting, honey. We know.” And while Taehyung tries to keep his face in check, she just shoots him a look that makes her seem honestly
impressed. “He’s *so* polite!”

Oh. Once again, Taehyung feels every knot in his stomach dissolving, as Yoongi shoots him a patient smile and everything seems so much easier than part of him had feared.

“Come on, let’s get you home,” his dad says. “Boop is waiting for you.”

Taehyung lets out a happy squeak and regrets it immediately after because *fuck, Yoongi is watching*, but he just can’t wait to be jumped by his favorite dog in the world again. His parents take his suitcase and lead the way towards the parking lot, they’ve always made sure to leave Taehyung some room with his friends, and he’s always been incredibly thankful for that. Of course, he misses the way Yoongi has already raised his arm to put it around his waist when Jungkook is quicker and places a hand on his back. Yoongi still walks close to his other side, and that’s enough for Taehyung.

The parking lot is surprisingly empty for this time, though Jimin says with a grimace that they’re probably all taking the subway. Much like himself. Taehyung hugs him once more, longer this time, and promises to come see him first thing tomorrow, and Jimin hugs him back and pats Jungkook on the butt before taking off for the subway station.

Once they reach their car, Taehyung’s parents start whispering among each other while putting his suitcase in the trunk, and then they get all giggly and Taehyung squints at them until they both put a hand on Jungkook’s shoulder and gently force him to turn away with them. “We’ll go pay the parking fee,” his mother says, smiling while Taehyung thinks that it doesn’t take three people to pay a parking fee. “You say bye to Yoongi in the meantime, sweetie.”

Oh. Okay then.

They leave, and Taehyung stares after them while he stands around uselessly next to their car. He can’t bring himself to look at Yoongi until he hears him chuckle, and it’s *really* close to him, so Taehyung turns to see him stand right in front of him.

“Think that went well?” Yoongi asks, watching him very obviously, a small smirk on his lips that Taehyung guesses is there because he himself looks utterly lost right now.

“Uh, yeah,” he stammers, blinking. There was something he wanted to say, but he can’t remember. “Holy shit,” he says instead. “You’re all freckly.”

Yoongi raises his brows. “Not like I haven’t had them the past two weeks.”

“I didn’t see them on screen!” Taehyung defends himself, truthfully, and he almost tells him that they’re cute. Because, well, they are. But maybe it’s not his place to say that. “Um, so, it did go pretty well, I think. I’m pretty sure they like you a lot already, you’re, uh, doing a good job.”

“You too. The cheek kiss was a nice touch.”

Taehyung stares at him for a second, about to ask and make sure that Yoongi isn’t fucking with him right now, that he really didn’t mind that because it sure seemed like he did, but he’s distracted when he squints into the direction his parents and Jungkook left in. Oh, god. “They’re watching us,” he says weakly.

Yoongi follows his gaze very briefly, then he looks back at him, and there’s something in his eyes that Taehyung can’t quite pinpoint, but his head is wiped empty when Yoongi speaks anyway. “Want me to kiss you?”

“Wh--” Taehyung sputters, eyes darting around the parking lot, but it really is basically empty, only
cars and no people, just his family watching and he guesses it would make for a good scene for what they’re trying to convey here, and he also guesses he would really like to know how that outrageous Cupid’s bow feels on his mouth. “I-- Would you?”

Yoongi pulls one corner of his mouth into a smirk, only one, and god, that’s hot, and he raises one hand and puts it on the nape of his neck to pull him down, one last look into his eyes, and then all Taehyung sees is the blur of his face and maybe some stars, because Yoongi’s lips are on his. He moves them against Taehyung’s, softly, almost chaste -- enough to put on a show but not enough to make Taehyung’s parents call an exorcist. Not like Taehyung actually cares about his parents anymore at this point. Yoongi’s hand travels upwards slowly until his fingertips are in Taehyung’s hair, and he’s pretty sure he blacks out for a second.

His hands find Yoongi’s slim hips all on their own, and he’s reluctant to remove them when Yoongi pulls back again, so he kind of just doesn’t. Automatically, he runs his tongue over his lips, and they taste like mint, and Taehyung doesn’t know where to look. Part of him hopes that his parents are coming back soon so they won’t have any awkward silences between then and now, but another part wishes that they’ll never come back again so he can just push Yoongi into the car and make out with him properly.

“That ought to do it,” says Yoongi.

Yoongi has never been the jealous type, thinks jealousy is over-romanticized and a waste of energy, but goddamn if Jungkook wasn’t pushing it.

He was staring at him the second they met at the airport, kept hovering in his general proximity when Yoongi introduced himself to Taehyung’s parents all nice and polite like an adult with a functional relationship, never really took his eyes off him until Taehyung arrived. And Yoongi liked this part of the plan, really, letting Taehyung hug his actual friends first to buy them some time, but Jungkook just had to make this pathetic giant show out of it, pick Taehyung up and throw him in the air, and yes, Yoongi did definitely catch that look Jungkook shot him when he made Taehyung shriek and giggle. The better do your best look, the your tiny arms could never even do this with him look.

It’s stupid and laughable and Yoongi would have looked past it because Jungkook is a child and Taehyung was obviously enjoying himself, but then Jungkook had to put his hand on Taehyung’s back when he had seen Yoongi move to do the same. And that pissed him off.

Not because he wants Taehyung to himself or shit like that, Taehyung is still a guy he’s seeing for the first time today and he has no right to be any kind of possessive towards him, but Yoongi is on a mission here, and he’s not about to let Jungkook ruin it because he wants to act like a territorial teenager.

So, having Jungkook watch them from afar with Taehyung’s parents was a great opportunity to let him know he can kiss Yoongi’s ass, while Yoongi kisses Taehyung’s lips.

They’re chapped from spending eleven hours on a plane flying into another hemisphere, but Yoongi can just guess how soft they would normally be, and the way Taehyung leans into his touch and practically melts under the hand on his neck is really all he has to know. The hands on his hips are good, smart move, authentic for anyone watching, and Yoongi definitely doesn’t care about what would happen if he were to deepen that kiss right now.

So, he doesn’t. He’s not here to make out with Taehyung, he’s just here to let his parents know that they’re super in love and everything, so he pulls back after a few seconds, and humbly takes pride in
how dazed Taehyung looks.

“That ought to do it.”

“Yes,” Taehyung croaks, gaze fixed somewhere to Yoongi’s left. “They’re coming back.”

With impeccable timing, Taehyung’s parents return with Jungkook, so Yoongi’s hand slips from Taehyung’s hair and he puts it on the small of his back instead as he puts on his civil smile and says that he’ll get going too so they can take their son home. His parents are all smiles, tell him how nice it was to finally get to know him and that he has to come by their house soon and Yoongi promises he will, all the while ignoring the hard look Jungkook is giving him without blinking even once. He gives Taehyung one last one-armed hug and turns to make his way to the subway station.

“Text me when you get home!” Taehyung calls after him, and Yoongi barely fights back a snort because that just beautifully underlined how surreal this whole encounter has been.

Jungkook is probably staring daggers at his back right now, and it’s a little funny, seeing how two weeks ago Yoongi actually liked him the most out of the chaotic trio that’s Taehyung’s friend group. He seemed calm and reasonable and not completely on board with this horrible idea of faking a relationship with someone he barely knows, and Yoongi had found that very pleasant in between the constant giggling and rambling from Jimin and Taehyung.

But now that they’re actually, seriously doing this, Yoongi guesses the kid is worried for his friend and has decided to make sure he won’t break Taehyung’s poor heart or something like that. It’s cute, sort of, and Yoongi wants to be the adult here and not let himself get bothered by it. Not now that he’s kissed Taehyung with Jungkook watching helplessly, anyway.

He doesn’t regret it, truthfully, but part of him still thinks that maybe he shouldn’t have done that. Because now he’s on the subway thinking about kissing, and about everything that usually follows when he kisses people. Because Min Yoongi isn’t a casual kisser, he doesn’t do it often without wanting more, so normally if he kisses someone he’s fully prepared to at least put his hands under their shirt soon.

Automatically, he checks his phone, as if he expects to see the usual notification from Taehyung’s weird texts there, until he remembers he’s probably busy rambling at his parents in the car now or hugging his ancient dog or whatever. Yoongi texts Hoseok instead to tell him he’s on his way home, so Hoseok can start preparing the Animal Planet inspired dinner he’d been talking about all morning.

He looks back out the window afterwards, wondering how long it’s been since he last kissed someone, really kissed someone, not that cute watered down version he gave Taehyung. A little over two months probably. That’s a long time for Yoongi.

He’s had a lot of sex in the past year, found someone to fuck and forget wherever he went, except during those short periods of time when sex felt icky and disgusting and he steered clear of it, but those never lasted longer than two, maybe three weeks. Then the retirement home called and told him about his father’s passing, and Yoongi was busy with planning his return to Seoul and dreaming about pissing on his grave and suddenly didn’t feel like sleeping with anyone anymore. And that was fine back then, but he kind of misses it now. That tame kiss in the parking lot was enough to reignite the flame he supposes, and Yoongi finds himself wondering how bad it would be if he went out and got laid tonight.

It’s not like they have to be faithful to each other. Sex never came up in their talks (that were mostly Taehyung telling him about his day), and Yoongi forces himself to think that they maybe shouldn’t have sex with each other at all, keep things simple, play their roles where people can see and that’s it.
Certain body parts of him are against that and gently remind Yoongi of those goddamn legs, and those goddamn lips, but Yoongi isn’t a teenager anymore and thinks with his head, not his dick. They’re doing this to please Taehyung’s parents, not each other’s libidos. They’re not fucking, and they probably won’t fuck in the future, so theoretically, Yoongi can do whatever he wants with other people.

The problem is, someone might see. What he got from Taehyung’s stories about his social life and extended friend circle is that he practically knows everyone on campus, probably at least half of all the regulars in the club where he met Jimin, and then a whole bunch of grown adults that work with his father. In short, he knows approximately every third person in Seoul and the chances of someone spotting Yoongi in a club and seeing him go home with someone else are shockingly high. Of course, right now nobody but Taehyung’s close friends and parents really know who he is and that they’re “together”, but it might just be a matter of time until word gets around and people might remember watching Yoongi attach himself to some other guy’s neck then.

He’d have to do it discreetly, which can be fun, really, but Yoongi isn’t sure he’s willing to put that much effort into a quick fuck.

So, that settles that. He thinks about jerking it in Hoseok’s shower on his way through the apartment building, but it doesn’t seem as urgent anymore as soon as he notices that the entire hallway smells delicious already. It fills the apartment too, and Yoongi can hear sizzling from the kitchen. He pushes the door open and creeps in, Hoseok working on the stove with his back to him. Yoongi just casually shows up next to him, eyeing the food as if he doesn’t already know what’s about to happen:

Hoseok flinches like he punched him square in the face, lets out a horrible shriek and throws one hand up to press it to his chest.

“Jesus,” he says, glaring at Yoongi’s content smile. “When did you get back?”

“Just now.” Yoongi shrugs, reaching out to grab a piece of fish and immediately getting his hand smacked away.

“You can wait five more minutes, you animal,” Hoseok chides. He watches him from the corner of his eyes now, quirking a brow. “So? You gonna tell me how it went?”

“It went well,” Yoongi says, watching him too, and he almost tells him that he might or might not have kissed Taehyung already, but he doesn’t. He almost didn’t notice in the past two weeks, but they’re back in each other’s personal spaces, because neither of them minds, because it’s so natural and normal for them to be close to each other, and he enjoys it, usually. So right now, too, he’s awfully close to his ex-boyfriend, the one cooking him dinner and letting him stay here for weeks on end, the one whose body he already knows by heart and the one he wouldn’t have to hide himself with because nobody can see them here in Hoseok’s apartment anyway -- so maybe he should not be thinking about kissing right now. Yoongi turns away a little, shoulder bumping into Hoseok’s, just so they can’t stare at each other as openly anymore. “Talked to his parents a little before he arrived, gave him a hug and all. You know, if audio engineer doesn’t work out, maybe I’ll just sign with some random entertainment and become an actor.”

Hoseok snorts. “Yeah, I’m sure that would work out much better. You have, like, three facial expressions.”

“Namely?”

“Asleep, angry, amused. Especially that last one. Your laugh face makes you look like an entirely different person.”
“That’s it? Come on, you’ve seen me orgasm.”

Damn it. Yoongi does his best to refocus on the food. He’s going to stop thinking about sex any minute now.

“I know,” Hoseok says lightly. “You wear your angry face for orgasms.”

Okay, Yoongi forgets about the food for another two seconds so he can snort and punch Hoseok’s shoulder, making him fall to the side overdramatically and laugh. “That’s not true.”

“How would you know?” Hoseok giggles, straightening himself up again. He clears his throat. “Anyway. So you’ve already talked to his parents? Think they like you?”

“I think they love me,” Yoongi answers. He forces himself away from Hoseok to get some plates and chopsticks for them. “And I’m actually serious about that. They looked really happy with me and all, honestly it went even better than I thought it would.”

“Yeah, well, you’re good with parents,” Hoseok says quietly, shooting him a grin that Yoongi almost doesn’t catch. “Forget about audio engineering and acting, soon you’ll be a full-time con artist.”

Yoongi grins back. That doesn’t sound so bad.

They fall asleep on the couch together that night, watching reruns of shows they don’t care about, Hoseok’s head on Yoongi’s chest and Yoongi staring at the ceiling for only half an hour instead of three, clothes still on, dirty dishes still on the couch table next to them. When he wakes up the next morning, Hoseok is gone, and Yoongi can’t remember why he didn’t just go out and get laid.

[05:12] you: im taking boop 4 her afternoon walk and ill probs tell my parents that we went together
[05:12] you: that ok?

[05:15] (ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: sure

[05:15] (ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: tell me where youre going and ill meet you two there

“Oh shit,” Taehyung says loudly, to the emptiness of his room. Well, almost empty. Boop raises her head off his stomach and blinks at him, leaving a wet spot on his shirt from where she drooled on it. Taehyung blinks back. “He’s coming with us, Boop. You’re gonna meet Yoongi.”

Boop doesn’t seem quite as impressed as Taehyung, though she does look happy when Taehyung pulls his shoes and jacket on and grabs her leash. She’s old and not quite as active as she used to be anymore, but she still loves walks with Taehyung, and nearly seemed like an excited puppy again when he got home last night. She’s been pretty much literally sitting on him ever since, only moving off his lap when Taehyung sat down for dinner with his parents, and then later on following him to his room to sprawl out across his legs while he sat on the floor talking to Jungkook. About this and that, nothing in particular, really.

(“That sure was a kiss,” said Jungkook, making Taehyung release a noise from the back of his throat that sounded less like him and more like a trumpet.)

She seemed borderline heartbroken this morning when he left to go see Jimin like he promised (which resulted in Jungkook passionately reenacting the kiss with himself, Jimin choking on his
laughter and Taehyung tackling him to the floor for that), and jumped him the second he came back home roughly an hour ago. Taehyung supposes she’s going to have to learn how to trust him not to leave for half a year again every time he goes out the door, but she’ll get there.

Yoongi finds them in the park Taehyung described to him, and Taehyung is immediately reminded of Jungkook calling him a face and some stick legs. Even the face is just two eyes and a nose this time, the rest buried in a beanie and a huge scarf, but still there’s something about him that Taehyung himself doesn’t really understand. He doesn’t know what it is that makes Yoongi so horribly attractive to him but it’s still there, under who knows how many layers of fabric.

He watches Boop carefully as she approaches Yoongi -- dogs her size aren’t exactly common here in Seoul, many passersby get unreasonably scared of her. She’s kind though, always listens to Taehyung especially, but Yoongi can’t know that. Still, Yoongi remains perfectly calm, extending one hand to let her sniff it, and it only takes her a few seconds before she presses her entire head in his palm.

Yoongi blinks at that, snorting quietly as he pets her head, shooting Taehyung a look with his brows raised. Taehyung just grins at him happily. “She’s cuddly,” he explains. “She’s not always this quick to like people, though. Must be something about you.” Yoongi doesn’t say anything to that, but Taehyung has already observed that he never really responds to any sort of praise. He does what he always does, and just continues talking as they walk. “My parents are positively smitten, too, just so you know. They kept talking about you on the way home. I think Jungkook was ready to jump out a window.”

Taehyung laughs, and he’s secretly excited to see Yoongi chuckle into his scarf too. “Yeah, he’s the one exception, isn’t he?” Yoongi says. “Your Jungkook doesn’t seem to like me a lot.”

“He’s just overprotective.” Taehyung waves his hand around. “Teenagers, you know. He means well, but he’s wary with everyone around Jimin and me because the world is evil and stuff.”


Oh.

For a second, Taehyung just blinks at him, then he grins helplessly. “Well, yeah,” he says, “that’s what he usually tells barkeepers in clubs.”

“Oh, god.” Taehyung’s stomach plummets for a second, but he’s pretty sure Yoongi is actually still laughing. “Okay. I’ll just keep that to myself, then. Any other criminal activity I should be aware of?”

“One time we almost got kicked out of high school for spray-painting a teacher’s car.” Yoongi is definitely staring at him now, but Taehyung still just grins back. It’s a good story to tell when he doesn’t want to act like he’s never done anything wrong in his entire life. Or his friends, or his family. He shrugs. “He was bullying Jimin, and we weren’t having that.”

“How the fuck did you manage to not get kicked out for that?”

“Our parents helped us out. Kookie’s dad’s a lawyer. Made that teacher shut up about Jimin, too.”

Yoongi snorts, and Taehyung catches himself thinking that maybe he should start counting the times he makes him laugh, but that’s a stupid idea and he won’t. “You rich kids and your influential parents,” he says, shaking his head. “Fucking weird. What do your parents do, then?”

“Dad’s a CEO, mom’s a realtor. Oh, she asked me where you live, by the way, but you never told
me. I just said I keep forgetting because it’s been so long.” Really, they’re both lucky that Taehyung has forgotten enough things in his life that his parents don’t question him on that.

“Yongsan,” Yoongi says, after a short moment of hesitation. “Almost in Itaewon, basically. It’s Hoseok’s apartment, though, not mine.”

Taehyung frowns. That sounds weird, like they’re not sharing the place, plus… “You live with your ex?”

To that, Yoongi just gives him a look that makes it very clear that he’s not about to answer any questions about this, and Taehyung is starting to understand where Jimin got the kkangpae aura from. “I mean,” Taehyung says quickly, shrugging. “It’s cool that you’re still close like that! That’s nice. I think I could probably live with Jimin too.”

“Yeah,” Yoongi deadpans, “if things go on like this, Hoseok and Jimin are gonna move in with each other instead.”

Taehyung gasps. “That would be so cute. Oh my god, wait, you live with Hoseok, you know him -- so he’s into Jimin, too? You sure? Because Jimin hasn’t been talking about anyone else.”

“Shit, you have no idea,” Yoongi says with a fake groan. “Last week when we got drunk together he literally wrote a poem about the boy’s ass. I’m not fucking kidding, I wish I was. I’m not sure where it went, but if I find it I’ll send you a pic, it’s a disaster.”

“Please do,” Taehyung manages to get out between snorts of laughter, and just like that, they have found their conversation topic for the rest of the walk. Taehyung loves talking about his friends, and Yoongi seems to enjoy talking about Hoseok too, and it might feel a little weird at first, how both their ex-boyfriends are falling for each other now, but it’s fun to talk about, and they’re back at the front door of Taehyung’s apartment building quicker than he would have thought.

“Do you wanna come in for a bit? My parents aren’t home,” Taehyung says, sputtering when he realizes how that might have sounded. “I mean, uh, because you haven’t seen the place yet, so when, like, they invite you over to dinner you won’t seem lost, you know?” Fuck.

Yoongi looks like he’s fighting back a grin, which honestly just makes Taehyung even more nervous. He checks his phone briefly before nodding. “Yeah, why not. I can’t stay long though, I’m meeting up with friends later.”

“That’s fine,” Taehyung says quickly, ignoring the thought that he didn’t even know Yoongi had any friends besides Hoseok. He doesn’t have to know, he reminds himself. It’s none of his business. He lets them into the building, smiling at how Boop keeps licking Yoongi’s hand in the elevator and how Yoongi doesn’t do anything against it, then he punches in the security code they have for their penthouse apartment instead of a key.

He’s pretty sure Yoongi is doing his best to not come off as impressed, and Taehyung does his best to not come off as snobbish as this place looks. It’s big and clean and everything here is expensive, but he gets the tour over with quickly and leads Yoongi to his room instead, which -- he hopes -- is a bit different from the rest of the house. He’s only spent one night here but it’s already chaotic, his suitcase is still open on the floor and the bed isn’t made, and maybe that makes up for how big his room is, or for how new and shiny his TV looks.

Yoongi doesn’t actually comment on anything and goes straight for his music collection. Taehyung feels something like nervousness settling in his stomach as Boop climbs on his bed and he absentmindedly pets her, wondering if Yoongi is going to say something about the CDs on his
bookshelf. He almost opens his mouth to tell him that he’s got more music on his laptop, before Yoongi wordlessly moves on and inspects something else right next to his biology books.

“Is that a dead octopus in a jar?”

He’s been told people might find that weird. Taehyung grins sheepishly. “His name is Shinichi.”

At that, Yoongi turns a little to look at him over his shoulder, one brow raised, a hint of amusement playing with the corners of his lips. It’s pretty.

“You know, after Detective Conan. ‘Cause octopodes are smart.”

Yoongi looks at him like that for a few more seconds, enough to make Taehyung glad he’s petting the dog so his suddenly nervous fingers have something to do, then he turns back to his dead octopus and nods. “Makes sense. You read all these?”

Now, Taehyung has no idea what books he’s talking about, because while his biology collection is next to Shinichi, there’s also the manga shelf right underneath that. He leaves Boop alone to go stand next to Yoongi and peer over his shoulder, even though that doesn’t quite help him.

“The manga or the bio books?”

Yoongi doesn’t even dignify that with an answer, so Taehyung just bites his lower lip with a grin. He scans his shelves for something he maybe hasn’t read, or at least hasn’t read twice, and then he turns to Yoongi to inform him that yes, apparently he has read all those, when he realizes that Yoongi has been watching his face.

His lips.

Taehyung’s teeth release them, slowly, and then Yoongi’s eyes flicker up, and there’s something hot creeping under his skin, down his entire body, an itch in his fingers, realizing suddenly how close they’re standing to each other. He swallows, his mind filled with the memory of Yoongi’s lips on his and that damn hand in his hair, when Yoongi looks down and pulls his phone out of his pocket again to check the time.

“I gotta get going,” he says.

“Okay,” Taehyung breathes, but if his voice is giving him away, Yoongi doesn’t let it show.

He and Boop accompany him to the door, Taehyung’s heart suddenly beating in his throat when Yoongi leaves with a “See you soon, probably.” He closes the door after him, stares at it for a second, then he shakes his head as if that could help him get rid of that image, Yoongi’s eyes on his lips. He’s going to forget all about it, he decides. They don’t have to kiss if it’s not about impressing his parents, and they probably won’t. That’s cool.

Boop is sniffing the door, tail wagging weakly. Taehyung watches her as she raises her head to look at him questioningly, like she misses Yoongi already. Dogs are stupid, Taehyung thinks, for letting people into their hearts this quickly.

Chapter End Notes

 uhh idk how ao3 update notifications work but in case anyone noticed: sorry for the
hiccup. had to delete and re-post the chapter because as it turns out ao3 doesn't like emojis. but then maybe (இ•ᴗ•இ)*・☆ is an even better nickname for yoongi than the atrocity i had planned.
Yoongi has been developing a routine. He’s been told that routines are good -- in general, but also for trauma survivors, like him. However, he’s pretty sure that entirely depends on the routine in question. He doesn’t know if what he’s been doing can be described as good by any definition of the word.

His days are Taehyung, friends, work. Not always all three because he doesn’t work every day, but always in that order. It’s always Taehyung first, and he thinks that’s probably where the problem lies.

Spring semester has started, so Taehyung doesn’t always have time anymore, but he also doesn’t have as many classes as he normally would, because he’s missed an entire semester thanks to Australia. Some of the classes he was supposed to take this semester are based on some he would have had last semester, so he can’t take those and has to wait until next year, which still leaves his schedule free enough to go on almost daily Boop walks with Yoongi. When their schedules overlap and they can’t meet, Taehyung always texts him instead, sends him random things he just learned in class or pictures he takes wherever he goes. He doesn’t always send selfies, but sometimes half his face is in a picture and he pulls some sort of grimace, or one of his hands is there because he’s pointing at something. Yoongi could probably take that if it was only for those texts. He likes to think that he could.

But whenever they meet up, which, again, is almost daily, it leaves him with a craving. It’s still cold outside and most of the time they really only walk the dog together so he only gets to see Taehyung fully clothed and rambling about DNA strands or manga updates, and Yoongi doesn’t know when the fuck he got so desperate. Because it’s enough to make him want more, enough to remind him of how fucking long it’s been since he’s felt someone’s skin hot beneath his fingertips, flesh between his teeth. He blames it on the fact that he’s still too lazy to just go and pick up some stranger, because
it’d have to be a secret and that’s effort, so really it’s not Taehyung he’s craving, it’s just sex. Sex he’s not getting.

Between those meetings and the nights he works at clubs or theater plays (he’s trying to get into radio but no one is hiring), he usually either meets up with Seokjin or Namjoon or both of them, or he’s with Hoseok. And as much as he loves them all, right now it’s not exactly helping.

Being with either Seokjin or Namjoon is usually good for a little while, but sooner or later they always start talking about each other, which regular Yoongi would maybe even find somewhat endearing, but for sex-deprived Yoongi (that’s what he’s calling it for now, okay), it’s torture. Of course, it’s worse when he’s with both of them at the same time, because Hoseok was right, they really do seem like a couple already, even if they won’t admit it. It’s almost sad, how deeply in denial they are, but really Yoongi can’t bring himself to care that much right now.

So when he’s not with them he’s at Hoseok’s place, and sometimes he’s alone there, which is good, but often Hoseok is with him. And that’s good too, as long as Yoongi doesn’t allow himself to think. They talk and they cook and they eat and they watch TV and they fall asleep on the couch together. A lot. Yoongi’s chest seems to be Hoseok’s favorite pillow right now, and Yoongi doesn’t particularly mind, because it helps him sleep better, and it helps with at least some of the craving. Because he trusts Hoseok, he trusts nobody more than he trusts Jung Hoseok, so having him this close to him without actually making out is fine. Hoseok knows so much about him and he knows so much about Hoseok, and it feels so uncomplicated lying here with him and just letting their bodies touch like it’s nothing, like it’s what they were always supposed to be doing, like the past year and a half never happened.

But it doesn’t really get rid of the craving. Only partly, but it’s still there somewhere, prickling under his skin, tingling on his lips. So maybe, it’s no surprise they end up like this.

Yoongi had passed out on the couch for a nap around noon, and woke up to soft mumbling from the TV and Hoseok’s weight on him. Hoseok told him about what he was planning to cook soon and Yoongi told him that he’s a saint, and then… Well, his sleep-clouded mind can’t really reconstruct what exactly happened between then and now. Some heavy gazes might have been involved. Hoseok might have told him he looks cute when he’s sleepy, and there might have been some “Shut up” and some “Make me”s, but that’s too embarrassing to admit even to himself. So the only thing he does know for sure is that right now, Hoseok’s lips are on his, and it’s heaven.

It’s familiar and it’s easy, so easy, and Yoongi catches himself thinking that maybe this is home, Hoseok’s chest flush against him, his heartbeat quick but steady on Yoongi’s own, hands in his hair. He knows, somewhere, in the back of his head, that that’s not quite right, but Hoseok slips his tongue into his mouth and he doesn’t care anymore.

He doesn’t need home, or closure, not right now, what he needs right now is Hoseok’s fingertips running along his scalp, Yoongi’s own hands finding the hem of his shirt and slipping beneath it like it’s nothing. Hoseok’s mouth tastes like an ashtray, and maybe there’s something to be said here about habits that Yoongi forced himself to quit only to have them back on his lips now, but he doesn’t give two shits. He sinks his teeth into Hoseok’s lower lip and just straight up ignores the gasp he gets from him for that, ignores the weird, sickly feeling it leaves in his throat. He wants this, he tells himself, he’s been wanting this for weeks, and it’s okay to do it with Hoseok because he trusts him and things with Hoseok are always simple and uncomplicated and he wants this, he needs this.

Does Hoseok want or need this? He has no idea, but Hoseok is a grown man who can make his own decisions, so who cares how much he talks about Park Jimin on a daily basis, who cares how well they’ve been functioning all this time as just friends, who fucking cares about anything but this right
now.

Hoseok breaks the kiss, breath heavy on Yoongi’s swollen lips, only to mouth down his jaw, and it happens when his teeth scrape Yoongi’s throat, his hands fisting softly in his hair, it happens when Yoongi raises one thigh to press it in between Hoseok’s legs. They moan, both of them, simultaneously, voices wrecked and breathy but very, very audible, and it seems to have the same effect on both of them: It slaps them awake.

The hands disappear from Yoongi’s hair as quickly as Yoongi’s leg hits the couch again, and Hoseok sits up to stare at him, dumbfounded, only to have Yoongi stare right back like he can’t quite process what the hell just happened. And, really, he can’t. Was he honestly about to make out, probably even sleep, with his ex-boyfriend? The one that said “I can’t be with you when you’re like this” to him, a line that, frankly, made him feel like part of him had died? The one Yoongi told they’ll never be able to have any sort of relationship again after what they went through, not in a million years? The one he’s unbelievably happy to have back in his life as a friend, but as anything else? No. Hell no. Fuck no.

“Shit,” Hoseok says, clearing his throat, almost falling over as he clumsily scrambles off the couch. He runs a hand through his hair, still staring at Yoongi, and Yoongi almost can’t take it. “Shit, fuck. I’m sorry. Yoongi, I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t be,” Yoongi mutters, swinging his legs to the floor. He has no idea what he’s doing, but he’s getting up from this couch, now. “It’s fine. We’re good. Just… I’ll go.”

“What—” Hoseok starts, and Yoongi moves quicker than most people will ever see him move, crossing the living room to get his shoes, his jacket, already patting his pockets for his phone. “Yoongi, wait! Where are… Where are you going?”

And it’s then that Yoongi looks at him again. He’s at the door already, and Hoseok is standing in the hallway looking at him with nothing short of fear in his eyes, and Yoongi suddenly understands what he’s scared of. He thinks it’s all about to happen again. He thinks Yoongi might not come back this time.

But it’s not that deep. It’s not that bad. Yoongi needs out, but he doesn’t need Leave the city and roam the entire country for a year out. He needs Leave this apartment and get some fresh air out, nothing more, because this time around, it was just some warm, sleepy mistake. A relapse. They happen. They didn’t break each other’s hearts this time, they were just needy and nostalgic, and they’ll be fine.

Yoongi takes one breath, two breaths, steadies himself. “I’m just going out,” he says, calmly, and watches Hoseok’s shoulders relax very slowly. “I’ll be back tonight. I promise. I’m just giving us space, and I’m coming back later, it’s okay.”

“Okay,” Hoseok says quietly. He just looks confused now, lost in his own hallway, but Yoongi reminds himself again that he’s an adult and he will handle himself. “Okay. Be safe. I’ll-- I’ll see you then.”

Yoongi nods, reaches for the door handle blindly, and then he’s out. He leaves the building in record time, and the cold air outside hits him like a fist, but one he needed. He lets it clear his head, walking down the street in quick, big strides, until he’s focused enough to realize he has no idea where he’s supposed to go now. He’s too agitated to just go and sit down somewhere, have a meal or some coffee, it won’t work. He briefly considers hitting up Seokjin or Namjoon, but their whole thing with each other is honestly the last thing Yoongi wants to be thinking about right now.
He stops at a bus stop, takes out and unlocks his phone, stares at it. He stares at it until the screen goes dark again, so he wakes it just to stare at it some more. Considering his inner turmoil, his thumbs move very slowly as he starts to type.

[02:13] you: your parents home?
[02:13] : no :O theyre at work
[02:13] you: im coming over
[02:14] : ok!!

The ride to Taehyung’s obnoxious penthouse apartment takes a little over half an hour, enough time for Yoongi to think things through. He doesn’t really know what he’s trying to achieve here, but he knows what his body would like him to do as soon as Taehyung opens that door, and he can’t do that. He doesn’t really know what else he’s supposed to do with Taehyung though, since he’s really not in the mood to listen to him go on and on about whatever the hell his current obsession is, so he’s gonna have to find something else to talk about, or whatever. Right. Maybe he’s coming over to talk about that family dinner they still haven’t had, make a plan like they did for the airport thing, that worked out well. Yoongi would actually like to get that milestone over with soon, so maybe that’s a good reason to show up at Taehyung’s house in the middle of the day. Because Yoongi is definitely the kind of guy to do this face to face instead of just texting him like he usually does. Definitely.

He loses count of how many times he’s run his hands down his face, turns up his music as loud as he can without fearing for his eardrums (and maybe a little bit past that), and leans his head against the bus window. Maybe this is enough. A bus ride on his own, thankfully with nobody sitting down next to him, time to himself, to focus, to listen to music and calm down. He’ll be himself again by the time he’s reached Taehyung’s apartment and they can make plans or something like that, it’s not all that important anymore. He’s calm. He’s better already.

Nope. Yoongi is slammed back to square one the second Taehyung opens the apartment door.

Part of what Yoongi has learned about Kim Taehyung so far is that he likes to wear plaid shirts, but he doesn’t like buttoning them up all the way, and no, it’s not enough to just leave the top button open like regular people do, he leaves the next button open too, and sometimes even the one after that. Yoongi is greeted by a bronzed collarbone, staring at him, right out here in the open. He raises his head and it just gets worse from there, Taehyung’s hair is tousled and pushed off his forehead, and he’s wearing a pair of round glasses that Yoongi has never seen on him before, but fuck, it looks good, and he definitely still hates him.

“Hi,” Taehyung says, smiling at him, and it takes Yoongi all he’s got to not just glare back.

“Why are you wearing glasses?” He meant to ask that all casually and cool, but it comes out as a snap, and Taehyung blinks at him like he’s immediately worried he did something wrong. Like wearing glasses, for example.

“I,” he starts, automatically making room in the doorway for Yoongi to come in, and closing the door behind him. “Uh, I was reading something. Are you okay?”

Oh, he’s not. The craving is back with full force, something dark and hungry settling in his chest, fingers burning with the need to touch someone, skin screaming with the need to be touched. “Sure, I’m fine,” Yoongi says, mentally giving himself an award for playing it cool as he peels off his jacket and shoes. Taehyung is still watching him carefully, and Yoongi straightens his back, turns to look at him and throws everything he thought on the bus in the wind to say, with perfect nonchalance,
“Wanna make out?”

Taehyung blinks once, twice. He opens his mouth and closes it again, but overall, he seems less shocked now than he did in the airport parking lot. Maybe it’s because they already kissed once, maybe it’s because he’s on familiar terrain now, and can be sure that nobody’s watching except for maybe his dog (though Yoongi can’t see Boop anywhere). Maybe Yoongi doesn’t care, because a second later there’s the hint of a goddamn smirk on Taehyung’s lips, and he jerks his head towards the stairs.

“Let’s go to my room.”

That was easy.

Their steps upstairs and towards Taehyung’s room are pointedly calm and composed, but they’re still up there in a matter of seconds. Taehyung lets Yoongi in first, and Yoongi hears the door close behind him and already tries to map out a plan on how to get this thing going without getting too awkward, when a hand closes around his wrist and pulls him back. Next thing he knows his lips crash into Taehyung’s, huge palms flat against his back and Yoongi automatically steadies himself with his hands against the door.

He was right, back at the airport. Taehyung’s lips are soft now, even though the kiss isn’t. It’s urgent and it’s hungry, and at first Yoongi thinks that’s all on him, but it’s not. He tries to dial it down at least a little and realizes that Taehyung is pressing back against his lips with the same desperate force that Yoongi feels tugging at his entire body, hot and flaming and making him curl his fingers against the door until he can’t take it anymore and grabs Taehyung’s hips instead.

The touch alone is enough to make Taehyung gasp softly, hot air against Yoongi’s lips, and the sound goes straight to his dick. His fingers sneak beneath the hem of Taehyung’s shirt and he fucking does it again, gasps right into his mouth as he sucks in his stomach. Yoongi guesses his fingers are cold, they’re always cold and Yoongi doesn’t even notice anymore, but Taehyung’s skin is burning, like he’s trying to melt him then and there, and Yoongi isn’t really sure if he should try to fight that or just give in. He doesn’t think about it, doesn’t really think about anything at all as he presses in even closer and licks into Taehyung’s mouth, tongue tracing his teeth as Taehyung lifts his hoodie and shirt to press his fingertips up Yoongi’s spine.

Yoongi almost lets out a groan, but he fights it. Nobody’s touched him like that in fucking forever, but Taehyung doesn’t have to know that. He just wants him to keep going, to keep pushing his clothes up so he can let his hands roam over his back, tracing every single vertebra, then his ribs, his shoulder blades. At this point Yoongi’s hoodie is bunched up somewhere in his neck but he doesn’t particularly care because that goddamn kiss is still going. Taehyung’s tongue is in his mouth now and he does things with it that leave Yoongi feeling slightly dizzy, so he’s struggling for control, pulling back a little only to catch Taehyung’s bottom lip between his teeth and suck it into his mouth.

As soon as he releases it, Taehyung cants his head back, sucking in a breath of the cooler air above them as Yoongi rakes blunt nails up his sides, taking his shirt with them. He gets distracted though, by the fact that he’s at eye-level with Taehyung’s throat now, strained and golden and beautiful, and he wonders if Taehyung knows just what the hell he’s doing when he presents it like that.

Yoongi leans forward to press his lips against the side of his neck, catches some skin between his teeth and bites it, softly, reminding himself that they’re in his parents’ house and he might not want to get marked up, fake relationship or not. But it’s enough to make Taehyung’s breath hitch, have him squirm under his fingers and Yoongi wants more. He lets go of his sides, slips his hands out from under his shirt to grab the collar instead, fingers blindly looking for buttons to open while he’s still mouthing over his throat. Taehyung’s fingers press into his back a little harder before slipping down
again, leaving softly burning trails on his skin until they find Yoongi’s ass and just stay there for the
time being. Yoongi hears a soft thump when he lets his head fall back against the door, because
Yoongi’s mouth has found his collarbone, and his shirt is almost completely open, and does this still
count as making out?

Sure it does. It’s also still making out when he takes a step back and yanks Taehyung along with him
on that shirt collar, pulling him away from the door and turning, so he can shove him on his bed.
He’s tired of doing this standing up, is all. It’s still making out.

He’s straddling Taehyung’s hips and pushing his shirt off his shoulders, and Taehyung discards it
along with those outrageous glasses before his hands go back to his hoodie straight away, pushing it
upwards too until Yoongi takes it off and just drops it to the floor. Taehyung’s arms are a little darker
than his chest, faint tan lines reminiscent of warmer days while Seoul was freezing, and there’s a scar
on his left side, light against the pretty brown of his torso. It’s big and Yoongi wonders briefly what
the hell happened there, but he also finds out that he doesn’t care. Not right now. Kid probably got
bitten by a shark or whatever, might just be waiting for Yoongi to ask so he can excitedly dish the
whole story, but they’re not doing that now.

What they’re doing is smash their lips back together, Yoongi’s hands on his chest, Taehyung’s
thumbs on his hipbones, and Yoongi doesn’t think twice before grinding down, only to hear him
groan into his mouth. The sound rumbles against his lips and sends a shiver down his spine, nowhere
near the confusion and shock he felt with Hoseok, and Yoongi wants to hear it again. He rolls his
hips down once more and Taehyung whines, digging his fingertips right into them, hard, but not
quite hard enough to make him stop, and, okay, maybe they’re not making out anymore.

Maybe this is foreplay.

Panting softly against Taehyung’s wet lips, Yoongi forces himself to break the kiss again, pushing
himself up just enough to sit on him (he’s pretty sure something is poking him there already), trying
to clear his head. He stares down at him with a soft frown, and Taehyung blinks back, eyes slowly
going from hazy to worried, fingers stilling on Yoongi’s hips.

“Is this okay?” Yoongi asks and, fuck, his voice is a nightmare already, raspy and deep, but he’s
pretty sure he can feel a shiver going through Taehyung.

“Yeah,” Taehyung breathes almost immediately, nodding and Yoongi starts to think that maybe he
wasn’t the only one desperate here. “Yeah, just-- hang on.”

And Taehyung twists his upper body to the side, leaving Yoongi sitting on his hips watching him
reach for his bedside drawer with both arms, stretching for all he’s worth. It’s… weird. Yoongi has
found him to be some peculiar sort of graceful most of the time, long lashes, slender fingers, legs he
usually tries not to think about, he’s got his own type of movement, his own method of steering that
long body of his around the world, and it’s pleasant to watch, normally. But then Yoongi guesses
sometimes he can look like this. Halfnaked and draped over his bed but entirely unceremoniously,
the polar opposite of graceful.

Not like it matters. Taehyung turns back towards him with lube and a condom in his hand, pushing
both in Yoongi’s direction on the mattress with a grin on his face and a look in his eyes that makes
him look nothing short of goddamn seductive, and Yoongi doesn’t give a flying fuck about grace. Yoongi
sends back a quirk of his lips that might be classified as a smirk, pointedly shooting the
condom and lube a look before shifting off Taehyung so he can kneel between his legs instead.
“Okay,” he says, unable to hide the hint of smugness with Taehyung giving up the reins so easily,
before diving back in.
He goes for his shoulder this time, sinking his teeth into it hard enough to pull a whispered *Holy fuck* from Taehyung, which, Yoongi has to admit, is pretty encouraging. Taehyung’s hands are back on his spine, find their way to skim down his sides instead quickly though, going straight for the waistband of Yoongi’s jeans. They slip beneath it, then beneath his boxers too, and next thing Yoongi knows Taehyung’s hands are on his bare ass, pressing him downwards to grind against the bulge in his pants again.

Yoongi does end up leaving a mark just on the edge of Taehyung’s collarbone, mostly to stifle his groan, but also because his parents probably won’t see it there anyway, and Taehyung didn’t complain. Actually, he just sucked in a breath even rougher than before instead, fingernails digging into Yoongi’s asscheeks, and he took that as a good sign.

It takes only a few more rolls of their hips against each other before they both have enough, the tightness of their pants suffocating. Taehyung’s fingers are first to slip to the front and nimbly open Yoongi’s fly, but Yoongi is the one to ultimately lean back and free them both of their last pieces of clothing.

He immediately gets distracted by Taehyung’s legs. They’re just so *there* all of a sudden, shown to him in all their glory for the first time, long and slim and golden and just fucking flawless, despite the lighter constellation of scars across his knees, which Yoongi can only assume are a product of a childhood spent playing in the dirt too often. He wants to lean down and bury his teeth in those thighs, mark them up just to see what it’d look like -- but Taehyung’s hands are on his arms, like he’s trying to pull him back in, or just trying to get him to do something. They’re both hard by now and really, Yoongi shouldn’t be wasting time thinking about the guy’s legs like a creep. He doesn’t know where that came from.

They don’t lose a whole lot of time preparing, Taehyung seems impatient already and Yoongi is starting to feel a little lightheaded with the way Taehyung responds to practically everything he does. He’s loud. Usually that annoys Yoongi in people, but with Taehyung it seems like it’s actually genuine, like he literally can’t help but moan softly every time Yoongi’s fingers press in deeper. And his voice is beautiful, Yoongi can admit that very quietly to himself on a professional level, so he’s not about to complain. Taehyung rolls his hips down every time Yoongi’s fingers take too long, lets him know just when to add another, and ultimately also lets him know when he’s fed up with stretching in general. Yoongi catches himself staring at the way his abs move softly when he does it, barely visible before, but straining against skin now, urging him to hurry up.

Shit, Yoongi is never going this long without sex ever again.

He sets a personal record with putting on a condom and slicking himself up, then he forces himself to slow down a little so he doesn’t just ram himself into Taehyung like part of him would like to. He sinks in slowly instead, making both of them groan deep in their throats. While he stills to let Taehyung adjust, Taehyung reaches out and pulls him closer by his shoulders and it catches Yoongi by surprise so he doesn’t fight back when he pretty much ends up hugged to Taehyung’s chest. Fuck. He’s sure as shit not doing this.

Taehyung makes it up to him by pulling him into the next kiss -- closeness is one thing, closeness during sex with Min Yoongi is a complicated matter, but kissing is fine. Kissing is good. Taehyung’s lips moving hungrily against his own is better than good, and Yoongi can’t remember what he was mentally complaining about just now when Taehyung rolls his hips down once more, telling him it’s fine to move by moaning breathily into his mouth.

Still, Yoongi pushes himself back up on his knees to start thrusting and set a rhythm. Taehyung’s body is like a goddamn furnace, it’s too warm and too close and Yoongi wants to be able to watch
him anyway. And he’s not disappointed. The pace that Yoongi wanted to set is already quickening, giving away how deprived he was until just now, but Taehyung meets each and every one of his thrusts jerking his hips up with a strained gasp every time. Yoongi can barely take his eyes off his torso, every muscle movement it takes to do this, and he runs his hands down Taehyung’s sides, careful not to grip too hard so Taehyung won’t even think about stilling his movements. His fingertips do dig deeper into his skin though as Taehyung literally arches his fucking back off the bed with a strangled moan and, okay, Yoongi guesses they might have found his prostate.

He holds Taehyung’s hips in place now so he can keep that angle, pushing into that sweet spot relentlessly. His eyes flicker up to see his throat work around hurried gulps and quick, rough breaths, head pressed back into the pillows, mouth hanging open, eyes pressed shut. It’s quite the sight to see, and Yoongi feels like he got slapped in the face when it vanishes.

Taehyung moves his head back up to look at Yoongi, tongue darting out to wet his lips. “Wait,” he rasps, and Yoongi immediately stills all movements, praying silently that this isn’t about to get ruined. “I want to,” Taehyung says, doesn’t finish the sentence though. He just sits up, puts his hands on Yoongi’s shoulders, and then everything is a flurry of movement, and two seconds later Yoongi’s back is against the mattress, weight on his middle, and Taehyung is already sinking back on him, until their hips meet. “Oh, god,” Taehyung breathes shakily, and Yoongi has to agree with him there.

This definitely did not get ruined.

“Th-This is fine, right?” Taehyung manages to ask somehow, worried because he switched positions without actually finishing the question first. Yoongi watches the way Taehyung’s thighs part on him, their skin tones in stark contrast to each other as he runs his fingers along them and nods.

“Yeah,” he says, shooting Taehyung a smirk, almost tells him to go on and start fucking himself on him already, but he keeps that one to himself and just moves his hips up tentatively instead, basking in the way Taehyung’s mouth falls open.

It’s enough to get him moving, gyrating his hips slowly at first, like he’s still testing the waters. His eyes aren’t closed this time, they’re half-lidded and glued to Yoongi’s face, and Yoongi’s gaze doesn’t waver either, both of them holding eyecontact while Taehyung rolls his entire body to meet Yoongi’s hips, and Yoongi uses his hands to ever so slightly guide his movements. Neither of them actually manages to keep this up for long though. Taehyung’s movements get more erratic each time, and sooner or later, Yoongi finds himself pressing his heels into the mattress behind Taehyung so he can thrust upwards, pulling a noise from Taehyung’s throat that almost doesn’t make him sound human anymore.

He keeps it up while Taehyung times himself to bounce down on Yoongi’s thrusts, thighs straining as his expression gets more and more blissful, the eyecontact gone, long lashes fluttering against his cheeks as he goes and presents that throat again, leaving Yoongi to stare at it. He gets distracted quickly though, because one of Taehyung’s hands moves from where they were, scorching on Yoongi’s stomach, palm wrapping tightly around his own erection, neglected and leaking already.

Normally Yoongi would swat that hand away and finish the job himself, because he’s learned that that’s apparently something like etiquette in these situations, which he has always guessed has something to do with ego or whatever. He doesn’t care about etiquette right now though, he cares about watching Taehyung, so he does just that. For a second he thinks he could watch him move forever, but that’s weird, so he corrects himself to thinking that he wants to watch him get himself off on top of Yoongi, because right now it’s borderline pornographic and so, so good.

Taehyung doesn’t complain either, hip movements getting frantic, falling out of rhythm as he fists his
cock with one hand, fingernails of the other digging hard into Yoongi’s skin now. Yoongi never stops fucking up into him, pleased with the way it seems to overwhelm Taehyung, his own body feeling hotter by the second, familiar tension pooling in his abdomen. Taehyung finishes first though, unsurprising to Yoongi at this point. His whole body goes rigid for a second before it goes very soft instead, and Yoongi makes an exception and lets Taehyung fall forward and bury his face in his shoulder, biting down very softly as he rides out his climax. The moan he releases against his skin seems to literally vibrate through Yoongi’s bones and he grips his hips harder, still thrusting upwards until he can feel Taehyung tense and whine quietly.

He stills then, letting Taehyung breathe hot air into his shoulder, chest heaving. Quietly, Yoongi watches the blur of brown hair he can see in this position, already trying to find a semi-polite way of letting him know he better not fucking leave it at this now, when Taehyung raises his head and gifts Yoongi with a grin that looks positively wrecked, and way hotter than Yoongi had anticipated.

“Come on,” Taehyung says, his voice a spent mess, and once more grabs Yoongi by the shoulders when he doesn’t move by himself. He rolls on his back again, pushing Yoongi back between his legs, doesn’t even wince at the way Yoongi moves inside him even though he’s got to be sensitive as hell by now. There’s another grin when he notices Yoongi’s perplexed expression, then a sultry look as he does something with his hips that has Yoongi groaning out a curse. “You know you wanna.”

Fuck, he does. And with Taehyung giving him permission like that, he’s going to.

He doesn’t last long after that. Taehyung’s legs are crossed behind him, heels digging into his ass to pull him in even further, Yoongi gripping his sides hard enough to bruise now, not even able to watch anymore. His eyes are closed and his breathing is loud and ragged as he slams into him, no rhythm or pace, Taehyung raking his nails up Yoongi’s arms, and Yoongi downright doubles over when climax hits him, burying himself in Taehyung as deep as he can, throat raw from spilling obscenities under his breath.

He lets go of Taehyung to support himself on the mattress instead, catching his breath. For a few seconds, he stays like this, enjoying the last waves of pleasure washing over him with a first sense of tiredness, until he realizes how soft Taehyung’s fingertips on his arms have gotten. Knowing Taehyung (or at least judging by the things Yoongi thinks he knows), he’s just waiting for Yoongi to collapse on him now so they can cuddle or shit like that, and he’s not having that.

Yoongi pulls out slowly before falling on his back, grimacing at the way his sweaty skin sticks to the bedsheets. He moves to pull off the condom and glances around to dispose of it, but before he can find anything Taehyung pulls it from his hands and knots it like it’s nothing, throwing it in a corner of his room that Yoongi can only hope contains a trashcan. After that, Yoongi can hear him plop down again, breathing still ragged, and he dares to look at him. His hair is sticking to his forehead, a single but giant mark on his shoulder, beautifully dark against his skin, then more bruises already forming on his sides, reminiscent of fingerprints. Yoongi sort of wishes he could have left more. Maybe next time.

Next time?

No. No next time. Yoongi looks away again quickly, redirecting his gaze towards Taehyung’s manga collection. Shinichi the dead octopus is staring at him. Nope, no next time.

“I’m thinking maybe we should do this more often,” Taehyung says into the silence, the bliss still audible even in the hoarse disaster that is his voice.

“Yeah,” Yoongi says. “We should.”
Taehyung wouldn’t mind cuddling. But he’s a quick learner and can already guess that Yoongi wouldn’t want that, so he doesn’t do anything. He’s had sex without cuddling before, it’s no big deal. He feels completely spent anyway, and pretty content with not having to move an inch until they’ve caught their breaths again and start freezing. He tries not to think about what’s next either, since he can already sense that it might get pretty awkward, what with the whole fake-dating thing and the fact that they’re not even really friends yet, just obviously find each other hot. Which isn’t bad per se, really Taehyung feels honored that Yoongi apparently finds him attractive at all, but it might just get a little weird with the whole thing they’re doing.

He closes his eyes as soon as he can breathe through his nose again, waiting for his wits to come back. Or some motivation to put his pants back on, maybe. Either of the two would be fine.

What he gets instead is a faint sound from downstairs that makes his eyes snap back open.

“Was that the front door,” says Yoongi. It’s not a question. They both know the answer already.

“Fuck,” Taehyung hisses, sitting up so quickly it makes him feel a little dizzy, scrambling for his boxer shorts.

“Taehyungie!” his mother trills.

“They’re not supposed to be back yet, what the hell.”

“We’re home early!”

No shit, Taehyung mouths, ignoring the way he can see Yoongi grin from the corner of his eye. Yoongi, who’s still sprawled out on his bed butt naked. Fantastic.

“We brought jjajangmyeon,” calls his father, and okay, maybe Taehyung’s face lights up a little. But only a little.

“Cool!” he calls back, yanking his underwear back on. “I’ll be down in five!”

“I’d say I could just climb out the window, if this wasn’t the twenty-sixth floor,” Yoongi drawls, and Taehyung shoots him a halfhearted glare. “Plus, my shoes and jacket are downstairs. Pretty sure your parents already know I’m here.” Fuck. Fuck, he’s right. Taehyung stares at him in horror as Yoongi sits up lazily, fishing for his boxers with one foot and throwing him an unimpressed glance. “Come on. I’m not your fake-boyfriend for nothing.”

Well. He is kind of right about that, too. Taehyung still doesn’t know how his parents would feel about their son having sex with a guy in their home -- they might have reacted well to his sexuality in theory, but many people react differently when it’s about actual sex. Taehyung doesn’t quite get it, but he just doesn’t want to ruin this for himself. Plus, the fact that he just got boned isn’t actually any of his parents’ business.

“Right,” he murmurs, running a hand through his hair. Then he sniffs himself. “Do you think I smell like sex?”

Yoongi gives him a half-amused, half-resigned look. “You might smell less like sex if you wiped that cum off your stomach.”
“Oh.” Taehyung looks down to the mostly dried streak of his own spunk splattered over his torso. Yeah. He should probably get on that.

A little more than five minutes later, they’re both cleaned up and dressed, and Taehyung has cracked a window in his room because he’s still pretty sure the sex smell is there. He also swears he could hear Yoongi’s stomach growl, though he almost expects him to leave right away. Yoongi doesn’t seem like the kind of guy to stick around after sex, but then again, he’s been strangely committed to this fake dating thing.

Plus, it’s jjajangmyeon. You don’t say no to that.

“Oh, hello Yoongi!” His mom beams as they come into the kitchen (Taehyung has closed all his buttons except for the very top one this time), happily putting insane quantities of steaming jjajangmyeon on plates. “I didn’t know you were here!”

Taehyung doubts that. “He spontaneously dropped by,” he says. That much at least is the truth. Taehyung doesn’t quite feel like questioning what the hell led up to that particular fact right now.

“Do you want to eat with us? We easily have enough for four, we always get a lot. Taehyungie loves jjajangmyeon.”

“Oh, I know,” Yoongi smiles, so sweet it’s almost dizzying for Taehyung after the things he’s just seen him do in his room. And then Yoongi moves and puts an arm around Taehyung’s waist, and he swears he can feel heat rush down his body again. What the fuck.

Anyway, Taehyung doesn’t remember ever telling Yoongi about his mild jjajangmyeon obsession, but obviously he’s a good liar. His mom seems convinced. “He practically covered himself with it as a kid. Oh, actually, he literally covered himself with it. He’d always smear it over half his face, and down his entire shirt. I remember one time when he was twelve, I found a noodle in his sock. I still don’t know how it got there.”

“Mom!”

Well, this is terrible. Yoongi chuckles and pulls him in a little closer, and Taehyung feels heat creep up his neck for completely different reasons this time. “I can only imagine,” Yoongi says. Smug asshole.

“Don’t embarrass the boy.” His dad shows up in the kitchen to save him, gently ruffling Taehyung’s hair as he walks past. “Yoongi, you’re hereby invited. I mean, we wanted to have dinner with you anyway, didn’t we? Didn’t quite think it’d be over fast food we just happened to bring by, but this is nice, I think. Do you have time to stay?”

“Yeah, I do,” Yoongi says, and it takes everything out of Taehyung to not turn and blink at him. Despite what he thought about staying for good food a minute ago, he’s surprised, because his father just turned this into The Family Dinner, the one where they get to know his boyfriend and probably cross-examine him, and Yoongi’s just comfortably standing in their kitchen, agreeing to it without them having some sort of battle plan.

Min Yoongi is the devil.

“I have work tonight,” Yoongi continues like it’s nothing, “but I can stay for about three more hours. Thank you so much for inviting me.”

“Three hours!” his mom says happily. “Well, that should at least be enough time to tell you half of Taehyung’s embarrassing childhood stories.”
Taehyung just whines softly, leaving Yoongi’s side so he can get chopsticks for them all and doesn’t have to keep looking at them. They’re horrible and they have conspired against him and now Yoongi definitely owes him another orgasm like that.

“You work night shifts?” his father questions as they all settle down around the dining table, Boop showing up from where she was sleeping on the living room couch to plop down at Taehyung’s feet. “Taehyung just told us you’re an audio engineer.”

“He was really proud to explain what that means.” His mother is out to ruin him today.

“I DJ in clubs sometimes, yes,” Yoongi says. Taehyung still has to keep himself from staring at him - - it’s not like he’s overly polite or anything, he’s still keeping it pretty natural, but he still seems like an entirely different person than the guy he’s been going on dog walks with lately. It’s weird, and a little scary. “I occasionally help out with theater production, too.”

“He’s still looking for a steady job, dad,” Taehyung says quickly, ignoring the split second of Yoongi glaring at him. He can already guess that Yoongi wouldn’t bring this up on his own, not the guy who can’t take compliments and doesn’t know how to hold a conversation, and he’s well aware that a huge reason for Yoongi to do this whole thing was the prospect of having Taehyung’s parents spoil him. He doesn’t hold that against him. Yoongi just made him cum hard enough he still feels a little lighter than he should while sitting at the family table, he deserves to get spoiled by his parents.

“Really?” his dad says, rhetorically, and frowns a little. “Do you like working night shifts? Or would you rather work during the day?”

Yoongi shrugs. “Nights are fine. I have the sleep pattern for it.”

“Hmm.” Taehyung’s father nods and watches Yoongi pensively, and Taehyung watches him in turn, because suddenly he’s really hopeful that he might be able to help. “You know, actually, my friend runs a radio station. I know a while ago they were struggling to find someone to fill the night broadcasts. I don’t know much about the business, but maybe you could play some mixes there, work your way up. I’ll ask him if they’re still looking.”

Now Taehyung shifts his gaze to Yoongi, just in time to see him stare at his dad, chopsticks frozen halfway to his mouth before he catches himself and manages a polite nod. “That would be amazing,” Yoongi says, and Taehyung quickly shovels food in his mouth to keep himself from grinning stupidly. “Thank you.”

“So,” his mom chimes in, both of them looking way happier with this whole dinner situation than Taehyung would have thought. “Taehyung never told us you’re from Daegu, too.”

Ah. Taehyung stops chewing and swallows quietly and watches Yoongi with a hint of apprehension. They never talked about it, up until now. He knew, of course. Yoongi does a better job at hiding the accent than Taehyung does, but it’s still there sometimes. When he’s tired, or when he curses, which is often enough, really. But Yoongi never mentioned it, and neither did Taehyung. Daegu is a weird topic to talk about for him, and he knows all topics are weird to talk about for Yoongi, so he decided to spare them of that one, but here they are.

“Well, yeah,” Yoongi says, smiling this smile that seems to belong to a different person, definitely not the guy who just fucked him into his mattress while swearing like his life depended on it. “It’s purely coincidental, too. Guess we just really know how to find each other, even out here.”

And then he looks at Taehyung, all smiles and heart eyes, and Taehyung is glad he already swallowed, because otherwise he’d probably be choking right about now. He briefly wonders if this
is what whiplash feels like, all confusing and vertigo-inducing, and he has to move his bare foot a little to the right under the table to touch Boop’s soft fur and convince himself that this is, in fact, a real thing that’s actually happening. His mother coos at Yoongi. Taehyung is trapped in some sort of surreal masterpiece.

He just finds himself hoping his parents won’t ask about Yoongi’s family, on the topic of his hometown, since he made it pretty obvious before that it’s not exactly his favorite topic, but they seem happy enough with Yoongi’s cheesy answer and leave it at that. And the rest comes easily, for some reason. Taehyung made sure to let Yoongi know that his parents aren’t evil and out to grill him or anything, but he did somehow expect them to ask more weird questions, which they don’t. Maybe it’s because Yoongi keeps sending him looks, and Taehyung eventually learns to shoot them right back, looking just as smitten. Their hands are very, very close to each other on the table and he starts to think that this is all his parents wanted to see, wanted to know. That they’re super in love, when really all they do is fall back into speech patterns people out in the streets probably wouldn’t even understand, and act like they didn’t just bang each other’s brains out.

In the end, Yoongi scores his last points by helping his mother carry their dirty dishes into the kitchen, thanking both her and his father a couple more times, and enthusiastically ruffling Boop’s fur while saying goodbye to them all. His dad closes the door behind Yoongi, while his mother turns to him and kisses his forehead, telling him about how happy she is that Taehyung has found such a nice boy to call his own.

Meanwhile, Taehyung has no idea anymore who exactly Min Yoongi is.
Movie date

Chapter Summary

Everyone wonders about Yoongi, and Taegi fail to watch a movie together.

Chapter Notes

**Warning:** more porn, semi-public fun times.
not a whole lot is happening in this chapter, mostly because they dont quite understand each other (yet), but i had to get it off my chest. therell be more plot and less dicks in the next one.

movie pirating is a crime, kids.

He made out with Hoseok.

That is still very much a thing that happened. Yoongi almost forgot, what with the stellar sex, the warm food, the *extremely promising job in sight*, the happy faces of Taehyung’s parents. But all of that really only happened because hours ago, he made out with his ex-boyfriend on the couch until they moaned into each other’s mouths.

He’s not into Hoseok anymore. He knows that much, now. It actually helped clear that up, Yoongi guesses. He doesn’t want to get back together with him, he doesn’t want to kiss him anymore or even anything going farther than that. He just wanted *someone, something*. But it’d be mean and unfair to get that from Hoseok, when they pretty much proved today that they wouldn’t be any good at dealing with it. You can’t go friends with benefits on your ex-boyfriend and expect that to work out. Especially if the thought of sleeping with him kind of skeeves you out a little.

Hoseok, as a person, does not skeeve him out. Sex as a concept doesn’t skeeve him out either, obviously, but combining the two just doesn’t feel right anymore. And in a way, that’s good. It’s his own mind’s way of showing him that they’re through, and he’s over him, and they can continue the way they’ve been going for the past few weeks.

There’s a hint of disillusionment too, though. For a long time, Hoseok was home. And it’s not like the fact that they can’t have sex anymore makes him not home, Yoongi would physically fight anyone who tries to tell him you need a “significant other”, a partner in any shape or form, to feel at home, but for a while, that was exactly how they worked. Hoseok was his partner, his home, his sanctuary. And he’s not anymore.

Maybe he was too much at once. Maybe that was the problem.

It wasn’t Hoseok’s fault, either. It was Yoongi, back then, who continuously stacked all that responsibility on Hoseok’s shoulders, and eventually Hoseok crumbled, unable to still be all that for Yoongi, timed perfectly with a phase when he needed it the most. They both had a hand in messing it up and Yoongi is done searching for blame, he just had this one last thing to clear up.
He loves Hoseok, as a person, as maybe the most important idiot in his life right now, and he appreciates all the small and big things he does for him, so it’s not his fault and not Yoongi’s fault either this time, but he’s not home anymore. Yoongi has moved on.

He just doesn’t know where to.

And he’s starting to think that he won’t be finding out anytime soon, so this isn’t something he wants to dwell on now. Hoseok’s place is still something to come back to comfortably, and he promised him he would, so he’s doing that now, and that’s all that matters. He needs a shower and a change of clothes anyway. And he needs to make sure that Hoseok is alright. That they’re both alright.

Hoseok’s head peaks over the back of the couch the second Yoongi enters the living room. There’s something happy flashing over his face, something like relief maybe, then it makes room for something calmer, a soft smile, already letting Yoongi know that it could all be worse.

“Hey,” Hoseok says as Yoongi carefully sinks down on the couch, not too close to him, but also not too far away. It’s hard to find balance in between, but they’ll manage, they’ve always managed. Hoseok is holding a steaming bowl and chopsticks in his hands, which means he still cooked that thing he was talking about, even without Yoongi, and that’s good. “You hungry?”

“Nah, I’m good.” Yoongi is filled to the brim with jjajangmyeon. He’s not too sure if he should tell Hoseok that he went to see his fake boyfriend straight away after what happened. Feels a little tacky. “I’ll try it later, though. I gotta go to work soon.”

Hoseok hums quietly. “Me too.”

They’re quiet afterwards, a wary silence like they’re still trying to figure out how their dynamic is supposed to work now. It’s not all bad, though. Hoseok is giving him the space he needs, and Yoongi knows Hoseok is thankful he doesn’t make him feel like this was some sort of catastrophe, something Hoseok did wrong. It was some kind of small, but freaky accident, an aftershock of their relationship and the way it ended, and Yoongi thinks, begrudgingly, that there might still be something they have to do.

“Maybe we should talk,” he says softly.

Hoseok laughs around his chopsticks, very quietly, barely there. But he nods. “We probably should.”

Yoongi left Seoul only about two weeks after their breakup, and they barely talked during those two weeks. Yoongi busied himself with selling his apartment and almost everything he owned, so he could use the money for his trip, so nothing would still bind him to this city. He doesn’t know what Hoseok did. Fantasize about rubber ducks, maybe. And perhaps they should have a talk, find out what happened with them after things went to shit, because they’ve been gracefully ignoring it all in favor of being best friends again like they were in high school, and sure, it felt good, it even went well for a while, but Yoongi’s thigh between Hoseok’s legs on this couch so maybe it wasn’t the best plan after all.

“Not now, though,” says Yoongi. He might be chickening out. But he might also just be really tired from driving around town and having sex in Taehyung’s bed and he still has stuff to do and needs to be focused for work, so that’s perfectly reasonable.


It takes them a little over ten minutes to end up side to side again, Hoseok’s head on Yoongi’s shoulder, the TV on, the silence comfortable. They will talk about it. Yoongi knows. Hoseok
wouldn’t let him get away with anything else.

At least he really hopes so.

[07:02] : Yeah hes been texting me all day he said hes got work later but hell text back when hes on break man we are getting somewhere
[07:02] : Oh hey
[07:02] : Taetaes back online
[07:03] : hi
[07:03] : that was some long ass study session tae.
[07:03] : did u fall asleep?
[07:05] : uhhh no
[07:05] : yoongi kind of came over
[07:05] : Oooooo
[07:05] : “Kind of” lol
[07:05] : They fucked
[07:05] : like hell they did
[07:06] : whos been texting you all day jiminnie??? hoseok??
[07:06] : Yeah B)
[07:06] : tae
[07:06] : dont change the subject.
[07:06] : what did yoongi want
[07:07] : sorry!!! jeez
[07:07] : yeah we fucked
[07:07] : BAD IDEA
[07:07] : HAHHAHA I knew it
[07:07] : BAD IDEA!!!!!!!
[07:08] : WHY!!! Leave me alone omfg
[07:08] : Was it good
[07:08] : hell yeah it was good
UUUUUUUGH!!!!

shit yeah lets tone it down jimin theres a child present

Who cares I wanna know who topped

i hate u both.

You could easily leave the group chat if you didn't want to hear this you weenie

>:/

yoongi topped

ok how does that even work hes like 5'0''

be quiet!! it worked very well ok dyou want me to describe it in detail so you can picture it better

NO

You don't have to be taller to top someone kookie what kind of yaoi have you been reading

Ive topped taetae before

i dont wanna know that either!!!

:) 

anyway he stayed for dinner with mom and dad and they loved him

:O nice!

Wait he had dinner with your parents right after he banged you

eye

omfg.

And they say romance is dead

whats dead is my ass

gross

so what now

you got butterflies in ur stomach yet

shut up im not gonna crush on him

its bane vs batman time

you leave bane out of this!!!

Guys I just wanna say this real quick
Taehyung stares at the chat window. He’s been wondering why Yoongi came over at all -- out of curiosity, mostly. He didn’t question it when he let him in, because he’d been wanting to taste him again ever since that fiasco in the airport parking lot, but he’s kind of questioning it now. Did he really come over for the sole purpose of getting laid? Because Jimin is right, Gangnam and Yongsan aren’t really in walking distance to each other, so that was quite the trip to go on, just for Taehyung’s ass. Then again, Yoongi did ask if his parents were home, and only announced to come over when Taehyung said that they weren’t. It’s a little disorienting because Taehyung is absolutely not sure what to think, but Jimin definitely has a point.

Sad, so does Jungkook.

Jimin posts a long row of random keysmashes to that, and Taehyung grabs the opportunity to shift the conversation topic back on him and Hoseok, and away from Yoongi. It’s too weird to think about for now. Taehyung actually doesn’t want Yoongi to be into him romantically, because for once he’s been managing to get to know a boy he finds hot and even get him into bed without falling for him. So far, at least. He likes Yoongi, thinks he’s interesting and kind of cool, but he’s also mysterious and distant and Taehyung is going to steer clear of that when it comes to romance. And maybe this is mostly because Jungkook keeps insisting that he’s going to crush on him and
Taehyung wants to prove him wrong. So what if it is. He and Yoongi are doing this without anyone falling in love with the other and Yoongi probably doesn’t want to go see a movie with him.

Four days later, Yoongi is coming to see a movie with him.

Taehyung did as Jimin instructed, told him he doesn’t have to join since it’s only about what they tell his parents, but then Yoongi said he’s coming if Taehyung pays, and Taehyung got weak. He’s always been the richest kid in his friend circle, and Jungkook’s parents are pretty loaded too, but Jimin’s aren’t, really. They’re not poor, they’re just not as rich as Taehyung’s family is, so he’s always been the one to buy movie tickets and popcorn and drinks for his friends. And now he guesses he’s doing the same for Yoongi.

He was nervous, at first. Kept thinking about what Jimin had said, about not going to a cinema to fuck. Kept wondering what the hell this means, that Yoongi not only continuously goes on walks with his dog whenever they both have time, but now also meets up with him for something that could be conceived as a date, if you squint.

But Taehyung isn’t squinting. He’s looking directly at Yoongi right now, standing outside the cinema hall waiting for them to open the doors, and he’s not quite as confused anymore.

There’s no shy smiles or lovestruck gazes, no nervous fingers fixing his clothes or combing through his hair or whatever, all the stuff you do when you meet your crush. None of that is happening. What’s there instead is something dark behind Yoongi’s eyes, something carnal in the way he’s looking at him, and Taehyung doesn’t miss the way his glances keep traveling down his throat, down to his hands and always ending up either on his ass or his thighs. He quietly admits to himself that this is really fucking satisfying.

Really, Taehyung isn’t any better. It’s easy to think about other stuff when Yoongi isn’t around, but now that they’re close to each other again he can’t help but focus on the way his lips close around the straw of his coke, how his shoulders look in that jacket, how he idly wipes condensation off his cup with his thumb and Taehyung kind of maybe sort of wants to put it in his mouth.

Okay, Jesus. It’s just a finger. And they’re in public, and you don’t go to the movies to fuck.

He picked some random movie that sounded vaguely interesting, and he’s mostly looking forward to it now. Taehyung just likes being here, likes the atmosphere and the shitty food, the comfortable seats and the corny trailers before the actual thing starts. Yoongi seems bored though, but he doesn’t complain. He’s more invested in his popcorn than in the movie when it starts, which Taehyung guesses is just fine too.

About halfway in though, he can see Yoongi sneaking a glance at his phone in the pouch of his sweater, and then he does it again a few minutes afterwards, and again. He does seem like he’s trying his best to be inconspicuous, but with Taehyung being literally right next to him it’s kind of hard not to notice.

Taehyung peers at the screen, then back at Yoongi, then back at the screen. He leans to Yoongi’s side slowly so he can whisper his words, obviously only to not disturb the other guests.

“You wanna get out of here and make out?”

Yoongi turns his head to blink at him, evidently taken by serious surprise, and it sends something weird like pride through Taehyung. “Don’t you wanna see the movie?” he murmurs back.
“Eh,” Taehyung shrugs. “I can just pirate it. You’re bored. We can go.”

For a second, something hungry ghosts over Yoongi’s face and Taehyung can feel a thrill of anticipation jolt through him, but Yoongi stays put for now and squints at him. “Are we talking actual makeouts here,” he says slowly, “or are we gonna make out the way we made out last time?”

Taehyung answers with nothing but a heavily suggestive grin (like they’d manage to leave it at “actual makeouts” anyway), and for a split second, Yoongi actually grins back. He also grabs his bag of popcorn as they get up, and takes it with him. No point in wasting free food. They snake their way out of the row quickly, and Yoongi grabs the sleeve of Taehyung’s sweater as soon as they’re back out in the hallway, only to drag him to the side -- into the restroom.

He immediately feels nervousness tug at his stomach. Taehyung’s eyes dart around the room, it’s empty save for them, but who knows for how long, who knows who’s in the stalls.

“You like a challenge?” Yoongi murmurs, a mischievous smirk on his lips that makes Taehyung’s knees feel weak. The look in his eyes must have given away how unsure he is about this though, because Yoongi’s face does something he’s never seen it done before: it softens. Considerably. He looks patient and nice and like he’s going to accept whatever Taehyung answers, and Taehyung’s thinking about whiplash again. “You can say no,” he adds softly.

Obviously, he should. They’re old enough to be able to sit through the excruciatingly long drive back to Taehyung’s place, somehow steer past his parents and drop on his bed again, or the excruciatingly long drive into another direction to Yoongi’s place, which is actually his ex-boyfriend’s place, and bang on the couch while hoping that Hoseok won’t come home. For some reason, apparently, that would be the more reasonable approach, when there’s music playing in the restroom to drown out other noises, and the stall doors reach almost all the way down to the floor.

Yeah, he’s not gonna say no. Taehyung smirks back at Yoongi and loosens up his shoulders like the last few seconds just didn’t happen. “I love a challenge.”

The glint in Yoongi’s eyes is the last thing he sees before he’s pulled further into the room by his sleeve, shoved into a stall and pressed up against the door, hands on his chest, a pair of lips already sucking on his throat. “Fuck,” Taehyung breathes out as Yoongi slots a thigh between his legs.

Luckily his hands move on their own, so when Taehyung’s head clears a little they’re already in the back pockets of Yoongi’s jeans, pressing him closer, pulling a perfect little noise from his throat. Taehyung’s noises, on the other hand, are anything but small. He’s always been loud, as a person, in general, so it came as no surprise to him when he turned out to still be loud when aroused. He’d like to say that he could fight it if he wanted to, but that’s not even true. He should be fighting it right now, what with having another guy attached to his neck in a public place, but he just keeps getting distracted by Yoongi’s leg rubbing against him through the fabric of their pants, by the hands firmly slipping down his chest and under his shirt, by those teeth definitely leaving marks on his neck this time. He gets way too distracted, and he can’t do anything against the moans tumbling from his lips.

Luckily, Yoongi is quick to pull him into a kiss. Taehyung barely registers the way the side of his neck aches softly from where he was a second ago, he focuses on stifling himself against Yoongi’s lips, licking into his mouth as he pulls his hands from Yoongi’s ass and under his sweater, letting them ghost over his sides instead. Yoongi shivers under the touch, breathing softly into his mouth, and Taehyung thinks he can probably roll his hips down against his thigh without moaning now.

He’s moaning. Again.
It’s almost cute in a way, Yoongi thinks, because he’s very obviously trying his best to be quiet, pressing into the kiss with wild abandon, choking on his own noises, but with pretty much literally zero success. He’s determined but failing, and Yoongi kind of wants to see how far he can take this.

“You’re gonna have to be quiet, you know,” he whispers against Taehyung’s lips, only pressing in closer, and he can feel him shudder beneath his hands from that alone.

“I know,” Taehyung answers, and at least he manages to speak quietly. He runs his thumbs down Yoongi’s chest before they find the waistband of his pants, working the button open already. “Don’t stop kissing me, then.”

Yoongi snorts quietly -- not like kissing him has been overly successful so far, but it did get a little better, and he doesn’t feel like not kissing him anyway. It kind of interferes with his plan to leave more marks on him this time, but not getting caught with his hand down a boy’s pants in a bathroom stall is probably more important.

Because that’s precisely where his hand is going, after they both unzipped each other’s pants at the same time. Yoongi’s breath stutters quietly as he presses his lips back to Taehyung’s, with Taehyung’s fingertips ghosting over his semi hard-on, but of course Taehyung groans directly into his mouth the second Yoongi drags his fingers past the waistband of his briefs.

Yoongi offers an exaggerated sigh, pulls back his hand and breaks the kiss, to give Taehyung a look. He looks back guiltily, and bites his bottom lip, which is a thing he does often, Yoongi has found out, and it’s distracting. “Sorry,” Taehyung breathes, and before Yoongi can say or do anything, the sheepish look on his face makes way for something different, something almost predatory, something that makes heat coil in the pit of Yoongi’s stomach.

“I’ll shut myself up.”

And with that, he disappears from Yoongi’s line of vision, because he’s on his knees.

Oh.

Yoongi sucks in a sharp breath when his pants and boxers are tugged down just far enough to have cold air hit his erection, but Taehyung’s warm hand wraps around it immediately. He looks down just in time to see Taehyung mouthing along his underside, down, down, and then his lips are on his balls and Yoongi’s eyes flutter shut as his breath catches in his throat and he blindly reaches out a hand to brace himself against the door.

“Shit, Taehyung,” he rasps out shakily while Taehyung’s hand starts moving on his cock, gripping him tighter, and he can feel a tongue darting out.

Taehyung hums very softly before pulling back just enough so Yoongi can still feel his breath ghost over his skin. “You’re gonna have to be quiet, you know.”

He can hear the goddamn smirk in his voice. Yoongi cracks open one eye to glare down at him, almost mentions how he could easily kick him in the face right now, but no words come out when Taehyung closes his lips around him and takes it all in one go. Yoongi’s other hand flies down to grab Taehyung’s hair, neither pulling nor pushing, just to have something to hold onto, because he feels like he’s leaving this plane of existence. Taehyung swallows around him and Yoongi releases a breath he didn’t realize he was holding, honestly fighting to stay quiet himself now.

But he manages. Taehyung pulls back to take a breath, one of his hands immediately back on Yoongi’s length to keep stroking it, and his mouth is closing around him again in no time. Yoongi
gives up on looking composed and just leans forwards to rest his forehead against the coolness of the stall door, concentrating on breathing through his mouth without letting any sound come from his throat while Taehyung starts bobbing his head. His hands are scorching on his hips now, his cheeks hollowed, his tongue tracing little circles along the underside of his cock now and then, and Yoongi can’t quite grasp how he felt like he was having the upper hand here a minute ago. His head is white noise and his body feels like it’s on fire, he can feel sweat sticking his shirt to his back, and he wants nothing more but to move, thrust his hips forward into the heat of Taehyung’s mouth, but he can’t do that.

He could ask, but he’s not sure if he’s capable of forming words right now, much less words that string together to form coherent sentences. Also, Yoongi makes the mistake of opening his eyes halfway, glancing down and watching Taehyung suck on his tip with a kind of dedication that makes Yoongi fist his hand in Taehyung’s hair a little tighter. He can feel his tongue swirling around him and he wants to stay still, he really does, but next thing he knows, his hips buck forward and he almost chokes on a whine.

One second later he almost chokes on an apology instead, trying to find his voice to say sorry and ask if Taehyung’s alright, but before he can even catch his breath, Taehyung looks up and locks eyes with him. And then he takes his hands off Yoongi’s hipbones to gesture with them instead, making a very clear come-hither motion with his fingers from Yoongi’s hips to Taehyung’s mouth, and goddamn if that isn’t one of the hottest things he’s ever seen.

When Yoongi just stares at him for a second, Taehyung gives the smallest of nods, assuring him that he’s serious, and that’s all he needs. Yoongi starts out slow, rolling his hips forward carefully a couple times until he’s sure that Taehyung isn’t about to throw up on his dick, then he mentally kisses caution goodbye and goes back to listening to his instincts. The pace he sets is a little erratic from the start because he can’t quite believe he’s freely thrusting into someone’s mouth, one hand still in Taehyung’s hair to hold his head in place. Taehyung’s hands are back on Yoongi’s hips now, the touch light but Yoongi guesses he’s ready to push him back if he needs to. That’s fine with him. Right now, Kim Taehyung could set him on fire and he’d forgive him.

Sooner or later, one of the hands disappears, but Yoongi only vaguely notices because Taehyung makes a tiny sound and sends vibrations through his cock that have him gasping for air. He looks down and sees one of Taehyung’s shoulders move, piecing together in his foggy brain that he’s getting himself off on his own again. He can’t exactly help him this time though, can’t even tell him to wait two more minutes so Yoongi can pay him back, but Taehyung, again, doesn’t seem to mind. So Yoongi keeps shoving his hips forward, tip touching the back of Taehyung’s throat now and then which only seems to make Taehyung moan softly around him again, and there is no way Yoongi could have lasted any longer when he’s being like this. He tries to grit out a warning when he feels hot, familiar tension build up low in his stomach, but it only ends in a garbled string of whispered curses, though it seems enough to get the message across. Taehyung’s hand on Yoongi’s hip grips him harder suddenly and Yoongi forces himself with all his might to at least mostly still his movements, praying to any deity up there that Taehyung isn’t about to fucking tease him now, but Taehyung goes straight back to bobbing his head, properly sucking him off again until Yoongi sees stars.

He doubles over again, which is only the second time in his life that has happened, spills into Taehyung’s mouth with his hand still tight in his hair, only slowly relaxes his aching fingers when the last waves of pleasure ebb away. Yoongi can hear himself breathing raggedly, the synthetic wood of the door in front of him wet from all his gasps and sighs, and he pulls back, carefully, glad his knees aren’t actually as weak as they feel.
As he looks down, Taehyung has not only swallowed and licked his lips clean like it’s no big deal, he also has his own cum all over his hand and an ugly little stain on his sweater. Automatically, Yoongi reaches to the side and gifts him with a handful of toilet paper, combined with a look of disapproval.

“It’s fine,” Taehyung says quietly, reading him perfectly (Yoongi is luckily too high to find that disturbing). He cleans himself up and rises to his feet, swaying just a little, but grinning smugly at Yoongi. “You’ll suck me off next time, right?”

“I’ll suck you off in the theater,” Yoongi answers, voice deep and slightly unstable, but maybe that’s just fine for getting his point across. “Back row, see how quiet you can be with people in front of you trying to watch a movie.”

He watches heat flush Taehyung’s face, but his grin doesn’t waver one bit. “Another movie date, then,” he hums. “Cool.”

God fucking damn it.

“As long as you keep paying,” Yoongi shoots back, proud of himself for actually finding a comeback when his mind still feels like happy goo, and snags his back of popcorn off the toilet lid where he put it after dragging Taehyung in here. Taehyung just shrugs, which Yoongi chooses to take as a yes, and they’re silent for a few seconds, trying to hear if someone’s outside. It seems quiet though, so Yoongi opens the stall door and pushes past Taehyung, their chests unnecessarily close for a moment. “Thanks,” he says, vaguely. For the blowjob. He owes him that much.

Taehyung still doesn’t quite understand the entire concept that is Min Yoongi. He’s not sure what he thanked him for, but he’ll take it, because he has a feeling that Yoongi isn’t polite very often when he doesn’t happen to be talking to Taehyung’s parents. Everything he sometimes thinks he knows about Yoongi is based on feelings, really, and it’s a little disorienting. Taehyung has always been perceptive, he reads people, but there’s a lot to read about Yoongi and he’s not sure how to piece it all together. There’s this distance about him, he always seems a little far away, in the way that he doesn’t talk about himself much but also in the way that his gazes drift off a lot and he always seems to be in thought somehow, but Taehyung doesn’t know what he could be thinking about. Then, of course, there’s this sexual hunger that keeps appearing whenever they meet, and it seems untamed at first, but Taehyung has found out that it isn’t, because Yoongi is a very controlled person, he’s learned that much. There are soft looks in his eyes and the determination to let Taehyung know he doesn’t have to do anything he’d be uncomfortable with, but then there’s the growl in his voice telling him they can have a lot more sex in public goddamn places if Taehyung is on board with that.

And then there’s something else about him. Some kind of stubborn toughness, like he has to fight to feel okay, like it’s hard to be outside and on his own two feet sometimes, but he is fighting, and he doesn’t plan on stopping anytime soon. Taehyung is pretty sure he’s not supposed to notice that, but he’s seen it before, he’s seen it in the poor kids his father’s clan picks up off the street sometimes, he’s seen it in Jimin, he used to see it in himself. People get like this when something happened to them.

He doesn’t know what happened to Yoongi. But he knows that he doesn’t have any family left, and that he doesn’t have his own apartment or a lot of money, and he thinks that’s probably enough.

It’s just dizzying to think about, this complete artwork of a person, someone Taehyung just found incredibly cool the second they started skyping when he was still in Australia, with his casual air and dirty mouth, but there’s more about him. Of course there is. There’s always more about people, and it
makes it dizzying and fascinating to look at Yoongi, like a new biology book he doesn’t understand yet.

He doesn’t know why he keeps thinking about this while they’re on their way out of the cinema, his head still swimming from what he decided to do in that bathroom stall. He thinks it’s maybe not the best idea. To keep thinking about who Yoongi is, not the other thing. Blowing Yoongi in a public restroom was a great idea.

They walk to the subway station together, and Taehyung wonders if their goodbyes will be awkward, but Yoongi just waves at him lazily and says, “See you tomorrow.” It takes Taehyung a couple of seconds to remember that they’ve been going on midmorning Boop walks together every Tuesday. He fails at biting back a smile as Yoongi climbs into one train, and Taehyung into another.

[10:33]: Taetae spill how was the movie date
[10:45]: good. it was good
[10:45]: we fucked again
[10:45]: u cannot be SERIOUS
[10:46]: \_(Utc)/`
[10:46]: so jiminnie youre the expert what does that mean. we did go to the movies to fuck. still think hes into me??
[10:46]: You know what I have no idea anymore I just know you might have finally found someone whos as horny as you
[10:47]: Id tell you to try again just to see what happens
[10:47]: Just maybe dont give us any details this time Im not sure kookie would survive that
[10:47]: im already dead inside.

Taehyung thinks Jimin might have a point, both about Jungkook being a weenie and about trying again. So, that same week, he invites Yoongi into one of his favorite cafés, just to see what happens.

And what happens is that they end up giving each other handjobs in yet another public restroom.

(Taehyung finds it hard to not tell his group chat that this was the first time Yoongi has touched him like that, and it kind of feels like a little milestone.)
Yoongi and Hoseok talk. Then, Yoongi and Taehyung talk. Yoongi talks a lot more than he ever planned to talk.

Warning: csa is briefly brought up in the first part of this chapter, then there's alcohol and weed in the second part, and underage drinking for Jungkook. Did I say there was going to be plot in this chapter?? Sweats... this is kind of an info dump-y chapter, actually, and its 10k words for some reason (??), so if anything is too much or not understandable, feel free to let me know. Some things are still undisclosed for reasons, but I don't want you guys to be completely confused, and I honestly have no idea how comprehensible this whole thing is. I just know it was super tough to write so just... just take it. Idk

“Hoseok,” Yoongi says, the second Hoseok leaves his bedroom, phone still in his hand, chat window with Taehyung still opened. “I have a job interview at the radio station next week.”

Hoseok stops dead in his tracks, stares at him, lets his mouth fall open. “Holy shit,” he says, and then he moves, flinging himself at the couch to tackle Yoongi, his arms flying around his shoulders and Yoongi doesn’t even kick him away. He just bounces to the side a little, laughing, patting Hoseok’s shoulder as Hoseok babbles congratulations at him. “I’m so happy for you, man. And, you know, they’ll love you. Everyone always loves you. You’ll get your dream job, I know it.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Yoongi adjusts his shirt as Hoseok moves off of him again, still right next to him and beaming though. “I’m optimistic, too. Also, I mean don’t take this the wrong way, but if I get the job I’ll finally get my own apartment again. Free your couch. I know you’ve been waiting to show your bedroom to a certain Park Jimin.”

“What, you think I’m not bringing any boys home just because you’re sleeping on the couch?” Hoseok says, grinning, right before he nods. “But yeah, sure. Don’t take this the wrong way either, but I’ll be happy once you get your own place. You need it. I can give you one of my duckies, so you won’t be too alone there, how about that.”

“Oh, you’re too generous.” Yoongi snorts, not mentioning the fact that Hoseok really hasn’t been bringing any boys home and he’s pretty sure it is because his ex-boyfriend is sleeping on his couch. “How have things been going with you and Jimin, anyway?”

Hoseok shrugs. “Good, I think. Pretty good. I’m not sure where exactly we’re going, but we’re sure going somewhere. Also, his flatmate hates me.”

“Taehyung pretty much said Jungkook hates everyone that might be getting it on with his friends,” Yoongi says to that, patting Hoseok on the back. “So don’t worry about that. Hell, maybe it’s a good
“Is that so?” Hoseok grins at him. “What does he think about you, then? Fake getting it on with his friend? Does he hate you too?”

For a second, Yoongi just looks at him, and he thinks that maybe answers Hoseok’s question already because Hoseok reads him like an open book, but of course he still has to say it. For good measure. “We’re not fake getting it on. Actually, the getting it on part is pretty damn real. Real enough to make Jungkook hate me, yes.”

Hoseok sucks in a loud, exaggerated gasp. “I can’t believe you’re reallife-fucking your fake-boyfriend. Is that what’s been happening on those weird dates you guys have been staging?”

“Yep,” Yoongi says, not even trying to not sound smug. “Five times, now.”

“Ah, yes. Welcome to Min Yoongi’s libido.”

Yoongi only grins to that, shrugging. Actually, Hoseok was the victim of Yoongi’s first excursions to semi-public places -- they stopped again soon because Hoseok didn’t like it and Yoongi respected that, but they had a whole lot of sex in other, safer places instead. Hoseok once told him he’s had more sex with Yoongi than with any other boyfriends combined, and they hadn’t even been together that long at that point. Yoongi is sort of glad they can still laugh about it even now that they both know where that came from.

Hoseok’s face gets soft again soon though. “He’s been doing you good,” he says gently.


With a groan, Hoseok rolls his eyes, and Yoongi snorts happily to himself because that was a fantastic joke and he wasn’t deflecting that statement at all, and Hoseok definitely would have said the same stupid damn thing if their roles were reversed, so he’s got no business looking at him like that.

Still, he offers another shrug, because maybe he does feel like he has to clear something up. “It’s just sex.”

“Oh, don’t worry,” says Hoseok, waving a hand around. “I wasn’t accusing you of having romantic feelings. God forbid.”

“Good, because I’m not having any. Towards anyone.”

“Subtle.” Hoseok laughs, easing the weird feeling in Yoongi’s stomach that just settled there thanks to this horrible conversation topic, but his next words almost get rid of it completely. “I’m not having any romantic feelings towards you anymore either.”

“Thank fuck,” Yoongi says heartily, which might not have been the most tactful thing to say, but Hoseok still seems mostly amused so that’s good.

“Yeah, glad we got that cleared up.” Hoseok leans sideways against Yoongi’s shoulder now, both of them looking at the black TV screen and not at each other, which helps a lot. “We should still talk though.”

Yoongi makes an unhappy noise at the back of his throat, even though he was the one to initially suggest that. They need to talk, they do, so he’s not saying anything against it, but he just really doesn’t want to. He doesn’t even know where to start.
Hoseok does, though. “I’m sorry about all the shit I said.”

It’s soft, quiet, but Yoongi knows that it’s sincere, and it’s almost enough to make him cry already. He hates talking about things. “I’m sorry too,” he says to his hands. “I freaked out at you, and you didn’t deserve that. I know I made you feel like you did, but that’s bullshit. You did all you could to help me, I know that, and it’s not your fault that I didn’t get any better. You were my boyfriend, not my therapist, and I expected more from you than anyone should have to do for their partner, and that was unfair.”

He’s mumbling by the time he finishes, watching his fingers pick at each other, ignoring the cold feeling down his back. He means it, he really does. He just hates saying it.

“You didn’t have to fix me,” Yoongi says quietly. “And it was shitty of me to want you to fix me. That wasn’t your job and it fucked us both up. Even more than we already were.”

The sigh Hoseok heaves comes with a hopeless little laugh. “Yeah, I guess it did. I’m… I’m still glad you didn’t end up hating me for it all. I mean, like, while you were gone I sort of figured out that maybe I wasn’t completely at fault here, that maybe we’re both to blame, but. When Seokjin and Namjoon told me you were coming back, I was absolutely sure you were still gonna hate me for telling you I couldn’t be with you like that, and for just… for not being there for you when you needed me.”

Yoongi closes his eyes and lets his head drop on Hoseok’s shoulder. “I have never hated you in my entire life.”

“Okay.” Hoseok laughs softly, then he snakes an arm around Yoongi. “I’m still sorry I said all that, though.”

“I know,” Yoongi says quietly. “And I forgive you. It hurt, back then, I’ll admit that, but we were both being shithheads and I forgive you. I’m sorry I called you a horrible boyfriend. You were really good, actually. I was just having a shit time.”

“A shit time,” Hoseok echoes, breath huffing quietly through Yoongi’s hair. “Yeah, that’s one way to describe it.”

“I mean,” Yoongi pulls his feet on the couch, fingers playing idly with the fabric of Hoseok’s shirt now as he decides that this is as good a time as any to recap. “Mom was dead, dad got sick and decided it was a good idea to move into his son’s apartment to get better even though he knew I couldn’t fucking stand him, and I had to play his nurse while I remembered, out of nowhere, that he used to molest me as a kid. I don’t know what else to call it, Hoseok. It was a shit time.”

For a good few seconds, Hoseok is very quiet, and Yoongi thinks that maybe he might have overdone it with the deadpan voice and the downplaying of the hell he went through when his father fell sick. It only got a tiny bit easier when his father got worse instead of better and Yoongi put him in the retirement home instead, finally getting his apartment to himself again. He still had to deal with those formerly repressed memories that had come back to him, memories of his father touching him when he was little, and he didn’t even know what was worse, the memories themselves, or the horribly disorienting thought that he had gone through his entire life without even knowing about it. Yoongi had forgotten about it completely, right until the moment his father showed up in his
apartment and demanded to be nursed back to health by him because that’s what you do for family, and it fucked him up. It fucked him up big time.

He told Hoseok about that part, at least. What he never told him, and what he’s still not about to tell him, is that maybe Yoongi might have had a hand in the fact that his dad got worse and had to go somewhere else. But that’s not as important. That might have messed him up even more, in a way, but it was also disturbingly satisfying and he’s keeping it to himself.

Hoseok’s voice is still low when he speaks again, but also very clear. “I am so glad your dad is dead.”

Yoongi lets out a laugh. He twists a little to look up at Hoseok, who’s looking back at him with complete sincerity, and turns back to press his face into his shoulder. “Me too,” he says. “I haven’t felt sad about it even once. It’s… It made me feel so much better.”

Hoseok hums softly, squeezing Yoongi’s shoulder a little. Maybe talking isn’t all that bad. “What about the rest? Your trip? Did that help you?”

“Yes, mostly.” Yoongi shrugs lightly. “I went to counseling here and there. For-- for survivors. That was good, most of the time. And I saw a lot of cool stuff and gave myself time to think about things. Like what I’m gonna say when we meet again. Didn’t really think it’d play out like this.”

They both laugh, quietly. Yoongi can feel the laugh vibrate through Hoseok’s body. It’s nice.

“You were wrong, then,” Hoseok says. “When you said we weren’t going to be able to have any sort of relationship again. We can still be really good, really fucked up friends.”

“I was wrong about a lot of things I said.”

Hoseok doesn’t say anything to that. He kisses Yoongi’s head, though, and that’s good enough.

It feels like they really do go back to their old selves after that. Their old selves from before they dated. Yoongi first got to know Hoseok in high school after he and his family moved from Daegu to Seoul, and they were best friends from day one, quite literally. Yoongi still doesn’t know how Hoseok did that. Yoongi doesn’t work like that, usually, but he did with Hoseok.

Hoseok’s parents weren’t the same caliber of bad as Yoongi’s parents were, but they still sucked. Yoongi thinks they also still suck today, though Hoseok has been getting along with them better ever since he has his own apartment. Back during their college days, Yoongi roomed with Seokjin, and Hoseok kept coming over to escape from his parents. Then Hoseok got his place and Yoongi was the one who kept coming over, to be his boyfriend. But whether platonic or romantic, their entire relationship was built up on being comfortable with each other because they shared everything, and they knew how hard life had been for the other, and while they spent half their time having fun, cracking terrible jokes and geeking out about music, they spent the other half shittalking their parents and being really fucking bitter together, and it felt amazing.

So, they’re doing it again. It makes everything a lot easier, gets rid of the uncomfortable feeling in their stomachs after the accidental makeout session on the couch happened, makes Yoongi feel like this is just some really long sleepover and he’s not being a burden by staying for so long. Hoseok is in his last year of college, with that and the two jobs he’s working he tends to get a little stressed out, and he says it’s nice to have Yoongi around to help him relax now and then. They help each other take the edge off, which, again, is something they’ve been doing for years.
It feels even more like Yoongi’s back in his college days when they actually get invited to a student party. Hoseok and Namjoon get invited because they actually still go to college, Seokjin wants to tag along because his friends are there, and Yoongi was already waiting for them to sweettalk him into it too, but as it turns out, Taehyung is quicker than them.

He’s going with his two best friends, of course, and Yoongi sort of dreads to see what they’re like at a party. He did get to know both Jimin and Jungkook at a party in a club, but those were just one or two short, tipsy talks they had and Jimin scrawling his number on Yoongi’s hand. (It feels oddly long ago somehow.) They’re not on a mission this time, and they have Taehyung with them, and Yoongi is already expecting them to be really loud and really drunk. Then again, that’s precisely what Seokjin is going to be like too. Hoseok isn’t going to be drunk because he’s going to be high instead, and Namjoon might join in on that, might even mix it with booze too and then spend half the evening vomiting his soul out because he doesn’t learn from his mistakes.

Yoongi isn’t sure what he himself is going to do. He also finds it hard to predict what Taehyung is going to be like -- sober, hammered, or high --, but what they both know is that they’re going to be amazing actors once again. After Taehyung subtly told him that there’s a party he wants to go to, and Yoongi subtly told him he might be there too, they concluded that they were going to have to act like a couple there too, if they want to be thorough with their story.

He hasn’t told Seokjin and Namjoon about it.

He’s going to act like he’s been dating Kim Taehyung for months in front of two of his oldest friends, just to see how it plays out.

In the end, if they look through him, it won’t be that bad. He assured Taehyung of that, too, since he seems way more nervous about it than Yoongi himself. If they get busted, Yoongi can explain the whole thing and they’ll laugh it off, it’s not like Seokjin and Namjoon haven’t seen him do weirder things. But for now, he wants to try deceiving them, just because he wants to test his own acting abilities. Fooling Taehyung’s parents was way easier than he’d thought, so now it’s time to fool the self-proclaimed parents of his own friend group.

Taehyung has checked his phone so often now, it’s actually starting to embarrass him a little. And he doesn’t get embarrassed easily, it’s just that he’s kind of excited for this party for multiple reasons, and he’s glad to finally have a message from Yoongi telling him that he and his friends are, in fact, already there.

It’s not surprising – Taehyung, Jimin and Jungkook are late. Jimin took a long time preparing, stressing over what to wear and how much effort he should put into his hair, because he doesn’t want it to look like he put effort into it, but it does have to look good, so that’s a difficult balance to achieve. He’s not usually like this – Jimin used to be self-conscious about his looks, but Taehyung and Jungkook can proudly say that they got rid of that. Sometimes he just falls back into old habits, when he’s into someone. He wants to look his best tonight because Hoseok is there, and Jimin keeps talking about how they might finally end up making out, a prospect that makes him giddy with grins and giggles, but also painfully nervous. In the end, he chose to wear his packer, like almost always, but also dove into lengthy discussions with Taehyung and Jungkook about what exactly to say to Hoseok if they actually go under each other’s clothes sometime soon and Hoseok finds out that there’s no actual penis there once Jimin’s pants are down.

Taehyung can’t imagine that Hoseok would mind. He doesn’t know him very well, of course, but he seems really chill about most things. He works at an LGBT club, that should count for something, right? Taehyung hopes so. Plus, Yoongi likes him a lot, and he kind of wants to believe that must
make Hoseok a really good person too.

Also, the last guy that reacted negatively to Jimin’s gender identity got a fistful of Jeon Jungkook’s unbridled rage, so there’s always that.

“They’re already there,” Taehyung reports, phone still in his hand.

“Yeah, Hoseok just texted me, too,” says Jimin, in exactly the same pose, and they gracefully ignore the way Jungkook rolls his eyes at them both.

“And Namjoon and Seokjin are there with them,” Taehyung reads. That seems to get Jungkook’s attention, squinting at him over his shoulder (they’re in the right street already, and Jungkook is walking slightly in front of them so he can let them know just how much he disapproves of his best friends seeing other boys tonight).

“Seokjin? Seokjin like my business tutor?”

Taehyung just shrugs. There’s enough guys named Seokjin, probably. He hasn’t seen Yoongi’s Seokjin yet, and he doesn’t know if he’d tutor unenthusiastic business students, thinks it’d probably be too much of a coincidence until Jungkook gasps loudly and turns around to stare at Jimin while walking backwards.

“Shit, wasn’t he with Yoongi in that club in Itaewon when we first talked to him? Didn’t I tell you that I thought I saw him briefly? I kinda thought I was hallucinating or something, seeing my tutor in a gay club during break, but I did tell you, didn’t I?”

“Dude, I have no idea.” Jimin shrugs. “All I remember about that night is Yoongi scaring me shitless and you giving me a piggyback ride home.”

Jungkook rolls his eyes at him again. “Useless,” he says, turning to face forwards again and acting like he didn’t stumble briefly when Jimin tries to trip him. “I hope it’s not him. I don’t think I want to party with my business tutor.”

As it turns out, Jungkook is going to have to bite the bullet and party with his business tutor. The poor apartment of whoever is hosting this party (Taehyung has honestly forgotten his name, just knows that he keeps liking his Facebook posts about Australia) is packed with people already, it’s warm and the air feels sticky with breath, sweat and music thumping through the entire room, but they have no trouble finding the others. Hoseok’s voice floats through to them loudly, Jimin leading the way while Hoseok is telling some sort of story Taehyung doesn’t really understand a word of, and they reach the group of four just in time for Taehyung to catch a glimpse of what he’s pretty sure is Min Yoongi giggling into a plastic cup.

“Oh, hey! There you are!” Hoseok chirps, rushing over to greet Jimin with a hug that lasts way longer than necessary. Jungkook and Seokjin just sort of blink at each other, and Yoongi seizes the moment to reach out with his free hand and pull Taehyung towards him by his wrist, putting the arm around him once he’s close enough, under Namjoon’s curious gaze.

“Hey,” Yoongi says quietly, close to Taehyung’s ear, the sound doing something to him he’s not ready to admit to himself. “You good?”

“I’m fine,” Taehyung smiles automatically, because they’re in public and thus boyfriends, one of his hands already clinging to the back of Yoongi’s shirt. He’s actually pretty sure, now that he’s having a closer look, that this is the first time he’s seeing Yoongi wear nothing but a shirt, no hoodie or anything. He’s not certain why exactly he finds it as hot as he does. “You?”
Yoongi just nods, and then he turns towards Seokjin and Namjoon, probably to introduce Taehyung to them, but Seokjin is busy grabbing Jungkook by the shoulders and maneuvering him around to present him to Namjoon, because suddenly they’re all busy introducing someone to someone.

“Meet Jungkook! The student I’ve been telling you about. Jungkook, this is Namjoon, Hoseok, Yoongi--”

“I know Yoongi and Hoseok,” Jungkook says, looking like he’s trying hard to keep it together.

“You do? Oh, because Jimin knows Hoseok, right? Hi, Jimin. And you must be Taehyung.”

Taehyung can’t but grin as he greets Seokjin, who’s still holding onto a sourly looking Jungkook. “Has he talked about me?”

“He talks more about you and Jimin than he talks about business,” Seokjin says with a dramatic sigh.

“I should have figured everyone already sort of knows each other,” Yoongi says dryly, saving Jungkook before he can start crying. His arm is still around Taehyung’s waist, and it tightens a little as he goes on. “So I guess that means I don’t have to introduce anyone to my boyfriend.”

Namjoon chokes on his drink. “Your what?” he somehow gets out, Seokjin letting go of Jungkook to pat his back as he coughs.

“Do I have to explain to you what a boyfriend is?” Yoongi says. Taehyung can feel his own heartbeat in his throat with both Namjoon and Seokjin now staring at them, and he sort of wishes he could have gone and get his own drink first.

“What you have to explain,” says Seokjin, and Taehyung thinks he must be incredibly brave as he just reaches out and pokes Yoongi’s chest with one finger, “is when this happened. I saw you two days ago and you mentioned nothing.”

“Uh, it’s been,” Yoongi says, shooting Taehyung a pensive glance, “what, eight, nine months now? No, eight. We met before he went to Australia.”


“I was,” Yoongi says without missing a beat. Taehyung’s pulse is still quicker than he’d like it to be - Yoongi still hasn’t told him where he went on his trip or why, they haven’t exactly talked this through, but apparently Yoongi knows what he’s doing. “I was in Seoul for a short while. You know I didn’t always tell you where I am. Shit, I didn’t even tell you when I came back last month, you just went Sherlock Holmes on me and analyzed my selfies, remember?”

“Huh,” is Namjoon’s only answer to that, though he does seem to believe Yoongi. He just looks really baffled.

“Anyway, it was two weeks or so, enough for this asshole to seduce me,” Yoongi continues. Oh, that’s better.

“Excuse me,” Taehyung says, glad for the opening to bring himself into the conversation and not just stand by nervously. “You seduced me. You definitely had your hands down my pants first.”

“Ew, here they go again,” Jungkook chimes in, and Taehyung forces himself to not shoot him a surprised look, because is he helping them? It looks like he is. Taehyung loves him. “Come on, Jimin, let’s go get drinks. We’ll get Tae something too. Something really gross.”
“Thanks!” Taehyung calls after them, letting it sound sarcastic for show even though he actually is incredibly thankful for whatever the hell that was.

He and Jimin disappear giggling in the crowd, and as Taehyung turns back, Yoongi and Seokjin are having a reproachful stare-off. “So, everyone knew?” Seokjin asks, and Taehyung thinks he might actually sound a little hurt this time.

“He wasn’t gonna tell me either,” Hoseok says from where he’s leaning against the wall watching them all. Taehyung guesses that means he’s on their side, too. “I just sort of found out. Was kinda hard to miss with how much he was on his phone at home.”

“Yeah, only Taehyung’s friends have known about it for a bit longer,” says Yoongi, shooting him a mock-exasperated look. “Because he can’t keep his mouth shut. I wanted to wait with telling you guys until he’s back from Australia, see if we still work out when we’re actually both in the same city at the same time, and so on.”

For a second, Namjoon and Seokjin just look at both of them, like they’re expecting something. Taehyung clears his throat. “We do.”

Yoongi nods. “Yeah. So this is me, telling you. I’m sorry Hoseok found out before you guys, blame his nosy ass, not me. Will you stop looking at me like that now?”

Both Namjoon and Seokjin continue looking at him like that, but only for a few more moments. Then, Seokjin’s eyes soften considerably, because he’s turning towards Taehyung. “Well!” he says, and Taehyung briefly wonders if he should be scared. “In that case, Taehyung, welcome to the family.”

“Oh my god,” Yoongi says immediately, “don’t you dare, Seokjin. He’s got his own parents. You do not have to be his dad, too.”

“At the very least, I am his father-in-law, and he will have to deal with that. We should go eat together, the four of us!” he says, gesturing vaguely towards Namjoon, and Taehyung wonders if they’re maybe together? Yoongi hasn’t said anything about that though, so he’s not sure.

Next to him, Yoongi snorts quietly and moves his hand from Taehyung’s waist to pat his back instead. “Sorry, I never prepared you for dinner with my parents.”

Seokjin, obviously entirely unfazed by whatever Yoongi says, gasps loudly. “I could have you as a guest in my show! I bet you’d look great on camera.”

“Your show?” Taehyung echoes, cursing himself for it afterwards, because he’s pretty sure Yoongi just said something like He does very quietly, but now he thinks he might have imagined it. “You have a show?”

“He’s YouTube famous,” Namjoon says finally, straightening himself up a little next to Seokjin, looking proud.

“He eats,” says Hoseok. “He literally quit grad school because he’s making an unreasonable amount of money by filming himself while he eats and putting it on YouTube.”

“Envy is a sin, Hoseok,” Seokjin sighs, then he flips a strand of imaginary hair off his shoulder. “I’m also successful because I’m really pretty.”

“Who’s pretty?” Jimin asks the second he and Jungkook show up again, shoving a plastic cup that smells like alcohol and something sweet into Taehyung’s hand.
“You’re pretty,” Hoseok says without a second of hesitation, and both Taehyung and Jungkook turn to watch Jimin’s face grow several shades darker.

Namjoon is the first to start laughing quietly about Hoseok’s move, and they all gradually join in after that. Well, everyone except for Hoseok, and Jimin, because they’re busy standing very close to each other and looking into each other’s eyes, so yeah, they’re just gonna leave them be for now.

“So you all know each other from school, like Yoongi and Hoseok?” Taehyung asks, trying to seize the opportunity and find out more about Yoongi’s social circle, because that’s still one of many mysteries to him.

“College,” says Namjoon. “Seokjin and Yoongi were roommates, I lived just down the hallway.”

“Ohhh.” Taehyung flashes Yoongi a grin. “I wonder what you were like in college.”

“Drunk, mostly,” Yoongi says before anyone else can give Taehyung any actual information. It seems to catch Hoseok’s attention, who leans forward, past Jimin and towards Yoongi, giggling.

“Remember when,” he starts, and Taehyung can’t fucking hear the rest even though he would really like to, but Hoseok is too close to Yoongi’s other side now, murmuring some sort of college memory into his ear that’s completely lost in the music of the party, and then, something weird happens.

Yoongi laughs.

It’s not one of those breathy snorts he does, no quiet chuckle huffed into a scarf either, it’s a full-on, open-mouthed laugh. Taehyung isn’t sure if it’s loud, against the music it doesn’t seem like it is, but it’s so much more than what he’s used to, more than he’s ever seen from Yoongi, and it catches him off guard so much that he can’t help but stare. Yoongi’s body sort of folds in half in a way he’s only seen it do during sex, and he sees teeth, and he sees gums, and it’s… it’s happy. For those few seconds, Yoongi looks genuinely happy, and Taehyung realizes with a start that this really, truly is the first time he’s seen him like that.

The beautiful moment is over too soon, Yoongi wipes one of his eyes with his free hand and giggles off the aftershocks, which is still enough to make Taehyung feel like he’s in some sort of parallel universe. “What?” he finally finds the nerve to ask quietly, trying to meet Yoongi’s gaze. “What’d he say?”

“Oh,” Yoongi says, straightening up again with a last, quiet little laugh. “Eight months is not nearly enough to unlock that story.”

Immediately, Taehyung pouts at him, but Hoseok leans into his line of vision (Taehyung notices Jimin clinging to his side now, and Jungkook clinging to Jimin’s other side), throwing him a brave, shit-eating grin. “Don’t worry, Taetae. I’ll make him talk.”

Taehyung blinks. He doesn’t know what that means. “You will?”

“Hoseok brought weed,” Yoongi just says, making Namjoon shuffle closer immediately.

“Makes him talkative,” Hoseok says with a wink. “And cuddly. Stoned Yoongi is the best Yoongi.”

“I’ll stone you if you leave me unsupervised,” Yoongi says, dryly of course, cool as always, but Taehyung can’t help but notice that there is definitely some level of sincerity to that request. Like he really wants someone around to make sure he doesn’t actually get too talkative.

Someone like his ex-boyfriend, who can make him laugh in a way Taehyung never would have
thought possible, someone he probably has talked to. About real stuff, not about the shallow things he occasionally grunts answers to when he’s outside with Taehyung and his dog.

Someone he trusts.

Taehyung feels something tug at his stomach; he isn’t jealous in the way possessive boyfriends get jealous, doesn’t feel scared that Yoongi might break their deal to elope with Hoseok or anything, not with Jimin glued to Hoseok and Yoongi obviously not caring much about it. He envies Hoseok, for his ability to turn Yoongi into this other sort of person, this happier person. Someone who laughs and talks about things, who doesn’t seem like a constant grumpy riddle.

Thankfully, Jungkook distracts him. Fed up with playing the seventh wheel, he shows up behind Taehyung with his chin on his shoulder, whining into his ear about wanting to dance, so Yoongi lets go of his waist and pats his hip instead, making Taehyung feel a little too warm. “Go dance,” he says. “We’ll stay here, you’ll find us again.”

Apparently, we just means Yoongi and Seokjin. Occasionally, Taehyung still catches a glimpse of them leaning against the wall, talking (sending another pang of envy through him, because Yoongi actually seems to be talking too, not just Seokjin), but everyone else sooner or later ends up on the makeshift dance floor in somebody’s living room. It starts with only him and Jungkook, but Jimin joins them soon, dragging Hoseok along, ending in a happy mess of hip rolls and grinding.

Taehyung has missed this, letting loose with his friends in dimly lit rooms with mediocre music, never completely sure whose pelvis he’s grabbing right now, and Hoseok is a nice addition, fitting right into their sloppy dance routine, so well it doesn’t even seem to bother Jungkook. By the time Namjoon joins, someone has spilled their beer on Taehyung’s foot and he’s on his second drink himself, still unsure what his friends got him there but sure it’s stronger than he thought, and now it’s less sexy dance moves and more tipsy jumping, clinging to his friends or to Yoongi’s, he doesn’t really care anymore because everyone seems to get along and it’s fun and harmonic and exactly what he needed.

Eventually, the five of them tumble to a halt in front of Yoongi and Seokjin again, everyone except for Hoseok stumbling somewhere between tipsy and drunk, sticky with sweat and spilled drinks, leaning into each other. Taehyung has no idea what’s about to happen next, but the older four exchange a bunch of meaningful looks, and next thing he knows, everyone is holding someone’s hand. Taehyung himself is stuck between Yoongi and Jimin, which is good, nice, and he doesn’t know where they’re going like this until he notices Hoseok leading the way and saying something about a rooftop terrace.

Fresh air sounds nice, though Taehyung quickly notices it already smells like weed up here even before Hoseok gets out his stuff. Two smaller groups of people are already here, sitting on the floor several feet away from them, small puffs of smoke occasionally rising up into the air from between them. Nobody pays them any mind though, since they’re suddenly all very busy trying to sit on the floor without falling over. Yoongi and Hoseok are the only sober ones at this point, and they’re just standing by laughing at them while Jimin sort of ends up sprawled over both Jungkook’s and Taehyung’s laps, Seokjin is leaning into Taehyung’s shoulder, and Namjoon is just flat out laying on the floor with one hand holding onto Seokjin’s sweater like he’s still scared he might fall over somehow.

“Woo, boy,” Namjoon says. “Remind me to drink less next time.”

“We always remind you to drink less next time, and you never listen to us,” says Seokjin, sounding gentle, but way louder than necessary. “Also, just so you know, I’m not taking you home tonight if you end up barfing off this roof.”
Namjoon lets out an undignified giggle at that, rolling on his side to squint into the direction of the edge, then he shrugs vaguely with the one shoulder not pressed to the floor. “I’ll puke somewhere else, then.”

“Sure, knock yourself out,” Seokjin slurs. Taehyung is still busy with thinking about how funny he finds them all and now nice it is that Yoongi has such good friends, when he realizes that Yoongi is sitting directly across from him now, very close. They’re all very close to each other, really, but Yoongi is so close, to him, and it’s distracting.

Distracting enough that he only realizes they’ve already started when Yoongi’s fingers close around a joint Hoseok gives him, and raise it to his lips. Very distracting.

He watches Yoongi’s eyes fall shut after inhaling, keeping it in his mouth a little, then he cant’s his head back and breathes out slowly. Taehyung can’t even watch the smoke float upwards, because he’s too busy watching his throat instead. There’s still a faint mark there from their last “coffee date”, and Taehyung suddenly finds it hard to resist the urge to lean forwards and leave one or two more.

“Who else wants some?” Yoongi asks, voice sounding rougher already, reminding Taehyung that they’re not alone here.

“Meee,” Namjoon chants immediately. He stretches one arm out towards Yoongi, who hands him the joint, the rest stays quiet. Jimin seems vaguely interested, but on the other hand not too motivated to get up from their laps. Taehyung didn’t particularly enjoy the few times he’s tried weed in Australia, and Jungkook is entirely too drunk and, luckily, knows it. Seokjin seems the same, still resting his cheek on Taehyung’s shoulder, so it stays between Namjoon, Yoongi and Hoseok.

They sit like this for a while, the music from the party still thumping up to them very softly, telling stories. Taehyung, of course, wants to hear everything about Yoongi’s college times, and he does share at least a few, quiet anecdotes, about parties they threw, about the time he and Hoseok and Namjoon ended up rap battling each other and how to this day, they can’t agree on who won. Seokjin talks loudly about how all three of them wore skirts for an entire week and nobody remembers why, then Namjoon glances at Taehyung and asks if he knows that Yoongi was an extremely good student, and that it still baffles them all. Yoongi goes very quiet at that and fiddles with his hands, so Taehyung guesses Namjoon won’t doubt him if he says he had no idea.

Taehyung shares stories about Australian wildlife and Australian college parties, Jungkook starts singing at some point, while constantly petting Jimin’s hair, and it looks like Jimin is drifting off to sleep. Until, that is, Hoseok ends his tirade about dance students to eye him instead, twisting a joint in his fingers. It’s their third, by now, and maybe Jimin has been eyeing him back.

“You sure you don’t wanna try?” says Hoseok.

“That gets a few amused Ohhhs from Seokjin and Taehyung, a groan from Jungkook, and a borderline predatory gaze from Hoseok, motioning for him to move with one hand. “C’mere, then.”

Politely, the rest of them give the two some room to do their thing. For a few minutes, it’s just Yoongi and Jungkook calmly discussing the role of autotune in modern music, and Taehyung, Seokjin and Namjoon giggling about it because both are so obviously wasted, and also to drown out the noises from behind them, Hoseok and Jimin doing something that definitely doesn’t count as shotgunning anymore. Then, Hoseok shows up in their line of vision again to shove the joint into Yoongi’s hands and grin at them all. “We’ll, uh, be back later.”
“Have fun,” Yoongi says dryly, taking another drag.

“Use protection!” Seokjin calls after them, even though they’re not even that far gone yet, and Jungkook and Taehyung still have time to peer over at Jimin. But he seems happy, a little nervous maybe but that’s hardly surprising, so they both shoot him a wide grin and let him go.

Namjoon slams his hand flat to the floor barely two seconds after they’ve disappeared on the stairwell, and finally sits back up. “I wanna dance,” he announces. “I’m not lying around on a rooftop while Hoseok’s getting it on. Someone come dance with me.”

“I’ll go,” Jungkook says immediately, struggling a little to get back on his feet. One of his hands ends up heavy on Taehyung’s shoulder to steady himself, but he gets there eventually. His other shoulder is free suddenly, with Seokjin inelegantly pushing himself up too.

“Me too,” he says, extending one hand towards Yoongi and Taehyung. “Yoongi, come on. We haven’t danced at all tonight.”

But Yoongi doesn’t even look up. Yoongi’s eyes are fixed on Taehyung, now that everyone is suddenly getting up and both their butts are still attached firmly to the floor, and Taehyung understands that he has absolutely no intention of getting up and dancing anytime soon. His gaze is heavy, making Taehyung swallow quietly, and also making Seokjin snort and shake his head.

“Okay, fine. You two use protection, too.”

Jungkook squeezes Taehyung’s shoulder very firmly, then the three of them leave, with Taehyung staring after them. Okay. Maybe it’s just his slightly tipsy brain, but it feels like everything just happened very quickly, and now all of a sudden he’s alone with Yoongi on a rooftop, in the middle of the night, joint still smoldering softly between his fingers.

When he looks back into his face, there’s a content smile on his lips, like he was just waiting for everyone to leave, and the hunger Taehyung knows so well by now is back in his eyes. He doesn’t do what Taehyung half-expects him to do though, doesn’t tackle him or lean in for a heated kiss or something like that. He just shuffles around on the floor a little, rearranges himself completely wordlessly until he’s lying on his back, hands folded neatly on his stomach, head resting on Taehyung’s lap.

Oh.

He looks soft, hair falling into his eyes, looking up at him with that weirdly content smile still on his pretty lips. Taehyung looks down at him, unable to hide his surprise at this course of events, then Yoongi unfolds his hands again to take another drag, joint slowly dying between his fingers. His chest expands softly, Taehyung can see it under the one layer of fabric he’s wearing today, and he frowns.

“Aren’t you cold?” Taehyung asks quietly.

“Nah, I’m always warm when I smoke.” Yoongi shrugs, his shoulders bumping into Taehyung’s thighs. “I dunno why.”

Taehyung thinks he should probably know how to answer that, concerning biochemical messengers and bodily responses, but he’s a little bit drunk and doesn’t really care right now, he just cares about how it’s still March and past sundown and Yoongi’s wearing nothing but a shirt.

“I can give you my sweater, if you want. You can’t get sick now, your job interview’s the day after tomorrow.”
Yoongi snorts. “I know, it’s fine.” He looks back up at Taehyung now, frowning softly but also still smiling, and then he shakes his head. “God,” he says, “you’re so nice.”

Taehyung doesn’t know how to respond to that. No one has really said that to him before, not like this at least. It sounds a little like an accusation, but also like Yoongi is genuinely surprised by the fact that Taehyung doesn’t want him to catch a cold, like he doesn’t understand that he cares about him. Which is kind of sad if Taehyung thinks about it like that, so he’s glad when Yoongi distracts him by shifting around on his lap, turning his head to blatantly stare at Taehyung’s crotch. He glances back into his face briefly, then back to his crotch, then he huffs a quiet laugh and closes his eyes.

“I forgot how horny weed makes me.”

Taehyung’s hand was halfway to Yoongi’s hair, but he quietly pulls it back now. He just offers a tentative grin instead. “You’re always horny.”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, turning his face away from Taehyung’s pants again. “It’s a coping mechanism.”

Taehyung blinks. That’s one weird piece of information to share with him, especially detached like that. He’s been sensing that there’s something Yoongi has trouble coping with, or is at least working very hard to get over, but he doesn’t know what it is. Now he knows he uses sex for coping, but that doesn’t really help him a lot. He still doesn’t know what’s bothering Yoongi so much, he just knows that apparently, sex helps. Or at least he hopes it does.

“Do you think those people over there would mind if I sucked you off here?” Yoongi asks airily. His eyes are closed, but Taehyung shoots the other small groups of people a quick glance, even though he already knows his answer.

“I would mind,” he says softly.

“What.” Yoongi opens his eyes to frown, almost glare, at him. “I give good blowjobs.”

“You do,” Taehyung laughs, a little helplessly, “but you just said you’re horny because you’re high, and I don’t want to take advantage of that.”

Yoongi utters a soft Oh, then he rolls his eyes at him before letting them fall shut again, halfheartedly trying to stifle a laugh. “See,” he just says. “So nice.” Taehyung kind of wants to tell him that really, that’s just basic human decency, but Yoongi is already shaking his head to go on. “You know why? ‘Cause your parents are nice, too. Nice parents raise nice kids. Your whole family is just so goddamn nice, it’s, like, the nicest family I’ve ever seen. Your parents love you so much? And they’re loaded. They’re basically perfect.”

That must be the talkative Yoongi Hoseok mentioned earlier. Sprawled out on the floor with his head on Taehyung’s lap, without Hoseok’s supervision like he wanted. Taehyung wonders where this will end.

“My parents aren’t perfect,” he says quietly, but with a smile. They are good, and he loves them. But they’re not perfect. Yoongi has no idea what they’re like beneath the surface, and he’s not supposed to find out, ever.

“They are compared to mine,” Yoongi says matter-of-factly.

Taehyung frowns. Up until just now, he thought Yoongi doesn’t like talking about his family because they’re dead. He’d never considered that it might also be because they weren’t good to him.
“Were they bad?” he asks, already feeling nervousness tug at his stomach.

“Horrible,” Yoongi says promptly, with a dull snort. “My real ones, I mean. Not Seokjin and Namjoon. Although the fact that my younger friend feels the need to call himself my new dad because my old one sucked already says it all, I guess.”

“I’m sorry,” Taehyung manages to throw in quietly, though he’s not even sure if Yoongi heard him, because he’s rambling on already.

“Like, imagine two people, and both of them have no idea how to handle relationships, okay? And now imagine them in a relationship, with each other. Great idea, I know. Now, also imagine them knowing fuck all about raising kids, and still trying to raise a kid.” Yoongi lifts both hands to point at himself with his thumbs. “My parents were the last people on earth who should have had a child, and yet here I am.”

“I’m glad you’re here,” Taehyung says without thinking about it, and it makes Yoongi smile, and his nervous stomach makes a happy little lurch.

“Yeah, me too,” Yoongi says, softer now. “And I’m glad they’re not here anymore.” He starts chuckling at that, shaking his head a little in Taehyung’s lap, and his voice is barely more than a whisper when he speaks again. “Dad always said I’d kill him one day.”

For a second, it’s quiet. Taehyung hears himself swallow. There’s something in the tone of Yoongi’s voice, something sincere and not figurative at all, and Taehyung thinks about the killers he knows, about how they’re all normal people on first glance, how they all had their reasons, some good, some not.

“Did you?”

Yoongi frowns up at him like he can’t remember what he just told him. “Did I what.”

“Did you kill your dad?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, and something in Taehyung’s chest hardens, then he looks away to frown at the night sky instead. “...No. Well, not really. I just sped up the process a little. I don’t think that counts. I don’t know though.”

Taehyung’s not sure what exactly he means by that, but he’s not about to ask for specifics. There’s something else he cares more about right now. “Did he deserve it?”

“Oh, yeah,” says Yoongi, without a second of hesitation, and that’s all Taehyung wanted to hear, all he needed to hear to feel the thing in his chest soften again.

It does something else instead, making him feel a little nauseous combined with the nervousness in his stomach, when he thinks about what Yoongi said about using sex to cope. All this time, Taehyung had thought that Yoongi’s overall mood and attitude had something to do with losing his parents, but apparently, said loss actually came as a huge relief to him. And there are many ways in which parents can be horrible, and they’d all make Taehyung feel bad, but few things would make him feel quite as sick as the vague idea he’s piecing together about Yoongi’s parents being bad enough that he’d be happy about their deaths, that he’d actually somehow get his hands dirty with ending his own father, and that he’d wind up needing copious amounts of sex in public bathrooms to somehow live with whatever happened to him in the end.

“I wanna get drunk,” Yoongi says. He tries to get up briefly, but groans instead, and Taehyung moves his arm automatically to press his chest back down very gently. “No, come on, Taehyung.
Let’s go downstairs, get drunk with me.”

“You’re really high,” Taehyung says, making Yoongi nod with an out of place little giggle. “I don’t think you should get drunk too. I’m not sure how well you’d handle that.”

“I don’t handle anything well,” Yoongi mumbles, quickly getting rid of the rush of sadness threatening to pierce through Taehyung at that by grabbing one of Taehyung’s hands and placing it in his hair. “But, okay. See, you’re being so fucking nice again, but sure, let’s stay here then. I don’t wanna talk about stuff anymore, though. You talk. Tell me something fun.”

Taehyung can’t help but smile softly, fingers carding through Yoongi’s hair now. “Like what? What do you wanna hear?”

“I dunno,” says Yoongi, and closes his eyes. “Whatever you like. Whip out those random shark facts.”

“Okay,” Taehyung laughs. Shark facts are easy, even his mushy brain can still come up with those. “Well, for starters, ladders kill more people each year than sharks.”

“Lame, I already knew that,” Yoongi throws in. “Try harder.”

“Sharks have survived five massive extinction events during their time on our planet.”

“Nice,” Yoongi mutters. “They’re, like, ocean cockroaches.”

Taehyung giggles a little, and feels his heart jolt in his chest when he realizes that the sound alone seems to make Yoongi chuckle too. “Sure, let’s go with that. A lot of shark species die if they stop moving, because they don’t have muscles to move water through their gills. They’ll drown.”

“Oh no.”

“But not all of them. Some can stay still. One time I got to pet one and he kept super still because he liked it.”

Yoongi cracks an eye open. “You petted a shark.”

“Yeah! Pretty cool, right?”

“Super cool,” Yoongi says monotonously. “D’you miss Australia?”

“A little.” Taehyung shrugs. “But I’m glad to be back home, too.”

Yoongi hums quietly, grimacing softly while he shifts around in Taehyung’s lap. “More shark facts.”

“Umm…” Taehyung thinks, then he giggles again, which makes Yoongi open his eyes fully to watch him speak. “Some sharks live in freshwater, which isn’t exactly easy for saltwater animals, so they piss into the stream. Swim around in their own pee. They piss twenty times faster than other sharks, too. Imagine being famous for that.”

“What the fuck,” says Yoongi, a laugh in his voice that makes Taehyung a little giddy with pride.

“Yeah, they’re really weird,” Taehyung says happily. “I love them.”

Yoongi nods solemnly to that, and Taehyung goes on telling him about the egg cases some people call mermaid’s purses, about how when a shark dies, only its teeth get left behind and everything else dissolves in the water, about how sharks have more senses than humans. He always enjoys dumping
knowledge on people, and right now he enjoys even more that Yoongi actually responds to what he says, even if it’s just some soft reactions, short comments or incredulous snorts. It’s a little more than what he usually gets from him, and it makes him feel warm and welcome, and good.

He’s showing Yoongi pictures of whale sharks and pygmy sharks on his phone when the door to the roof terrace swings open again and Hoseok and Jimin walk towards them, arm in arm, hair disheveled, shirt collars askew. Jimin looks highly pleased with the world, which is enough to make Taehyung grin from ear to ear.

“Huh,” Hoseok says, looking around. “Where’s the rest?”

“Dancing,” says Yoongi, barely looking up from Taehyung’s phone.

“Oh, okay. Well, we’re just stopping by to let you know I’m taking Jimin home. Like, uh, to my place.”

Yoongi raises his head a little more now, watching Hoseok for a second, then there’s the hint of a smirk playing around his lips. “Sure. Congrats, you two. I’ll find somewhere else to crash.”

“You don’t have to,” Hoseok starts, but Yoongi shakes his head.

“No, I do. You’re really loud. Like, louder than Taehyung.”

Jimin’s eyes go wide. “Are you sure? He can’t be louder than Taetae.”

“Oh, my god,” Hoseok says quietly, draping his free hand over his eyes. “I almost forgot you two are ex-boyfriends too. Why is everyone sleeping with everyone here? Anyway, I sincerely do not want any more details about this, so, goodnight. Come on, Jimin. I’ll show you loud.”

“I’ll show you loud,” Jimin giggles into Hoseok’s sleeve as they turn around and leave again. Taehyung looks after them happily, before glancing down towards Yoongi and remembering what he just said.

“Where are you going to sleep?” he asks, part of him hoping that he might be the answer, but he’s not actually sure how that would work out tonight.

“No idea,” Yoongi yawns. “Might ask Seokjin or Namjoon. You going back home to your parents?”

“I don’t think so, actually,” Taehyung says. “If Jimin’s going home with Hoseok, that means Jungkook would be going home alone, and he’s pretty wasted. I was thinking maybe I should go home with him, to make sure he gets there safely.”

“Because you’re not wasted?”

“I’m not as smashed as Kookie is, okay,” Taehyung huffs quietly, putting his phone away again. “Either way I don’t want him to be alone, he’s, like, five years old.”

“That’s very true,” says Yoongi, his head still warm on Taehyung’s legs. “I could go home with you two. I’m still sober, and the weed’s been wearing off. I mean, I’m definitely still high, I can admit that much. Not as bad as I was when I asked for shark facts though.”

“Don’t act like you regret it,” Taehyung says with a grin, trying to cover up the fact that he’s kind of yelling in his head right now. He did not expect Yoongi to say that first part, to offer to come home with them, he did not expect them to end up spending part of this party alone on the roof talking very calmly without taking each other’s clothes off, he did not expect them to go home together
afterwards.

Of course, it’s whatever, really. The talking part is an achievement, because he wanted to get to know Yoongi better (and he’s got some disturbing things to think about now once he’s sobered up), but the rest isn’t that important, because they’re not actually together. He’s just glad to know Yoongi has a place to sleep and stuff, and it’s nice to spend more time with him because he’s cool and maybe they can be friends or something, is all. Maybe they can be friends one day, yes, that’s a nice goal.

“Jungkook’s gonna hate this,” Yoongi predicts as they slowly peel themselves off the ground. Taehyung’s butt feels frozen. Also, he agrees quietly, thinking that Jungkook would have been very happy to just go home with Taehyung after a party, but might actually kill him later for dragging Yoongi along, of all people.

However, Jungkook just seems glad to latch onto Taehyung when they find them in the crowd, clinging to his arm and pressing tiny kisses to his cheek while telling him that he missed him, which leaves the elder three casting them some bemused glances. Seokjin looks like he could still go on partying for another five hours, but Namjoon is leaning into him tiredly while very obviously trying to keep his stomach contents in somehow, so the five of them end up leaving the apartment together.

“I’m glad you’re going home with Kookie,” says Seokjin, while Jungkook is quietly trying to convince Taehyung to let him carry him. “I was already contemplating taking him home myself.”

“Stop parenting people,” Yoongi deadpans, watching Namjoon warily.

“Well, sorry, I’m just not sure if you and Taehyung are ready to be fathers yet, you know?” Seokjin shrugs, and Taehyung quickly busies himself with steadying Jungkook by the shoulders to make sure he doesn’t stare at him instead. That was a weird thing to hear. He’s going to forget it ever happened.

Luckily, Yoongi doesn’t seem bothered. “Yeah, yeah. You just go and take care of your boyfriend there before he passes out.”

“He’s not my boyfriend!” Seokjin answers immediately, voice a little higher than before, so Yoongi turns away chortling to get them a cab. Taehyung decides not to dwell on how he sincerely thought Namjoon and Seokjin were together for the entire night when apparently that’s not the case, and listens to Yoongi and Jungkook instead, because they’re trying to continue their autotune discussion in the car. It’s even funnier this time, because the weed really is wearing off slowly so Yoongi actually has some good points to make and words his opinions nicely, while Jungkook is having trouble forming sentences that actually make sense.

Taehyung feels pretty sober compared to him, pays for the cab himself, though they end up having to rely on Yoongi to get the apartment key into the lock, and also to work on the convertible couch to make room for them both, because Taehyung can only explain the thing to him in theory, his hands aren’t actually very helpful anymore.

He helps Jungkook take his shoes off, and by the time he quite literally tucks him into bed, the boy is snoring already. Taehyung closes the door to his room behind him, glancing into the living room, where Yoongi’s pants are already discarded on the floor and he’s slipping beneath the thin guest blanket. Okay. He can totally do this. He can sleep next to Yoongi. Under one blanket, with his pants off. No big deal.

Luckily, once he actually is under that blanket on the soft couch, he feels sleepy enough to not worry about it too much anymore. He wonders briefly if Yoongi is still weed-horny, or even regular Yoongi-horny, but he doesn’t say or try anything so maybe he’s tired too.
“Thanks for coming home with us,” Taehyung says when they’re both on their backs next to each other and he can feel the warmth from Yoongi’s naked legs next to his.

Yoongi shrugs, blanket pulled up to his chin. “Just needed somewhere to sleep.”

“Right,” Taehyung says with a quiet laugh, and rolls his eyes at him, because if it had only been about that, Yoongi could have gone home with his college friends. But of course he has to act like it’s all selfishness now.

“What,” says Yoongi, squinting at him.

Taehyung laughs some more, shifting a little to look at him better. “Nothing. Just make sure to say thanks to Kookie tomorrow then, for letting you crash.”

He gets a hostile look for that, and no other answer, save for Yoongi turning on his side and away from him. Taehyung’s not worried though, giggling breathily while pressing his head into the pillow and definitely not staring at the back of Yoongi’s neck from there. He’s guessing this is just Min Yoongi’s way of pouting.

And he’s not very good at it. “Goodnight, Taehyung,” he says, his voice soft, barely five seconds later.

Taehyung smiles. His eyes fall shut to the sight of Yoongi’s light hair against the dark pillowcase. “Goodnight.”
A bunch of fluffy stuff happens, and Yoongi doesn’t know how to deal with good things.

Yoongi is good at a lot of things. He doesn’t like admitting it, not even to himself, but he is. He’s good at most things that have to do with music, except for maybe singing, but he could probably master that if he really tried. He writes really well, and he takes fantastic photos. He can count the number of basketball matches he’s lost in his life on one hand, and his blowjobs are amazing. There are many things he’s great at.

What he is bad at, is sleeping.

A lot of people think the opposite. They think he can just fall asleep everywhere, and he can, but only if he hasn’t slept the entire night before, if he’s so tired that his eyes are falling shut while he stands. Then he can sleep, and dream of nothing, wake up sort of grumpy and disoriented, but still better than if he hadn’t passed out where he was sitting. He can sleep during the day if he can’t sleep during the night.

Most of the time he can sleep during the night, but seldom long enough. He sleeps for three hours, four hours, wakes up with his eyes burning and a scratchy throat. Sometimes he falls back asleep then, but that usually means nightmares. Yoongi hates nightmares, like every normal person would, so he usually tries to not fall asleep again. He just gets up and deals with it, he has to.

He sleeps better with Kumamon present. Nobody knows that, not even Hoseok, but he’s got a Kumamon plushie in his backpack, and his backpack is right next to Hoseok’s couch, and he sleeps better when it’s close.

He is not on Hoseok’s couch, and his backpack is nowhere near him.

His pants are on the living room floor though, so at least he could fish for his phone once he woke up, and check the time. Of course, it’s fucking seven in the morning, the day after a party that went on for way longer than he’d anticipated, and he’s wide awake. To be fair, Yoongi can’t really remember what time it was when they went to sleep on Jungkook’s and Jimin’s couch, but he doesn’t want to think about what happened last night anyway.

The bad thing about weed is that he doesn’t forget all the shit he said. The other bad thing about weed is that it kind of made Yoongi want to start smoking again, and another bad thing about weed is that Hoseok didn’t fucking stay with him the whole night to make sure he doesn’t tell Taehyung about his weird fucked up family. Yoongi can’t really hold it against him because he was stoned too, and of course he wanted to go spend some naked time with Jimin, and Yoongi doesn’t know why he thought relying on Hoseok when they were both going to get high would be a good idea.

Now Taehyung knows that his parents were assholes, which would still be kind of alright because all his friends know about that, but Yoongi very distinctly remembers telling him that he fucking killed his father.
(It’s not true. He didn’t. He was just really fed up with him and made him sicker than he already was, that’s not murder. He’s not a killer.)

Then again, he also remembers Taehyung dropping the topic like it’s nothing after asking him if his father deserved it, which is a really weird thing to do, but Taehyung was drunk. And then he told him a bunch of stuff about sharks and that was it. Like he didn’t care about that stupid confession at all. Like he’s heard worse before.

He was drunk, Yoongi repeats to himself. Not completely wasted probably, but definitely drunk. Drunk enough that it took him a ridiculously long time to type *pygmy sharks* into the Google search bar on his phone to show him pictures. So that must be why he didn’t particularly mind Yoongi telling him about vague crimes he doesn’t regret.

Taehyung’s hand is directly in front of his face. Yoongi is still on the couch, his limbs are heavy and it’s warm under the blanket, heat radiating off Taehyung’s body like he’s a furnace, and of course he’s the only one awake. He’s lying on his side, Taehyung on his stomach next to him, half of his face pressed into the pillow, his mouth open by maybe half an inch, and his hand right there on the edge of Yoongi’s pillow. Yoongi might have been watching him for a minute or two, or ten. Him and his stupid pretty hand.

He’s been wondering if he plays an instrument. He’s got classic piano fingers, Yoongi thinks, but he’s never seen a piano at his parents’ place. Maybe he was just born like that. Kind of a dick move, to be honest.

This is so weird. Yoongi can’t remember the last time he woke up next to someone, but he’s still pretty sure that the last time probably involved sex. And he’s had sex with Taehyung, but only once in an actual bed, and they didn’t fall asleep there because it was the middle of the day and his parents chose to have dinner with him right afterwards, so this has never happened before. And now it has, but without sex. And that’s all wrong and he’s not used to this and unsure how to deal with it.

He should probably just get up and find breakfast. But Taehyung scrunches up his nose and shifts a little so that Yoongi can see more of his face, and there’s a mole on the tip of his nose he’s never noticed before, and Taehyung swallows and sighs and Yoongi feels like he’s watching a nature documentary.

He’s never seen him like this before. Usually Taehyung is all smiles and talks and excited expressions, and then a lot of times he’s moans and furrowed brows and teeth in his lower lip, but never like this. All calm and unmoved, his face smooth and -- yeah, Yoongi’s going there -- *beautiful*, and he thinks there’s another mole right on the edge of his lip, but it’s tiny and he’s not sure. His hair is falling into his face and he’s not quite as tan anymore as he was when he came back from Australia, but his skin is still perfect. Taehyung’s fingers twitch against the scratchy fabric of Yoongi’s pillow so Yoongi watches his hand again, brown and slender, he could probably be a hand model, but that’s a weird thought --

“I can hold it for you,” Taehyung says.

What.

“What,” says Yoongi.

Taehyung frowns, and shakes his hand around a little without actually lifting it off the pillow. “C’mon,” he drawls, impatiently. “It doesn’t look too heavy, I’ll hold it. Don’t worry about it.”

His eyes are still closed. It’s dawning on Yoongi now, while Taehyung still breathes calmly into the
fabric beneath them, that he must be sleep talking or something like that. He’s curious now, though. “Hold what?” he says.

Taehyung sighs very loudly and Yoongi’s pretty sure he can see him roll his eyes underneath his eyelids. “The thing,” he says, like that’s the most obvious answer in the world, and then he starts shifting around a lot, turning awkwardly until he’s on his back. His hand is gone from Yoongi’s pillow, it’s lying still on Taehyung’s chest now. “Whatever. Just pass me the cheese, okay?”

Alright then. “Sure,” Yoongi says, and watches Taehyung nod and mutter a thanks while he sits up slowly. That’s enough Kim Taehyung: The Show for this morning, he needs to get going. To a place where Taehyung isn’t. For reasons he can’t disclose.

Yoongi feels tiredness aching in his bones when he gets up from the couch, and part of him wants to just lay down again, believe in a world where he can’t get nightmares if he sleeps next to someone like Taehyung, who looks like a hand model and talks about cheese in his sleep, or wait for him and Jungkook to wake up and entertain him with their hungover teenie friends shenanigans. But he’s not going to do that. He’s going to go outside and get coffee, let himself into Hoseok’s apartment to shower off the weed smell, and then he’ll see. He needs to get away from Taehyung before he gets any more fluffy ideas.

It looks cold outside, he realizes as he pulls on his pants and glances out the window, around the same time that he remembers he didn’t take a sweater or a jacket with him. Because he kind of thought he’d be going back to Hoseok’s directly after the party while still feeling warm from weed. Now it’s early in the morning and March in Seoul and he’s in nothing but a T-shirt and jeans.

Yoongi’s gaze drops to the floor, to the small pile of clothing Taehyung left there before crawling onto the couch a few hours ago. His pants, and that sweater. He did say Yoongi could have it, last night, on the roof. And Taehyung probably wouldn’t have to go home in just his shirt, seeing as both of his friends live here and the three of them definitely seem like the kind of people to share clothes. He can just wear Jimin’s or Jungkook’s stuff, and Yoongi can wear his fake boyfriend’s sweater. No big deal. It’s fucking cold outside, is all.

Of course, it’s a bit big on him, but it’s not like Yoongi never wears oversized shirts or sweaters. It doesn’t look weird, it looks fine and it’s warm, and it’s not that big. Taehyung has ridiculously long arms so Yoongi can hide his cold fingers in his sleeves and that’s just fine. At least he’s been eating well recently, thanks to Hoseok. He fits into other people’s sweaters.

It’s still cool outside though, maybe partly because he hasn’t slept enough, partly because he’s hungry. He gets coffee and a fat roll of kimbap from a corner store on his way, then he shoves his headphones into his ears so he has something else to think about other than the fact that he’s wearing Taehyung’s sweater and slept next to him.

Like many things with Taehyung, it’s not necessarily bad, just weird. Just something that usually doesn’t happen to Yoongi, something he doesn’t normally do. Plus, after the shit he said last night, he’s absolutely not sure how Taehyung thinks about him now, but that’s something he’ll have to worry about later, once Taehyung is actually awake and sober.

For now, he licks salty seaweed residue off his fingers as he quietly shuffles into Hoseok’s warm apartment, ignoring the trail of shoes, jackets, socks and a pair of pants leading from the door towards Hoseok’s bedroom. It’s quiet at least, no sex noises, and Yoongi makes a beeline for the kitchen to make some more coffee, because he knows he’s going to need it after his shower.

He’s still busy convincing his cold, tired fingers to press the right buttons when a door opens
somewhere in the apartment. Automatically, Yoongi assumes it’s Hoseok coming out to make sure he’s not getting robbed or something, but in the end, it’s Jimin peeking into the kitchen on his way to the bathroom, pulling the hem of his shirt down to cover his ass, blinking at him sleepily.

“Hey.”

“Morning,” says Yoongi, not bothering to look up from the coffee machine after that first, quick glance. He did kind of think Jimin would just go on and leave so he can go pee or whatever it is he’s doing out here and not in Hoseok’s loving arms. But the kid is still there, and Yoongi can still feel his eyes on him.

He doesn’t realize why, until it’s much too late. Yoongi looks at him again, and Jimin is squinting at that sweater, a bemused little grin on his lips, and for a second, Yoongi considers throwing the coffee machine at him and sprinting back out the door.

“Is that Tae’s?” Jimin says slowly. Of course he’d recognize his best friend’s sweater everywhere. Of fucking course.

“He gave it to me,” Yoongi says immediately, like that makes it any better, especially with how defensive he sounds all of a sudden.

Jimin just offers a little hum, and a broad, bright smile, nodding. Yoongi catches himself thinking that this is the worst possible response, but he guesses he would have thought that about pretty much everything Jimin could have said or done. At least, Jimin actually does leave the kitchen doorway now and goes on towards the bathroom, but he shows up again only a few seconds later, walking backwards like he forgot something that just crossed his mind.

“Yoongi,” he says, “what’s with the ducks? Hoseok won’t tell me.”

Oh, Jesus. Yoongi decides not to glare at him for the sweater thing, because Jimin just banged a guy that bought about three million rubber ducks after his last boyfriend broke up with him, said boyfriend standing in his kitchen at eight in the morning. Yeah, Jimin’s going to have enough on his plate without Yoongi’s wrath.

“He’ll tell you when he’s ready,” Yoongi just says, because you don’t expose the guy whose coffee machine (and couch, shower, et cetera) you’re using.

Jimin snorts quietly. “Kay,” he says, and with that, he finally does disappear into the bathroom. Yoongi busies himself with unnecessary fiddling around the kitchen until he’s done, waits for him to scuff back into Hoseok’s bedroom, then he finally claims the shower for himself. He closes his eyes under the hot water, enjoying the feeling of getting rid of all the gross party smells he was carrying around with him, trying to forget about the sweater, or Taehyung’s hand on his pillow, or the distinct memory of telling him about his father.

It’s going to be a long day.

[01:32] you: you did come with me and kookie last night right i didnt imagine that

[01:32] you: im trying to recap how drunk i was

[01:34] (⁄ω⁄)/˚•°✦: i did yeah. i woke up early

[01:34] (⁄ω⁄)/˚•°✦: if youre looking for your sweater i took it
you: i know

(ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: jimin?

you: ;D yep

you: he texted me about it at like 8 am

you: asked what we did and where but we didn't really do anything did we??

(ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: no

you: i know i told you about shark pee and then we went and parented jungkook

(ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: thats pretty much it

(ノ◕-validate-shirts-・゚✧): when do you want your sweater back

you: no rush!! i do have some other sweaters lol

you: but im taking boop for a walk around 4 or so u can drop by if you want

(ノ◕ validar-shirts・゚✧): k

Taehyung has learned, by now, to properly interpret that single letter as a “Sure, I’ll be there, thank you for offering.” Well, minus the thank you part maybe, but he does know that Yoongi will show up at his front door in time to go out with Boop and him.

Which is good, he thinks, relieving. Mornings after party confessions are always weird, mornings after confessing to killing your own father while stoned would probably be double or triple weird, but maybe they’ll manage. Taehyung doesn’t want to make it weird. Not now that he and Yoongi are starting to have actual conversations, he’s not about to ruin that. And he hopes that the fact that Yoongi is apparently still willing to meet up with him, today even, is a good sign.

He was worried earlier, when he woke up alone, tangled in the thin blanket and a little cold. But Yoongi’s message made it a bit better, plus he’s so warm and cozy right now, on his back in Jungkook’s bed with Jungkook’s arm and leg draped over his body and a much heavier blanket covering both of them up to their noses, he can’t actually worry about anything right now. He snuck into Jungkook’s room earlier with a bottle of water and some painkillers, but Jungkook hasn’t touched them yet and chose to cuddle Taehyung instead, which is just fine too. He’s breathing steadily against the side of Taehyung’s neck, hair tickling his cheek, and Taehyung wonders if he fell back asleep until he speaks up quietly.

“Was that Yoongi you were texting?”

Taehyung squints down at him, but all he sees is hair. “Yes. Don’t look at my screen when I text, that’s so rude.”

“If you’re here and he’s not, does that mean I dreamed that part about him being in the cab with us?” Jungkook’s voice is hoarse like he swallowed a handful of sand, but also very hopeful. “The part where I spent half the night rambling to him about music?”

“Nope, that definitely happened,” Taehyung laughs and blindly pats his back somewhere. “He spent the night here, but he went home already. I’m meeting up with him later though, because he stole my sweater.”
“Asshole,” says Jungkook. “It’s too cold to be stealing sweaters, what if you get sick? Don’t let him take advantage of you like that.”

He sounds like he’s trying really hard to mean that, but Taehyung is still laughing at him anyway. “I won’t get sick because I’ll be wearing one of your sweaters, duh. Don’t act like that. You think he’s cool,” he sing-songs, ignoring the weak-ass kick Jungkook just delivered to his shin under the blanket. “Admit it.”

“I don’t,” Jungkook mutters, and Taehyung can feel him huff warmly against his shoulder. “I don’t automatically find someone cool just because they know a lot about music.”

“Um, yes you do,” says Taehyung. Jungkook’s hungover brain doesn’t seem to have an answer to that, so he won this one. Taehyung is convinced that last night made Jungkook warm up to Yoongi a little -- he’s not as tough as he thinks he is anyway, it’s just this act he wants to keep up because he was kind of raised to be Taehyung’s personal bodyguard, but Taehyung thinks that’s a little ridiculous considering he was the one to tuck Jungkook into bed last night.

The thought does remind him of something though. Reminds him that Jungkook did that background check, and that Taehyung didn’t want it because he wanted things to be natural, and he still wants them to be natural and doesn’t want to be creepy about a past Yoongi is obviously not ready to disclose, but he did say some really curious stuff. Taehyung is pretty sure he could make a tiny exception for that.

“You said he doesn’t have a criminal record, right?” Taehyung asks, trying and failing to come off as totally casual.

“Yeah, why?” Jungkook asks, shifting a little as Taehyung just answers with a light shrug, to squint at him suspiciously. Great. “Tae.”

“It’s nothing big,” Taehyung says, even though he has no idea if that’s right. “He just said something weird about his dad when he was high.”

“Hm,” says Jungkook, settling back against his shoulder. “His father died of heart failure in a nursing home, three months ago. Seemed pretty boring to me. The whole guy, I mean. Nothing special.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says quickly, still unwilling to really get into this. He already feels like he’s spying on Yoongi or something, and he doesn’t want to know anything else Jungkook found out through whatever means. Maybe Yoongi will tell him in due time, maybe he won’t. Taehyung is going to have to live with that.

(Sped up the process a little, he said. Didn’t kill him, but sped up the process. His father died of heart failure and Yoongi said that, and it makes some weird kind of sense in the back of his head where Taehyung doesn’t actually want to think about it for longer than a millisecond.)

“By the way, if you two fucked on my couch while I was sleeping in here, I’ll cut off your dick and feed it to--”

It’s Taehyung’s turn to kick his shin. “We didn’t,” he says, sighing loudly, like that’s a completely unfounded accusation. “We were too tired and too wasted and I’d never do that to your poor virgin soul.” His giggle turns into a strangled scream as Jungkook pinches his side for that, then back into a giggle. “Who were you going to feed my dick to?”

“Boop.”

Taehyung gasps. “You monster.”
“She’d like it.”

“Of course she would. She’s just a dog, she wouldn’t know what she’s eating. That doesn’t make you less of a monster.”

“I guess not. Remember when our dads gave her that human ear to eat? She loved that.”

“I do, and she did, and I still hate them a little for that. My poor baby puppy.”

“At least she helped scare off that dealer. Dude had it coming, too. He should be glad they just van Gogh’ed him, could’ve gone a lot worse.”

Taehyung just offers a noncommittal sound to that. He doesn’t really get into the whole kkangpae stuff. Jungkook does, he has to because his parents want him to, but Taehyung’s parents have always been pretty relaxed towards his unwillingness to get involved with the family business. They don’t talk to him about it unless Taehyung initiates it himself, if he’s up to date with their stuff it’s mostly because he lets Jungkook vent at him sometimes, but he did grow up in their house, with their mindset, their colleagues.

He guesses maybe that’s why his image of Yoongi hasn’t really changed, even if he did speed things (heart failure things) up a little.

Boop doesn’t look like a dog that ate a human ear once. Not to Taehyung, at least. She might to other people, just because she’s a Doberman, but her fur is starting to grey in some places, and Taehyung thinks she just looks happy and peaceful and adorable all the time. She’s on her hind legs right now, front paws on Yoongi’s hips while she’s trying to lick his hands at the same time that he’s trying to give Taehyung’s sweater back to him over Boop’s head.

Taehyung thinks it’s a pity that he didn’t actually get to see Yoongi in his sweater, but whatever. He wore it, that’s what counts (and Taehyung didn’t see it, and Yoongi literally returned it the same day).

“Thanks,” Taehyung says, just throwing the sweater on the coat rack for now so they can go outside quickly before Boop gets too excited and pees in the hallway again. Yoongi offers his usual grunt that probably means something along the lines of “You’re welcome, thanks for lending me your sweater in the first place,” then they’re in the elevator and Yoongi finally lets Boop lick his hands.

“How do you look more hungover than me?” Taehyung says with a small grin, once they’re outside and he can’t watch Yoongi in the elevator mirror anymore. He looks tired, more so than usually, Taehyung thinks.

Yoongi shoots him a pointed look and stuffs his slightly wet hands into the pockets of his jacket.

(Taehyung has been wanting to buy him a pair of gloves but maybe that’s none of his business.) “By getting four hours of sleep and hating parties,” he answers, somehow managing to return the grin dripping with sarcasm. “Thanks though, real charming.”

“Sorry,” Taehyung giggles, trying to ignore the way Yoongi is intently squinting at him now.

“How do you look not hungover?”

Taehyung shrugs. “I told you I wasn’t that wasted,” he says, and Yoongi just heaves a sigh to that. It’s quiet for a few moments, and when Taehyung politely averts his gaze to let Boop pee into a bush, he catches Yoongi watching him with a frown. Maybe what he just said made it clear to
Yoongi that he does definitely remember what happened on that roof, and he doesn’t look away, he just frowns some more and clears his throat quietly.

“Listen,” he says, “about the stuff I said…”

He pauses, looking uncomfortable, so Taehyung decides to help him out a little. “About your dad?” Yoongi nods with a soft, affirmative hum, and when Taehyung smiles brightly he can practically watch him get caught off guard, with the way he knits his brows together in confusion for a second. “It’s safe with me,” Taehyung says. “I won’t tell, and I won’t pry. I mean, you can talk to me about it if you like, but I’m guessing you’d rather wanna do that with your actual friends.”

Did that sound weird? Sometimes Taehyung says things that sound weird, but he meant it like he said it, and he hopes that his tone of voice helped convey the no hard feelings part at the end there. It’s just that it doesn’t quite feel like he and Yoongi are friends yet, they’re just fake partners that bone a lot, and Yoongi very obviously has some pretty amazing friends he can and does talk to, so that just sounds logical. He could talk to Taehyung about anything, but Taehyung doesn’t expect him to, and he doesn’t want him to feel pressured or anything. Even though Yoongi doesn’t quite seem like the kind of guy to let himself get pressured. He’s just watching him now, before looking away with a huffy little laugh that Taehyung can’t fully read (which is confusing in itself), and nodding silently.

That’s that then, Taehyung guesses.

“They’re really nice,” he says airily, because he doesn’t want the conversation to die like that. “Your friends. I had a lot of fun with them yesterday. Also, Jungkook loves Seokjin, no matter what he says.”

“Yeah, Seokjin loves him too,” Yoongi answers, sounding just as casual now. “Maybe because Seokjin also hated being a business student. Jungkook isn’t exactly happy with that, is he?”

“No,” Taehyung says, gently pulling Boop away from a half-empty bag of chips someone dropped on the ground. “He wanted to go for some sort of music major, but his parents pretty much forced him into this. He’s really bad at it too. I think he’s trying to fail, to prove a point to them. Mostly. He also just really doesn’t get business.”

Yoongi snorts, and Taehyung watches him because that’s a nice sight to see, even though it makes him remember that point during the party where Hoseok made him laugh so hard he doubled over. Maybe they shouldn’t still be talking about last night.

“Are you excited for your job interview tomorrow?” Taehyung asks, chuckling a bit when Yoongi just shrugs. “Okay, I guess excited might have been the wrong word. Have you ever been excited about anything in your whole life?”

“I was excited once,” says Yoongi, “when I was nine years old and they told us gym class got cancelled for two whole months.”

They stop walking because Boop is taking a dump in the grass, and Taehyung seizes the opportunity to shoot Yoongi a scandalized look, complete with wide eyes and a soft gasp. “I can’t believe you made a joke,” he breathes.

Yoongi looks back at him very seriously. “You can never tell anyone about this.”

Taehyung nods solemnly, and then he giggles and Yoongi smiles, and maybe that’s enough for now. He doesn’t get anything about the job interview out of Yoongi, but he does notice that Yoongi
doesn’t really seem tense, not anymore, and that’s all he wanted to see. By the time their ways part again Taehyung has already shifted the topic to three different kinds of plants, and Yoongi has listened to every word he said, which Taehyung knows isn’t that easy for everyone, and he catches himself thinking that maybe this whole friendship thing isn’t actually that far-fetched.

It’s the fifth time Mario hits him with a red shell and rushes past him with that annoying fucking screech he calls a voice, and Yoongi can feel his facial muscles twitch slightly. “I literally hate you so much right now,” he says to Seokjin, ignoring the snicker that pulls from him that always kind of makes him sound like a guinea pig.

“It’s not my fault you decided to mess with perfection,” says Seokjin, and Yoongi bumps his shoulder into Seokjin’s viciously, hoping to throw him off enough that his fingers will fuck up on the controller, but Seokjin and Mario are essentially the same person at this point and nothing Yoongi will ever do or say could make him mess up steering that stupid red cap around on the speedway.

Yoongi heaves a sigh. He came here to tell Seokjin about how the job interview went, and the idea was to do something that would force them both to look at the TV screen instead of at each other, because that always makes talking easier for Yoongi. So far though, he’s just been cursing and grumbling a lot. He might have been told once or twice that he takes competition too seriously. He just wants to win, though. He’s pretty sure that’s perfectly normal.

“I’m starting work at the radio station next month,” he says eventually. Maybe conversation will distract Seokjin enough to let Yoongi make first place at least once.

“Nice,” Seokjin says, continuing to drive perfectly. “Congrats, that’s so cool. I mean, that’s pretty much what you’ve been wanting to do forever, right?”

“Yeah, more or less.” Yoongi shrugs. “Hosting a show is gonna be weird, but it’ll always be during the night, so it’ll be more music and not much talking, so. That is what I’ve been wanting to do, yes. They seemed pretty open to me introducing some of my own tracks now and then too, as long as I check back with them first to make sure I’m not, I don’t know, broadcasting propaganda in rap form or anything.”

“You’d never do that, of course,” Seokjin says while absolutely annihilating Donkey Kong, who goes down with a scream. “You should propagate my YouTube channel.”

“Dude,” says Yoongi, swerving gracefully to avoid the giant monkey tumbling down the speedway towards him. “You’re literally already famous. If anything, you should be advertising my radio show on your YouTube channel.”

“I’ll think about it. How’s the pay? Are you gonna have to keep working at clubs and theaters, too?”

“The pay is, like, fuckin’ astronomical. Night shifts are paid better than day shifts, apparently, I don’t know why they had such a hard time finding someone for the position, it’s amazing. I’m not gonna need any second jobs anymore, no.”

“Man, I’m so happy for you,” says Seokjin, sounding weirdly sincere while shooting Yoongi for the sixth goddamn time. “So I’m guessing you’ll go apartment hunting soon, too? I still have your stuff in storage, you know, you can pick it up anytime. I’ll help you move it too, just say the word.”

“Yeah, I will,” Yoongi says. “Thanks, Seokjin.”

When he knew he was going to leave town for as long as he possibly (or financially) could, he sold
most of his stuff, including his apartment and a lot of furniture, but not everything. He didn’t have the heart to get rid of some things, but he did have a good rich friend like Seokjin whose apartment has a large basement he wasn’t using. Yoongi’s audio equipment is down there, his favorite set of bedclothes, his music and book and photo collections, the dishware his mother left him, and his wardrobe with some clothes still inside. Seokjin has been sitting on it patiently this entire time, and Yoongi does kind of want it back, and he’s right of course, he should and will look for his own apartment again soon. He’s going to have the money for that, and he needs to get out of Hoseok’s hair, especially now that he and Jimin have been taking each other’s clothes off.

It’s just that this entire process makes him incredibly nervous.

“It’ll be so good to have your own place again, I’m sure,” Seokjin says, adding something about ex-boyfriends and personal space, but Yoongi can barely bring himself to listen at this point. He can feel his heart beat in his chest, and his hands are gripping the controller tightly, and he’s focusing on the game now, trying not to think about anything else.

Seokjin is still right, of course. It will be good, and Yoongi thinks he should be looking forward to it, and maybe part of him does, too. He’s getting the job he wanted, he’s getting paid very well for it, he’s going to have his own apartment again, and he loved having his own apartment even while he was still dating Hoseok. It’ll be even better now, and Hoseok and he still work well together but he’s had enough of sleeping on a couch that’s not his, and they still kind of made out on that couch, and it’s just time to move on, to get a place to himself. It is.

But all of that makes it sound like Yoongi has finally arrived in Seoul, utterly and completely, like he’s settling down, a flat, a steady job, a fake goddamn boyfriend, and it scares him.

It scares him, because maybe he wasn’t ready to come back here yet, maybe it was too early to go back to Seoul and try to live a normal life, maybe he can’t. Maybe he’s still too fucked up, he still can’t sleep, he still can’t even look his friends in the eyes when he talks to them, if he talks to them, he’s a mess and he doesn’t know what he’s doing and he’s not ready for regular adult life, he can’t do it, but he’s going to have to now because he agreed to start that horrible fucking job and it’s sealed now, no backing out, and it scares him so, so much.

In the end, he thinks a little later, outside Seokjin’s apartment after getting his and Yoshi’s ass handed to him in another devastating round of Mario Kart, there’s always a way to back out. He thought there was no way to back out a year ago, but he just sold everything and fucking left like the asshole he is. He could do that again. Just up and disappear, fall off the radar. He’d find a way.

He shouldn’t.

But he kind of really wants to.

He shifts a little to look back at Seokjin’s apartment complex. He should go back in there and talk to him. He knows he could. Seokjin is and has always been an amazing friend to him, listened when Yoongi needed him to, gave all the right answers, the smart answers, the rational answers without being an ass. He’s Yoongi’s one older friend, with money and his life together, an intact family, and he’s always this bastion of calm, no matter what Yoongi throws at him. He’d listen to Yoongi panicking very quietly about being an adult and doing adult things when he often still feels like some messed up teenager, he’d tell him that bailing out would be an incredibly shitty idea and he’d better get it out of his head right now, tell him to stay put and take some deep breaths and focus on the good parts of having steady income and a place to live. He’d shove Yoongi right back on track.

But Yoongi doesn’t want that.
His fingers itch like they want him to hold a cigarette between them again, but that, at least, he
doesn’t. He makes them hold his phone instead, dials without hesitation, raises it to his ear as he turns
away again and starts walking, aimlessly, but away from his friend’s apartment.

“Hello? Yoongi, you okay?”

Taehyung sounds a little concerned, probably because Yoongi has literally never called him before.
Even most of their Skype calls were initiated by Taehyung back during those two weeks before he
flew back to Korea, Yoongi prefers texting, always. But not right now.

“I,” Yoongi starts, then stops again. He was going to say that he’s fine, because he always says that,
but he wouldn’t be fucking calling Taehyung if he was. He wants to think he doesn’t know why he’s
calling Taehyung in the first place, but he hasn’t forgotten what Taehyung said. That Yoongi can
talk to him if he wants to. Taehyung thinks he’d rather talk to his actual friends, but he’s wrong.
Yoongi wants to talk to someone who doesn’t know him like Seokjin does, like Hoseok and
Namjoon do, someone who didn’t see the absolute catastrophe he was before he left for a year. “I’m
not sure. Not really, I guess.”

It’s quiet, but only for a second, before Taehyung speaks softly. “Do you want to talk? Are you
somewhere safe?”

Yoongi frowns, automatically looking around the empty sidewalk. Nobody’s ever asked him that
before. It’s weirdly sweet, but then again, of course it is. It’s Taehyung. “Yeah, yeah, don’t worry,”
he says, suddenly knowing very well that Taehyung has probably been worrying since he saw his
name show up on his phone screen. “I got the job.”

“Oh,” Taehyung says. Yoongi imagines him frowning in his room, trying to understand why that
wouldn’t be a reason to celebrate. “Is that bad?”

“No. It shouldn’t be, I mean, it isn’t. It’s a great job, and I need the money, and they seemed nice. I
don’t know, I’m…” Yoongi sighs loudly into his phone, starting to feel terribly fed up with himself.
“Fuck, this is so stupid. Shit.”

“Youngi, it’s okay,” Taehyung says, very softly, so softly it almost makes Yoongi’s chest hurt and
his throat burn a little. Almost.

“I just want to leave again,” he finally blurts out. “Like I left a year ago. I just keep getting this stupid
urge to run away whenever something happens, even if it’s something good, I immediately want to
fucking bail like a fucking coward, I don’t know where or why, and I need to stay and find an
apartment and just not be a dick for once, but I-- I want to go. I just want to leave.”

It feels horrifyingly amazing to get that off his chest, if he’s being honest with himself. Yoongi
immediately feels several pounds lighter, but he’s also slowly realizing that it’s Taehyung he’s being
painfully honest with right now. Again.

“Let’s leave, then,” says Taehyung.

He sounds perfectly calm. Yoongi blinks, still walking, staring straight ahead. “What?”

“When are you starting the job?”

“April 15,” Yoongi says automatically, swallowing around the lump in his throat. “I can’t leave,
Taehyung. I’m running away from responsibilities and I have to stop fucking doing that, I need to
look for a place to rent --”
“I’ll ask mom. She’ll find you something nice and affordable, she loves you. I’m not saying let’s elope to France for five years, Yoongi, but… You want to leave, let’s leave. Two weeks, anywhere you wanna go. How does that sound? You get to run away for a bit, hopefully clear your head a little, come back all relaxed and composed and look at apartments mom picked out for you, start your job, all’s well. You know, steer a nice middle course.”

Yoongi actually has to take a few seconds to sort through what the hell he just heard in his head. It does sound good, but it also sounds utopian, and he’s starting to think that these rich kids he knows just don’t get his kinds of problems. “I can’t do that,” he says, vaguely registering how he’s sounding calmer already. Still, he raises his free hand to pinch the bridge of his nose and squeezes his eyes shut for a second. It sounded really good. “I don’t have the money for a stunt like that, not right now.”

“I can pay,” Taehyung says immediately, and Yoongi wants to reach through the line and punch him. “Dad’s got ties to some airlines, we get discounts on a lot of flights. Plus, uh, I know it was your birthday this month. I mean, you didn’t tell me, but I know.” (Yoongi squints for a second, but he just guesses one of his asshole friends must have ratted him out at the party or something.) “I’m guessing you didn’t want to make a huge deal out of it, which is fine, but hey, as your super dedicated boyfriend, I owe you a present, right? So, it’s cool. If it’ll help you feel better, I’ll pay for your trip.”

Again, Yoongi keeps quiet for several seconds. He’s not completely sure where he is right now, but that’s not that important. What’s more important is that he should focus and consider this, weigh out pros and cons and stuff, but his entire mind, body, everything, is already screaming at him to just agree. To grab this opportunity and leave, at least for a little, before he has to face the real world again.

“Are you coming with me?” Yoongi asks. “You made it sound like you’re coming with me.”

He thinks he’s starting to sound like himself again, and maybe that’s part of the reason why it’s Taehyung who seems a lot more nervous now. “Uh,” he says loudly, then Yoongi can hear him clear his throat. “Um, I mean, I don’t know. I sort of assumed I would, at first, just because I really like traveling and I think it’d be really cool to travel with you and also my parents would just eat that right up, me leaving with my boyfriend, but then I realized that it’s going to be your trip, it’s to help you out, right? So, like, I don’t think it’s my decision to make, like, you can go alone, or you can take someone else with you, I don’t know. Your call. You can tell me no, it’s cool, no hard feelings. I probably shouldn’t be skipping class anyway, even though I don’t think it really matters that much—”

“Taehyung,” Yoongi interrupts the rant with a voice much gentler than he planned. “I’m not letting you pay for a trip you can’t go on. If we’re doing this, you’re coming too.”

“Oh,” Taehyung says quietly. Yoongi can hear him smile. “Oh, okay.”

“Your parents are gonna be beside themselves.”

“They are. They’ll be thrilled to bits. So where are we going?”

“I don’t know yet,” says Yoongi, “but I’ll figure it out as soon as possible.”

He’s lying. He knows exactly where they’re going.

He’s going to New York with the guy he’s fake-dating, because he just offered to pay for the whole goddamn thing, just because Yoongi called him sounding vaguely distressed. And now they’re going to spend two weeks in some hotel or whatever the rich boy’s next travel move is going to be, just him and Taehyung, and Yoongi isn’t sure how long they can still keep the whole we’re doing this to
please your parents thing up.
For days now, Taehyung has been expecting Yoongi to back out. He wouldn’t hold it against him of course, it would be fine. Taehyung’s spontaneous way of living and traveling isn’t for everyone, and he knows that people (especially grown men) don’t always like having others pay for their stuff, not to mention expensive stuff like plane tickets and hotel rooms. Then there’s also the fact that he and Yoongi are in this weird limbo right now where he’s still pretty sure that they’re not friends yet, but maybe almost. They’re starting to get closer for sure, just not close enough to be going on a trip together, just the two of them.

Yoongi has enough reasons to tell him no now that he’s hopefully calmed down a little from the way he was on the phone, or to tell him that he’d rather take him up on the offer to go on that trip alone or with someone else, but he doesn’t. He tells him that he wants to go to New York City, asks when his parents have time so he can talk to his mom about apartments, asks if Taehyung is sure about skipping class for this.

He’s sure. Taehyung is very, very sure.

And apparently, so is Yoongi.

They’re at his family’s penthouse apartment so Yoongi can talk over some more details about his apartment with Taehyung’s mother. Later tonight, his dad will drive them to the airport and then they’re gone already, but for now, Taehyung is busy watching Yoongi and his mom talk. He said he really only needs one bedroom but he’d be thankful if there could maybe be one additional room for his audio equipment stuff, so his mom said that won’t be a problem and she’s positive she can get those two rooms and a living room for him if she tries. And Yoongi actually looked … flustered.

Something like that. Taehyung isn’t sure if it’s the right word, but something along those lines. Like it’s still weird for him to be making enough money for a place like that now, or maybe the weird part is having Taehyung’s mom go to such lengths to do him a favor, just because she likes him. Taehyung doesn’t know what it is. He just knows that he kind of enjoys seeing Yoongi like this, squirming in his seat with sheepish smiles and a small voice. It’s so different from the Yoongi he
knows, which he enjoys seeing too, of course, but he wants to see every part of him.

Like… for science.

Yoongi of course acts like he was playing it perfectly cool as they go up to Taehyung’s room again, where Taehyung’s suitcase is, once again, lying open on the floor. He’s not really done packing yet. He has bad time management, or something, or maybe he just couldn’t believe that they’re really doing this and Yoongi isn’t going to bail on him last-minute.

Also, Boop is curled up in his suitcase.

Yoongi shoots her a look as he closes the door behind him, and snorts softly. “Is she gonna be okay?” he asks, and Taehyung knows there’s actual concern for his dog in there somewhere.

“She’ll be fine,” he says, gently tickling Boop until she makes a defeated noise and relocates herself to his bed. “She’s just being a big baby right now. And she probably thinks I’ll be leaving for half a year again, but that just means she’ll be even happier when I come back in two weeks. And until then, she has my parents, she loves them too. She’ll deal.”

“Alright,” says Yoongi, while getting comfortable on his bed too, which results in Boop immediately dropping her head in his lap with a heavy sigh.

“I could take Shinichi with us, though. Show him New York.”

Yoongi just looks at him blankly. “Why would you do that.”

Taehyung grins and shrugs. He guesses that’s a no on putting a dead octopus in a jar in his suitcase. Hey, maybe he’ll find some other preserved specimen in NYC. Shinichi could use some company, he thinks, as he looks around his room trying to remember what else he wanted to pack. His gaze drifts past Yoongi sitting on his bed and, oh, right. Quietly, Taehyung moves over to his bedside drawer and pulls a pack of condoms out to throw it into his trunk. A bottle of lube follows suit, but it’s almost empty, so he finds another one, pointedly ignoring the way Yoongi is watching him.

“I could take some of that with us on the plane,” Taehyung says airily, watching the bottle in his hands.

“Doubt you’d get through airport security with the liquid in your carry-on luggage,” Yoongi says. He goes on before Taehyung has a chance to question that. “Also, we’re not fucking in an airplane toilet. Much too cramped.”

Taehyung puts the full bottle of lube in his suitcase, but still shoots Yoongi a frown. “We’ve only been fucking in toilet stalls.”

“Yeah, but plane toilets suck. They’re small and they’re ugly, they’re in motion, and sooner or later some other passenger always knocks on the damn door telling you to hurry up. So not only is it not enough room, but knowing your general sound level, we’d also get caught.”

Choosing to ignore the comment about his volume, Taehyung raises his brows at him. “You sound like you’ve already tried it.”

“Nah,” says Yoongi, fingers playing idly with Boop’s ears. “Just thought about it during my last flight, when some asshole kept pounding on the door while I was trying to take a piss.”

Taehyung laughs softly. “Do you ever go anywhere without wondering if you could have sex there?”
“No,” Yoongi says without missing a beat. “I’m thinking about hotel sex right now, actually. Hope you got us a nice room.”

Okay, that maybe kind of sends a pleasant shiver of anticipation through Taehyung, warm and going straight to where it shouldn’t, so he busies himself with trying to choose which textbook he should put in his backpack to read during that fourteen hour flight that they can’t spend fucking on the toilet. He grins stupidly at the nucleolus on the cover of his cytology book. “The best.”

“Good. What floor?”

“Uh,” Taehyung frowns. “I don’t know, actually. Why?”

From the corner of his eye, he can see Yoongi shrug. “Just wondering,” he cants, and Taehyung wonders if this has somehow to do with their general conversation topic right now, or if Yoongi is planning to throw him out the window or something. Or maybe it’s something perfectly harmless like wanting a good view of the New York City skyline. Yeah, it’s probably that. Definitely.

He throws some more books into his suitcase, then more underwear because he forgot how much he’s already put in there, and frowns briefly, wondering if there’s anything else he should pack. He should probably leave some room in the suitcase so they can buy stuff. He knows Yoongi is only taking his gigantic backpack (he’s pretty sure Yoongi doesn’t own a suitcase), and there’s no room left in there. Taehyung wants to buy stuff for his friends though, he bought them stuff in Australia too.

“Hey, by the way,” he says at the thought, turning to look at Yoongi again. “What did your friends say about this? Do they still believe you?”

“Oh, yeah,” Yoongi says and drops on his back on Taehyung’s bed. “Now more than ever. Namjoon’s really jealous. Seokjin has gone full dad mode, keeps texting me how happy he is for me, but also to better take care of myself.” He snorts. “Hoseok’s face was priceless.”

Taehyung laughs. “Jimin’s and Jungkook’s too. They’re used to me doing this stuff alone, but they weren’t expecting this one.”

Yoongi raises his head off the mattress a little to give him a look, even though Taehyung barely catches his grin because Boop is aggressively nuzzling Yoongi’s chest now. “You go on spontaneous trips abroad often, rich kid?”

“Sort of,” Taehyung smiles. “It’s not usually abroad when it’s spontaneous. But I do use my free time to travel around a lot.” He shrugs a little, he doesn’t really want to seem too decadent to Yoongi, but it is one of his favorite hobbies. “I like it.”

“Yeah,” says Yoongi, and Taehyung can’t tell properly, but he thinks he’s smiling. “Me too.”

Taehyung ends up grinning to himself while he crouches down to shut his suitcase. It’s nice. He likes traveling, and he loves traveling with friends, and he and Yoongi don’t really have that much in common so far, but they have this. Maybe they’re completely different people, maybe they’re polar opposites, but at least they can both get excited over plane tickets, and staying in foreign places.

And fucking in hotels.

It’s always hard to say goodbye to Boop, even with what Taehyung said earlier about how she’s going to be just fine. He knows she will, but she doesn’t know that he’ll be back soon, and it always
hurts him a little. But his parents love her very much too (even if they fed her a human ear once), and
his mother sent them off with a hug each and a smooch to Taehyung’s cheek, and her being so calm
about him leaving made it a bit better. Like his friends, his parents are used to his trips, they don’t
worry that much anymore.

His dad is listening to music loudly in the front seat of the car, and Taehyung thinks it might be on
purpose, because it’s not as loud in the back where he’s sitting with Yoongi, so they could talk here
without him hearing every word. They don’t, though. His dad still keeps shooting them glances in
the rearview mirror and Taehyung is horribly aware of that, so he keeps trying to come up with some
sort of conversation topic, but it’s hard when he keeps thinking about airports and planes and hotels
and being in America.

“Your dad’s got great taste in music,” says Yoongi.

Taehyung turns his head to blink at him. He’s deep in his seat, comfortable, scrolling through his
phone with one hand. “What?”

Yoongi looks up from the screen at that, glancing at Taehyung like he’s not sure which part of that
he didn’t get. “I’m making conversation,” he says simply, which, Taehyung guesses, explains it a
little. Yoongi has caught on to his dad’s glances too and is more successful in making this look like
they’re a couple on the backseat, which is probably also why he’s raising his free hand now and
putting it on Taehyung’s neck. “I mean it though,” he says afterwards, adding something about what
genre is playing right now, but Taehyung can barely listen to him.

Yoongi is running his fingertips through the shorter hair on the back of Taehyung’s head.

He knows what that does to him.

There have been enough instances of Taehyung choking on his moans thanks to that hand in his hair,
he even remembers biting his own arm one time, and with the way Yoongi has found out about all
the other spots on Taehyung’s body that turn him into a whimpering mess writhing against bathroom
stall doors, there’s no way in hell he hasn’t noticed this one. Yoongi knows perfectly well what he’s
doing.

Taehyung feels his breath hitch in his throat but he gives his best to remain calm and casual, letting
Yoongi scratch over his scalp softly while he tries to remember what he just said about his dad and
music.

Fuck it, he has no idea. “That’s an interesting way to make conversation,” he says instead. His voice
is a bit unstable, but he kind of just hopes that Yoongi won’t notice over the music playing from the
front.

“You don’t like it?”

Shit. Luckily, Yoongi doesn’t actually stop moving his hand, which leaves Taehyung to sit there and
wonder about the answer to that. He does like it, of course, he likes the sensation and he likes that
Yoongi is touching him at all, this just feels dangerous. Most sexual encounters with Yoongi have
felt dangerous so far, thanks to their public nature, but this is different. Because it’s not sexual, it
won’t be, Taehyung has enough trust in Yoongi to know that he’s not going to try and get him off in
the back seat of his father’s car. He won’t go that far, but he will rile him up, apparently. Knowing
perfectly well that they still have way over fifteen hours to kill before they could actually go down on
each other. (Except if Yoongi is game for airport toilets, but Taehyung doesn’t want to get his hopes
up.) So this is somewhere in between somehow, an exciting kind of horrible, and Taehyung still
doesn’t know what to say.
“I’ll stop if you want me to,” Yoongi says softly, the tone of his voice making Taehyung realize just how much he seems to be enjoying this. Taehyung doesn’t want him to stop, he wants him to have that hand in his hair constantly, even if it that means living with that fiery pull in his groin forever, but he’s not going to tell him that. He’s not going to tell him anything. He just squints at him pointedly and says nothing, and Yoongi smirks back, barely visible, and ghosts his fingertips over Taehyung’s neck.

They still don’t really talk, both scrolling through their phones now, but it feels more natural like this. They’re still interacting in a way, until Yoongi’s arm gets too heavy and he drops it again, making the persistent heat in Taehyung’s stomach fade slowly.

He’s not sure who initiates the handholding from there. Yoongi didn’t pull his hand back completely after leaving his hair alone, and Taehyung’s hand was already just kind of lying around there in the space between them, and then he guesses it just happened somehow, because next thing he knows, his fingers are in Yoongi’s palm and they’re holding onto each other. Yoongi’s hand is warm for his standards, not ice cold at least, and Yoongi doesn’t comment on what they’re doing, doesn’t even look up from his phone, but Taehyung is very sure that he stopped scrolling for a moment and just stilled completely.

But he doesn’t pull away, so neither does Taehyung. They stay like this for the rest of the ride, and eventually they even start talking idly. Yoongi has been looking up places he wants to see and keeps showing them to Taehyung on his phone, he even dug out coupons for some stuff which obviously wouldn’t have been necessary but still can’t hurt, and Taehyung is just mesmerized by how much Yoongi can talk, if it’s something he cares about. Even without weed involved.

Yoongi still isn’t even close to Taehyung’s usual level of talkativeness, his voice is very quiet and he barely moves his hands when he speaks, but he does speak. Taehyung barely says anything in between, just nods along and translates some words from English when Yoongi gets unsure, assures him that they can do whatever he wants if they have time for it all. He hasn’t seen Yoongi this animated since he talked about autotune to Jungkook. It’s kind of a weird thought, but it’s nice that he has it all to himself this time.

His dad drops them off at the terminal and wishes them a safe trip, and Taehyung has been here countless times, but he still takes off into the wrong direction until Yoongi gently pulls him back. He seems gentle and soft in general now, and Taehyung guesses traveling with him is going to be quiet and calm, which isn’t exactly what traveling with Taehyung is like (it’s calm too but it’s also really chaotic), but he’s looking forward to it. They’re going to be a good mixture, he thinks. He really wants to believe that.

They get something to eat once they have their tickets and made their way through security, and after that they just sit next to each other in the waiting area and have to come up with a way to kill the time. Sadly there’s no handholding anymore since they’re in public, which Taehyung finds a little ironic considering other things they’ve done in almost-public, but he’s not going to think about that now. He won’t survive the long, long time until they’re on another continent and in their hotel otherwise.

So, they occupy their hands with other things, Taehyung holding his cytology textbook and failing to concentrate on it, Yoongi flicking through a smaller book that seems to have a lot of musical scores between paragraphs of text, and even more of Yoongi’s handwriting scrawled somewhere on every page.

“How the hell is Hypomixolydian a word,” says Taehyung, unable to stop himself after he managed to read something on the page Yoongi had lying open.
Yoongi looks up and raises his brows at him. “Like you’re not used to weird long words from biology,” he says, but it doesn’t actually sound reproachful. “I still don’t know how to say whatever DNA means written-out.”

“Deoxyribonucleic acid. That’s pretty basic.”

“Right. Hypomixolydian is a type of key.”

“Oh,” Taehyung says and frowns. “I’ve never heard of that before.”

Yoongi is still watching him. “Do you play an instrument?”

“I used to play the saxophone,” Taehyung says, and his face lights up a little, and then Yoongi’s face also lights up a little, and Taehyung’s face lights up even more. “I mean, I guess I still play it? I haven’t really been practicing lately, but I definitely still know how to play it.” Yoongi doesn’t say anything, but he’s still looking at him like that, like Taehyung just got infinitely more interesting. He doesn’t want to blow this. “You probably play an instrument too, right? What do you play?”

“Guitar and piano. They were pretty much the easiest choices back when I got into composing.”

Taehyung’s eyes go wide. “Composing? You mean, like, you compose your own music?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, cocking a brow at him like that was perfectly obvious.

“You never told me! You just told me about the audio engineering thing, the mixing and stuff, I didn’t know you write songs! Can you show me one sometime?”

There’s a grin darting through Yoongi’s face, still pulling at the corners of his mouth when he looks away again, fingers picking idly at the page in his book. “Maybe,” he says, softer now. “I haven’t been composing much lately.”

“Why not?” Taehyung asks. He supposes it has to do with how Yoongi just got back from a pretty long trip himself and maybe didn’t have the time or equipment (Taehyung has no idea what kind of equipment you need for composing, but he kind of imagines that a piano is necessary now), but the way Yoongi stays silent for a bit longer than would feel natural makes him think it’s something else.

“I don’t know,” Yoongi says.

“Oh,” says Taehyung. “Will you get back into composing if I dig out my saxophone again?”

His heart jolts a little when the tiny grin is back on Yoongi’s lips. He’s still looking at his book and not at him anymore, but that’s alright. He can see him run the tip of his tongue over the top row of his teeth, considering, and then he snorts softly. “Maybe,” he says again. “You start, though.”

“Okay,” Taehyung chirps. “I’ll dust it off first thing when we come home in two weeks.”

“You have to play it, too.”

“Wow, I know. Smartass.”

Yoongi chuckles quietly, and Taehyung feels almost giddy by now. He thinks he might be getting a feeling for the type of conversation Yoongi can actually hold, the kind of things he’s actually interested in, and that means being alone with him for two whole weeks maybe won’t be as awkward as part of him feared it might be. He looks forward to actually talking with Yoongi about stuff, which sounds simple, but he’s a wordy person and it means a lot to him.
It is still Yoongi though, so they fall back into silence after that. Actually, Yoongi looks like he’s about to doze off by the time they can board their plane -- their first class seats shake him wide awake again for a bit, but after settling in and admiring all the space for his feet he seems ready to sleep again. He still soldiers through the flight safety instructions, then Taehyung watches him gradually pass out from the corner of his eye.

That’s fine. Taehyung is back to watching in-flight TV in no time, wondering how many *Friends* episodes he knows by heart now. By the time he switches to some random drama, Yoongi looks more relaxed than he has ever seen him, head tilted back and mouth hanging open, hands folded in his lap, chest rising and falling with his soft breath. Taehyung feels a little bad for nudging him awake, but the flight attendants are approaching to ask for their dinner choices, and he can’t have Yoongi miss any meals.

He blinks his eyes open sleepily, and Taehyung looks away again quickly to distract himself from how cute that is. They’re fumbling with their trays when Yoongi’s gaze drops a little, and he frowns.

“Did you take your shoes off?”

“Yeah,” Taehyung says, rubbing his feet together automatically. “I do that on every flight, especially long ones. It’s more comfortable.”

Yoongi frowns at his feet some more, then he goes on frowning at his own feet, and by the time they both have food and drinks (coke for Taehyung, water for Yoongi), he has quietly kicked his shoes off, too.

Taehyung half expects him to fall back asleep after eating, but it seems like Yoongi is more or less awake for now. He does fumble the soft blanket out of its plastic foil and drapes it over himself, but he leans back after that and starts flicking through TV shows. Taehyung watches him for a few seconds, then he puts his own blanket over himself, and tries to focus back on the drama. As it turns out though, it’s hard to do that when Yoongi is awake next to him and he just keeps thinking about his stupid hand in his stupid hair on the stupid car ride, like there are no better things to occupy his mind with. He’s pretty sure Yoongi isn’t thinking about that anymore, for him it was just some hair in his palm, and that’s just not fair.

As sneakily as he can, Taehyung looks around. It’s only the two of them in their row, and all other passengers he can see from here have their eyes either closed or glued to the screen, and all have headphones on. That’s good. Taehyung’s hand creeps out from his blanket and under Yoongi’s blanket instead, fingers immediately finding his thigh. Yoongi flinches a little, and Taehyung keeps his gaze firmly on his own screen when he feels him squint at him. Yoongi’s thighs are sensitive. He knows that much. Now he only has to hope Yoongi can feel his fingers through his jeans.

But if Taehyung can feel his muscles twitch slightly under his touch, he’s pretty sure Yoongi can feel him too. His fingertips travel upwards and towards Yoongi’s inner thigh, getting them dangerously close to his crotch already.

“What are you doing,” Yoongi says, very quietly.

“What do you think I’m doing?” Taehyung asks back, voice low too, of course, but also distinctly smug.

“I think you’re being an ass,” Yoongi mutters. He’s looking around now, but he probably comes to the same conclusion as Taehyung did just now, since the rest of him keeps perfectly still.

“This is revenge for earlier, in the car,” Taehyung explains. Since Yoongi hasn’t tried to decapitate
him yet, he’s feeling brave and runs his palm over his crotch once.

Yoongi takes a deep breath. “That was your hair,” he hisses. “You’re on my dick.”

“You don’t like it?” Taehyung says immediately, turning his head now to watch Yoongi scowl at him. “I’ll stop if you want me to.”

He smiles sweetly, and Yoongi gives him the deadliest glare he’s ever seen, but he doesn’t say anything. He just turns his head towards the screen again and slams it back against his seat, apparently getting comfortable in a very grumpy way. So, Taehyung continues. He grinds the heel of his palm down against Yoongi now and then, in between running his fingers over his thighs, always staying close to the seam of his pants. At first he almost gets a little scared that this might end up more embarrassing for him than for Yoongi because nothing really happens, but it apparently just takes Yoongi a little longer than he thought.

Eventually, there is definitely something growing under the fabric of his jeans, and Taehyung starts leaving Yoongi’s thighs alone in favor of rubbing teasing little circles over the bulge underneath the blanket. He keeps it up until he can see Yoongi’s entire body tense a little, until Yoongi opens his mouth only half an inch or so to breathe, and his eyes fall shut. Then, Taehyung pulls his hand back under his own blanket.

Yoongi releases a loud breath, that’s it. His eyes are back on the screen and he completely ignores Taehyung smirking stupidly next to him, which is fine. Taehyung has felt victory in the palm of his hand. That’s all he needed.

About ten minutes later, Yoongi gives up the fight and gets up to go to the bathroom.

Sleepiness seems to return to him afterwards, and this time, it’s contagious. By the time Yoongi’s eyes are drooping shut again, so are Taehyung’s, and he dozes off soon dreaming about their hotel in New York, which for some reason looks like Monica’s and Rachel’s apartment in Friends.

He wakes up briefly when he feels weight on his shoulder, and just enough to fumble his phone out of his pocket and take a rushed selfie with Yoongi resting his head on him. He might need that later. You never know.

Next time he wakes up it’s gone again, and Yoongi is wide awake and taking pictures out the plane window. Taehyung can hear the shutter of what looks like a very expensive reflex camera click softly, and he didn’t even know he had that.

“You still need to show me the photos from your last trip,” Taehyung reminds him, stretching his legs with a little groan. Yoongi doesn’t look up.

“True. You haven’t shown me your own underwater pics yet, either. Only the ones you googled.”

“Oh, that’s right!” Taehyung’s face lights up with the realization that Yoongi apparently actually wants to see those. “I have them with me, they’re on my laptop. I’ll show you at the hotel.”

“Yeah, we’ll have enough time for stuff like that in the coming two weeks,” says Yoongi.

Taehyung immediately feels warmer. He’s right of course, they will have enough time for photos in the coming two weeks, it just reminded him that they’ll have time for a lot of other things too. He’s kind of expecting a lot of sex already, and Yoongi wants to go sightseeing a lot, but they’ll be with each other in the time in between all that as well. They’re going to see each other sleep and eat and sit on subways, and it already feels incredibly exciting to him because maybe, maybe that means he’ll finally learn more about the mystery Min Yoongi.
It’s only a little later on the same day when they land in New York City, and the sun is starting to set. Taehyung feels a weird mixture of tired and excited, but it’s not like he hasn’t learned how to deal with jet lag. They take a cab to their hotel, and he keeps himself awake by watching Yoongi clutch the camera in his hands and stare out the window, taking the occasional shot. Taehyung is pretty impressed himself -- he came here with his parents once, but he was so young he can barely remember anything about it, so seeing the city now and being here without parental guidance is pretty awesome.

The hotel is nice too, nothing that special for Taehyung, but he knows it’s different for Yoongi. He lets him inspect the bathroom for a solid five minutes while Taehyung strips off his shoes and jacket and drops face forward into the giant, soft bed.

“I’m so sleepy,” he tells the quilt, before turning his head at least a little as Yoongi emerges from the bath again. “Do you wanna grab some dinner or can I pass out here?”

“I’m gonna go eat something,” Yoongi says, so Taehyung is back on his feet in a matter of seconds. “The sign downstairs said the buffet is still open.”

“Okay!” Taehyung is aware that Yoongi didn’t actually include him in his announcement to go and eat something, but he also doesn’t seem opposed to Taehyung joining him, so that’s all he cares about right now. That, and hotel buffet food.

Yoongi puts his hands in the pockets of his jeans when they’re in the elevator, watching them idly in the mirror on the ceiling. “You didn’t expect to just get away with feeling me up on the plane, right?”

Something cold ghosts down Taehyung’s back, but by the time it reaches his middle, it’s hot. “What,” he sputters. “That was revenge for what you did in my dad’s car, you can’t get revenge for revenge, that’s not how it works!”

“If action movies have taught me anything,” Yoongi says, shooting him a smile that makes Taehyung’s blood run cold before stepping back out of the elevator, “yes it is.”

All of a sudden, Taehyung is hyper aware of where they are, how many people are outside the elevator doors waiting, or sitting in the lobby, he counts the guests at the buffet almost automatically because they’re in public now, and Yoongi wants revenge, and this already feels like a game Taehyung absolutely cannot win.

“Didn’t think it’d still be so full,” Yoongi says like he’s reading his mind, glancing around the room as they walk towards an empty table with full plates in their hands. He doesn’t sound discouraged though. Not at all. He almost sounds happy. “How many of those people d’you think speak Korean?”

Taehyung frowns a little, scanning the place for korean looking people, and not finding any. “I dunno.” He shrugs while they sit down. “One or two businessmen maybe, but I think they usually learn Mandarin.” At the thought, Taehyung grins around the fries he’s shoving into his mouth. “That means we can say whatever we want.”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says casually, eyes focused on his fork stirring sauce into his spaghetti. “Means I can sit here and tell you about how I want to fuck you against that huge window up in our hotel room, maybe leave an imprint of your pretty ass on the glass, and no one here will understand a word.”
Taehyung had his glass of coke halfway to his mouth, now he’s glad he wasn’t drinking yet, because he probably would have choked on it. Yoongi looks up at him with a polite smile before starting to eat like it’s nothing, but Taehyung supposes someone who can act like he’s been dating him for eight months can also act like he’s talking about the weather while actually calling his ass pretty.

“Shower looks big enough to fuck in, too,” Yoongi continues after he’s swallowed, and Taehyung still hasn’t answered. It’s rare that he doesn’t know how to respond to something. He’s going to chalk it up to tiredness. “And I’ve never tried it in a bathtub, but we do have one, and I guess there’s a first time for everything.”

“I’m not sure how bathtub sex is supposed to work,” Taehyung says, trying and failing to sound just as casual as Yoongi still does.

Yoongi shrugs. “Yeah, it’d probably get messy. Sex gets messy often though, so. I think we might not have the room for much thrusting and stuff like that, and handjobs might get awkward in the water, but I could just finger you until you cry. Doesn’t take much thrusting once I’ve got your prostate under my fingertips, I know that since that one time at Starbucks when you almost passed out afterwards.”

“That was just because I was already really wound up from making out!” Taehyung feels like he needs to defend himself, which makes it hard to keep his voice down at a reasonable level for two young men talking about world economics over dinner.

“So?” Yoongi raises his brows at him as he chews. “That just means I’ll have to wind you up before again. It’s not like you make that very hard. You’re getting wound up right now, aren’t you? Because you’re already picturing my fingers in your ass, and my chest pressed to your back in that bathtub. How many are you imagining? Two? Three?”

Taehyung forces himself to stop imagining (it was three), shooting Yoongi a glare over the table. “I’m not. Is this your revenge for the plane thing? Seriously?”

Yoongi gives him the same friendly smile he always gives his parents. “D’you like it?”

Instead of answering, Taehyung continues his glare and shoves another handful of fries into his mouth. Yoongi knows what that means, of course. On those few occasions when he did something Taehyung actually didn’t like, he let Yoongi know immediately and very clearly, so this right here just means he does like it, but isn’t ready to admit that. Honestly, Taehyung never would have thought that this would have this much of an impact on him -- he always laughed about dirty talk in porn and found it pretty fucking ridiculous, but maybe it’s this entire situation, or Yoongi’s voice or something, but there’s definitely heat pooling in his groin already.

“I’m kinda sleepy too,” Yoongi continues, fingers playing with his spoon now. “I’ve been thinking about your legs basically since we boarded the plane, though. I don’t think I can lie next to you on that bed upstairs without getting between them. I wanna mark them up real nice, but knowing us I doubt we could leave it at that. And we haven’t had proper penetrative sex in forever, due to, you know, lack of a bed. Or other surfaces that aren’t toilets.” Yoongi sighs tragically. “I really miss fucking you open with my cock, not just my fingers.”

“How can you say stuff like that with a straight face?” Taehyung feels hot, not just in the embarrassing bulge in his pants though, he feels hot on his neck, and his ears, and his cheeks. He keeps telling himself that nobody here understands them, nobody is giving them weird looks or anything, but Taehyung understands what Yoongi is saying, and that’s obviously enough for his body to flush head to toe.
“I’m just saying what I’m thinking,” Yoongi says airily. “You won’t even have to hold back your voice up there. I can just fuck you until you scream yourself raw.”

“I’m about to scream myself raw right here,” says Taehyung, making Yoongi laugh a little, and he thinks he might have diffused the situation with that, until Yoongi swallows another mouthful of pasta and gives him that pseudo-peaceful look again.

“I can go on,” he says, like that wasn’t clear before. “Wanna hear about how I want to bang you against that shiny desk we have in our room? Make you cum all over the polished wood?”

Taehyung somehow finds time to think about how they’d have to clean that up really well afterwards, because he’s starting to feel terribly sorry for the cleaning staff here. “What do I have to do to make you shut up and let me eat my burger in peace?” he asks, feeling brave, even though part of him isn’t that sure if he really wants Yoongi to stop. He does want to eat though, and he still hasn’t touched his burger. He’s scared of opening his mouth wide enough, thinks a moan might slip out somewhere. Then again, the burger should muffle the sound, right? He’s gonna try it.

Yoongi seems to soften a little, like always when Taehyung doesn’t seem a hundred percent on board with something. “Just tell me if you’re up for a short round after dinner, or if you’d rather sleep,” he answers, always trying to make it obvious that Taehyung has a choice here.

“Like I could sleep now,” Taehyung says with his mouth full, and when he swallows he raises his brows at Yoongi, finally deciding that he’s right about nobody understanding them anyway. “Do you have any idea how hard I am?”

Of course, Yoongi seems pretty satisfied with that answer, offering a smug little smile. He’s still looking at Taehyung quietly though, and it takes him a few more seconds to realize that Yoongi is waiting for an actual, definitive yes.

“I’m up for sex,” he says finally, setting his burger back down and grabbing his coke. “Oh, but I’m still definitely too tired for any desks or windows, okay? We can try all that later, but I want a bed under me for now.”

“That’s fair,” Yoongi says, sounding pleased, and Taehyung briefly wonders if he could have done that, if Yoongi actually still has the stamina to bone someone standing up against a window or whatever.

Probably not, though. Taehyung watches him wolf down his spaghetti now that their pleasant dinner conversation has died, he’s very obviously hungry and a little paler than usual, so Taehyung decides that he’s bluffing. He must be.

By the time they’re on their way back to their hotel room, Taehyung is still half hard in his pants, mostly because Yoongi’s voice keeps echoing through his head, describing over and over what he’d like to do with him. But he watches Yoongi stifle a yawn in the elevator mirror, and he feels tiredness in every single bone of his own body, so he’s not exactly expecting the fuck of his life right now. They need to get this out of their system in order to fall asleep next to each other, Yoongi was right about that, but he doubts it’ll be anything special.

Then again, when Yoongi drops on his back on the giant bed and pulls Taehyung down to straddle him, it’s already starting to feel a little bit special. What he was also right about of course, was the fact that they’ve been limiting themselves to a lot of hand jobs and blow jobs (and some fingering at Starbucks), since they’ve never had the room to lie down somewhere, and neither of them was
daring enough to try it standing up against one of the stall walls without anybody noticing outside. So not only is the bed kind of new, but also the prospect of ‘actual’ sex, without worrying about people hearing or seeing them, and it makes Taehyung’s head swim a little.

Though that might also be coming from the kiss Yoongi pulled him into. There’s a hand in his hair again while their lips press against each other and Taehyung chokes on a moan, immediately rolling his hips down to grind against Yoongi’s. He doesn’t bother breaking the kiss when he huffs a laugh, murmuring softly into Yoongi’s mouth instead. “Can you even get off without fear of getting arrested for indecent behavior?”

“I got off pretty well in your bed that one time,” Yoongi shoots back immediately, making something hot run down Taehyung’s back at the memory.

Still, he’s not done stupidly teasing him, he decides. “Maybe that was just because you somehow already knew my parents were on their way home,” he suggests, lips still ghosting over Yoongi’s, his own bulge still rubbing over Yoongi’s pants, making Yoongi’s breath stutter.

His lips disappear from Taehyung’s a second later though, Yoongi pulls at his hair gently to move his head to the side a little and starts mouthing over his jaw, teeth scraping the skin on his throat before he speaks up again. “Listen, I don’t care right now, I just wanna bone you,” Yoongi drawls, making a laugh bubble up in Taehyung’s throat that dies down again immediately when he feels hot breath ghost over his ear and Yoongi’s voice drops. “But if it makes you happy, I can make you scream loud enough so the people next door will know just how much you’re enjoying yourself.”

Taehyung wants the laugh to come back to him, so he can giggle at Yoongi and tell him that this is about what makes Yoongi happy, that the entire basically-in-public thing is very obviously Yoongi’s kink, not his, Taehyung really just played along and kind of got used to it, but maybe he’s far too deep into this to keep telling that to himself. Maybe he sort of sometimes gets off on it too, now. Maybe.

“I’m good I think,” Taehyung just answers with a helpless little grin, voice quivering with the way Yoongi runs his blunt nails over his scalp one last time before his hands drop to unbutton Taehyung’s pants. Taehyung groans softly the second the pressure disappears from his growing erection, and he blindly claws downwards to find the hem of Yoongi’s shirt and pull it up to make him strip.

Yoongi does, discarding his own shirt and Taehyung’s shortly after, then he tugs at Taehyung’s pants a little as he sits up and quickly slips out from where he was lying between Taehyung’s legs. “Take those off, then get back on your knees,” he says while getting up from the bed, pausing a little before adding, “If you want.”

Taehyung sure as hell doesn’t mind. He kicks his pants off while Yoongi does the same, then sits back on his heels to watch him dig through that large backpack of his. Before he can remind him that he packed condoms and lube in his suitcase, Yoongi pulls a package of both out of his backpack and Taehyung has to fight to bite back a laugh. This means they have a lot of lube with them on this two-week trip.

Once the mattress shifts behind him, Taehyung is violently reminded of what Yoongi said about his chest pressing against Taehyung’s back -- it’s warm, and Yoongi is so close, and he can feel his nose and his breath brush just past his hairline before Taehyung lets out a little yelp because there are teeth sinking into the back of his neck. Yoongi’s cold fingers ghost over his hip bones, up his stomach, then to his sides until they’re on his back and Yoongi gives him a gentle shove that makes Taehyung fall forwards and support himself on the mattress with his elbows. Not being able to see Yoongi is weird after all those times when they were in a very close space together and Yoongi was
everywhere, always there to grab and muffle his voice against, but this is exciting in its own way.

One of Yoongi’s arms is back around Taehyung, the hand finding his cock, already hard by now, and giving it a few tugs while Taehyung hears the unmistakable sound of a lube bottle being popped open. He drowns it out with his own voice though, whimpering softly and grabbing the next best pillow while Yoongi lazily flicks his thumb over the head of his cock.

“You always sound like you’re on the verge of coming already,” Yoongi observes, ignoring the way Taehyung winces when a very cold, slicked up finger starts circling his hole. “You’re not, are you?”

Taehyung raises his head from the pillow bunched up between his hands to squint at Yoongi over his shoulder. “Don’t worry, I won’t come as long as you’re just standing around there talking instead of fingering me,” he gets out, voice a little unsteady, but he’s proud nonetheless. The answer he gets is an amused glance, and a finger inside him. Taehyung breathes out shakily, dropping his forehead back on the pillow and closing his eyes, relaxing slowly. “Didn’t know you were such a talker,” he mumbles. He’s unsure if Yoongi even caught that, before he hears him snort.

“Only when nobody’s listening,” he says, and curls his finger inside Taehyung.

They’re done talking quickly though, since Taehyung can’t really respond to anything anymore as soon as Yoongi starts adding fingers. He’s always quick to falter, but Yoongi is also always quick to find the spots he needs to push for that, so Taehyung finds himself reduced to a moaning mess once more, face pressed only halfway into a pillow since he needs the other half to gasp for air, fingers clawing at the bedspread, ass up high.

Admittedly, he has to lower it a bit, spread his legs wider a little later to make sure Yoongi’s dick can actually reach him. Not like Taehyung is going to say anything about that -- he likes pointing out weird things during sex sometimes (because sex is weird, let’s be real), but he knows better than to involve their height difference in this. He stays quiet, trying to steady his breathing instead, chest heaving against the mattress, though all his efforts go to waste in a shuddering groan once he feels the head of Yoongi’s cock press into him slowly.

Behind him, Yoongi releases a quiet grunt and slides in deeper, and it doesn’t take Taehyung two seconds to roll his hips down against him. He makes a mental note to himself that once they’re back in Seoul, he’s just going to have to bite the bullet and invite Yoongi over to his parents’ apartment more often, or more specifically to his bed, because as satisfying and exciting their bathroom stall dates are, he’s been in dire need of exactly this. Yoongi’s hands are on his hips, his cold fingers melting against Taehyung’s hot skin, and the pace is slow and tired, but that doesn’t take the intensity out of Yoongi’s thrusts. They’re deep and they’re angled perfectly, and one of Yoongi’s hands keeps roaming, keeps running up his spine and squeezing his shoulder, running back down and squeezing his thigh while he keeps fucking into him, and Taehyung can barely breathe.

Soon enough Taehyung throws his head back, gasping hungrily for cooler air that wasn’t caged somewhere between his sweaty body and the soft bedspread underneath him. There’s white flashing behind his eyes every time Yoongi pushes against his prostate, his moans breathy and unstable, sounding incredibly spent already, but if Yoongi’s own scratchy voice and the bruising grip on his hip are anything to go by, he’s not really any better.

Taehyung lets his eyes fall shut and wonders for a second if sex after a fourteen-hour flight, not to mention the trips to and from the airport, really was a good idea -- right before Yoongi slams against his prostate again, and the hand that’s not on his hip finds his leaking cock again, and after that, every coherent thought is wiped clean from his mind. He can still somewhat feel himself bucking into Yoongi’s hand, can feel Yoongi’s other hand pull him back by the hip, but everything after that is a blur. Bliss washes over him as he moans loudly into the pillow, his voice breaking into a whine.
Yoongi keeps stroking him through his climax and still plowing into him, and Yoongi is *everywhere* again, Taehyung thinks while too far gone to realize that Yoongi’s body is pressed flush against his now, his teeth buried in Taehyung’s shoulder blade to stifle his own noises while he, too, erratically thrusts through his orgasm.

When the static fades slowly from his head, he’s lying on his stomach, and his butt is growing cold. “You might be lying in a wet patch,” Yoongi points out from somewhere, “but I think most of it got on my hand.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says. He doesn’t really want to open his eyes or move or think or do anything at all, but he thinks he *is* lying on something wet, so he rolls to his side with a little groan and pries his eyes open. Yoongi is back in his boxers already, standing beside the bed and throwing him a box of tissues that bumps off Taehyung’s chest before he catches it in lazy hands. His shoulder aches softly, he realizes while muttering a thanks and cleaning himself off, but he’s not too sure why. He doesn’t particularly care either. He still feels a bit like he’s floating, so he’s going to enjoy that, not even thinking about their poor cleaning staff again as he carefully pats the bed sheet dry. Or dry enough to sleep on at least. Yeah, he doesn’t care. “Good fucking night.”

Yoongi laughs as he drops down next to him, quietly and a little hoarse of course, but it’s enough to make Taehyung squint at him with one eye opened halfway.

“What?”

“You always swear more after sex,” Yoongi says, pulling the blankets up over both of them.

“Oh,” says Taehyung. He frowns a little, because he didn’t know that, but he thinks Yoongi might be right. He wonders if that was already the case before he started sleeping with him, though. Maybe he should ask Jimin.

“I like it.”

By the time Taehyung realizes what Yoongi just said to him and finds the energy to turn his head and blink at him, Yoongi has already disappeared between pillows and blankets, leaving only a flurry of almost white hair as a hint to where his head might be. Maybe it’s for the better, not giving Taehyung the chance to get all excited over a simple sentence like that. Still, at the very least, it helps him fall asleep with a smile.
The best way to battle insomnia is to kiss Kim Taehyung's thighs. When that's unavailable, 4 am confessions are an option.

warning for more porn..... oops. this also gets a little angsty (?? i guess), child abuse is brought up again towards the end, but dont worry itll all be alright. also no offense to all hot dog lovers out there

Around five minutes after Yoongi told him that he likes his post-sex swearing, Taehyung is out like a light. Around thirty minutes after that, Yoongi is still wide awake.

He lets a quiet sigh escape from his lungs, turning on his side so he can look out the window. Lights blink into the night sky, he sees a plane rise past a cloud, no stars. The sky over New York City, at least, doesn’t seem that different from the sky over Seoul.

Taehyung makes a noise in his sleep and turns on his side as well, and Yoongi can feel his back close to his own. He wishes he could sleep. He really does. He slept on the plane, but plane sleep doesn’t count as real sleep in his book. It’s more to pass the time than to make him feel well rested or anything, he’s tired and his knees are sore and his entire body feels twice as heavy as it should, and he thinks he really is ready for sleep right about now.

But it’s not coming.

Yoongi tries to keep good thoughts in his head. The sex was good, so was the food. He’s always wanted to see NYC, and he’s already in love with the city even if he only got to see the airport and some streets outside the taxi window so far. Also, this bed is nothing short of fucking amazing. Being here with Taehyung is alright, mostly because he speaks English well and has a lot of money, also because his ass is nice. And maybe also because they’re both slowly learning how to talk to each other. It’s good. Coming here, taking him up on the offer, was a good decision. Calling Taehyung when he was freaking out was a good decision. It all played out nicely somehow, so Yoongi wants to feel good, good enough to fall asleep.

He sits up quietly, shuffles out of the blankets to put his naked feet on the soft carpet. He doesn’t feel bad. It’s not that. It’s not about to be one of those nights he spends crying or dry heaving or shaking on the floor. He’s glad he’s here, and he’s excited about the trip, but some things are just too hard to shake off.

Some things hold on to you even through expensive hotel buffet food and fantastic sleepy sex on soft beds. Yoongi pads over to the bathroom to pee, and it’s when he washes his hands afterwards that he catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror. His hair looks like he stuck a fork in an electrical outlet,
and he automatically raises a hand to try and flatten it before he remembers that it doesn’t exactly matter. It’s the middle of the night and nobody’s going to see him except for himself. His tired eyes stare back at him, at his barely visible freckles, his chapped lips, the hint of a hickey in the dip of his collarbone from a few days ago when a new café opened in Taehyung’s part of town.

He’s stared at himself in a lot of bathroom mirrors, in the past couple of years. This one is probably the most expensive. A lot of them were in motels or hostels, some were in clubs and bars, some in the apartments of people he went home with just long enough to fuck and leave again. He never stayed the night. People are not to be trusted.

It’s weird, he thinks, watching one of his own hands card through his hair now. Weird, surreal. If someone had come up to him on the street in Busan four months ago and told him that right now, he’d be in a fancy hotel in New York City, completely paid for by a guy who pretends to be his boyfriend but is also one of the inexplicably nicest people he’s ever seen in his life, whose mother is about to get him an apartment that’ll probably be twice as big as his old one because soon, he’s going to make enough money to pay for that, he’d… No, he probably wouldn’t have laughed about it. He might have gotten pissed off because it would have sounded like a mean kind of joke meant to torment him for being perpetually broke and unhappy. He might have punched this hypothetical person in the face, actually.

Taehyung’s arm dangles off the bed when Yoongi returns, his face smushed against a pillow. Yoongi watches his fingers twitch slightly, can’t help but think about his hand feeling him up over his jeans under that thin blanket they got on the plane. How it took him a moment to relax, how it always takes him a moment to relax when people put their hands on him. He’s been doing better, though. It helps to know that he can trust Taehyung, which is a thought that makes him frown to himself while standing around in his underwear in the middle of the room watching him.

He hasn’t trusted anyone but Hoseok, Namjoon, and Seokjin in a long time. He doesn’t know when he started trusting Taehyung, but right now, he knows he does. And it’s been a while, a very long while, that he’s (stayed in touch with someone long enough) slept with someone often enough to think that about them.

Yoongi feels his face relax a little, and decides to stop staring at Taehyung like that. He crouches down next to his bag to pull out his camera, flicking through his cab photos briefly before sitting down on the floor between their bed and the window to see if he can take some pretty shots of the city beneath them.

How exactly he acquires a picture of Taehyung somewhere in between is, of course, beyond him. Taehyung still has his back turned towards Yoongi so his face isn’t visible, just the back of his head with messy brown hair strewn across a white pillowcase. The blanket is up to his waist and his back is bare, his tan beautiful against the covers. There are some small constellations of moles and freckles sprinkled over his skin, and a bruise on his shoulder blade that’s shaped like Yoongi’s teeth. Yoongi stares at the picture for a while, his finger hovering over the delete button. It would be creepy to keep that, no? He feels a little creepy for taking it in the first place. But then again, he’s not planning on doing anything weird with it, or showing it to anybody without permission. He’s not exactly sure what else he’s planning on doing with it.

Taehyung stirs. Yoongi whips his body back towards the window, because the view outside is definitely pretty too, definitely. As the shutter clicks, he can hear Taehyung picking his phone off the nightstand and pressing a button to wake his display, probably checking the time. Yoongi lowers his camera and watches Taehyung’s reflection in the windowpane. He has to bite back a curse when
Taehyung actually sits up, looks around a little, and presses the heel of his hand into his eyes.

“Are you still up?” he mutters, his voice cracking on every word. Yoongi hums a yes, and Taehyung yawns an almighty yawn before dropping back onto the mattress and turning to his other side, so he can look at Yoongi. “Want me to dig out a fish cam? Do those still help?”

He should have figured. Yoongi bites back a helpless little snort as he shakes his head, turns off his camera and puts it on his nightstand. Taehyung knows about his bad sleeping patterns, because he caught him online in the middle of the night a few times and Yoongi never bothered to come up with an excuse other than saying he couldn’t sleep. And whenever it happens, Taehyung always tries to help. Usually with links to live cams in different parts of the ocean, probably because he’s noticed that Yoongi often does fall asleep watching them.

“Not right now,” Yoongi says, not in the mood for watching stingrays land on the ocean floor like giant pancakes. He gets up from the floor to sit on the bed instead, so he can put his cold feet under the blanket again. Taehyung stays on his side, looking up at him.

“I could suck you off,” he suggests. “Would that make you sleepy?”

Slowly, Yoongi turns his head to return the look. “You’ve been awake for like ten seconds,” he says, making Taehyung grin a little, “and you’re already thinking about dick?”

“I won’t fall asleep on yours, if that’s what you’re afraid of.” Taehyung shrugs, and Yoongi rolls his eyes.

“I’m not afraid. Nobody’s afraid of blowjobs.”

“That’s not true, I used to be a little afraid of giving them.”

“Was that before you found out you basically don’t have a gag reflex?”

“Yeah.” Taehyung stretches his long body with a beautiful little groan, then he rolls over even more so that he’s almost on his stomach, with his face very close to Yoongi’s lap, and grins up at him. “So?” he asks, fingers of one hand dancing lightly over one of Yoongi’s thighs. “How about it?”

“Jesus, you’re so horny,” says Yoongi, grabbing Taehyung by the shoulders and rolling him back over to his back. He’s going to have to leave Yoongi’s thighs alone before something happens, and Yoongi has a good idea as to what else they could be doing.

Taehyung lets himself get pushed back into the mattress, but gives him a pointed look. “You’re one to talk.”

“Didn’t say I’m any better,” Yoongi just answers, and with that, he dives under the blanket to gently push Taehyung’s legs apart and settle between them.

“Oh,” Taehyung says lowly, breath hitching audibly in his throat when Yoongi doesn’t waste any time and runs his teeth over the inside of his right thigh. “Oh, I guess I’m not sucking you off, then.”

“Nope.” Yoongi sinks his teeth into the soft skin and sucks it into his mouth, keeping it there to make sure to leave a nice, dark spot where it fucking belongs. Taehyung twitches a little, but groans softly afterwards, relaxing under Yoongi’s touch when he snakes his arms around Taehyung’s legs and rests his hands on his hips. He’s been wanting to do this since he first saw Taehyung in that damn video call in Jimin’s and Jungkook’s apartment.

From the corner of his eyes, he can see Taehyung’s limp cock gradually twitch to life, slowly, as
Yoongi makes his way up his thigh but stops when he reaches his crotch, to repeat the same thing on his other leg. His hands move from Taehyung’s hips, palms flat against smooth skin, running up and down slowly where his mouth doesn’t reach. Yoongi nips and kisses and bites, running his tongue soothingly along the bigger marks that made Taehyung wince a little. By now, Taehyung’s hands are in his hair, which feels good and right, partly because he’s lifting the blanket with his arms so the air isn’t as stuffy down here, but definitely also because it makes pleasure run hot down Yoongi’s spine.

Plus, the way he’s tugging at his hair now, almost piloting where Yoongi moves his head and leaves more marks, kind of fits with another thing Yoongi had in mind.

He does not like giving up control. It makes him nervous, even now, his heart beating a little bit too fast in his chest at the thought of letting Taehyung take over the reins here, of letting him decide where Yoongi is going to put his mouth. He’s always been like that, as long as he remembers, even before certain memories came back to him. Yoongi has plans for how and when things need to happen, and he doesn’t like including others in those plans or even leaving them up to others completely, because they’ll do it wrong. He was like that in school, he was like that at work, he’s like that in music (with few exceptions), and he has always been like that when it comes to sex.

Of course, you can still be in control while taking it up the ass. Yoongi knows that very well, has done it often enough, will fight anyone who says otherwise. But it’s easier the other way around, for him at least. So he’s been doing it like that, and Taehyung didn’t complain, seemed pretty happy with it, but that’s not the point.

He’s tense. Has been for a while, and he knows it won’t get rid of the problem completely, but maybe it might help at least a little, if he just let go for once. Loosen his desperate grip around control, here, in a safe space -- a warm room, a soft bed, no financial worries, no… inter-personal worries. He trusts Taehyung. It’s still a weird thought to have in his mind, but he does. He knows now that Taehyung is probably one of the last people who would want to harm him, or anyone, really, and he can do this with him. He can.

Taehyung’s legs look like someone tried to eat them. Yoongi is pretty pleased with that, and judging by the way Taehyung’s hands are still clawing at his hair, by the way he can hear him breathe just a little too roughly somewhere above him, the way his cock his half-hard right next to Yoongi’s face, so is Taehyung. His arms strain a little, and Yoongi suspects that right about now, Taehyung would love to press him down again, what with Yoongi’s breath ghosting over his length like that. He doesn’t dare to, and it’s still better that way, but oh, Yoongi is about to make the boy’s night.

He emerges from under the blanket only to lick a wet stripe from Taehyung’s navel up to his chest, making Taehyung quiver beneath him. His hands go from Yoongi’s hair over his chest to his back, fingertips digging into his skin when Yoongi finds the right angle to support himself on his elbows around Taehyung’s head and roll his hips down against his. Taehyung presses his head back against the pillow and moans, the soft fabric of Yoongi’s boxers rubbing against his naked semi, and he cants his hips up to meet Yoongi’s grinding, which pulls a stuttered little groan from Yoongi’s throat.

For a good little while, he keeps it up, rubbing against Taehyung in fluid downward motions, enjoying the gentle drag of Taehyung’s blunt nails against his back, always dipping his head down to suck more marks into Taehyung’s shoulder and the side of his neck. He kind of doubts either of them is more awake than maybe two hours earlier when they first fucked, so it still feels tired and a little lazy, but it doesn’t fail to send heat through Yoongi’s entire body, starting right where his cock keeps meeting Taehyung’s with only a thin layer of fabric between them, radiating up through his torso and right to his head. He waits for Taehyung’s croaky, sleep-deprived voice to turn into soft mewls right next to him before Yoongi raises his head a little to let a gust of hot breath hit his ear, and he speaks in barely more than a whisper.
“Taehyung,” he breathes, ignoring the hard pounding of his heart against his ribcage. “Fuck me.”

Obviously, Yoongi usually doesn’t get nervous over saying sexual things, he made that pretty clear a little earlier, but this is different. This isn’t about riling someone up with second-class dirty talk, this is about giving Taehyung the chance to take control, even if some small part of Yoongi would still very much like to punch himself square in the face for that.

The nervousness gets even worse when Taehyung stops mid-mewl and pulls back a little to blink at Yoongi, because all of a sudden Yoongi can’t read him anymore and has no idea what that means.

“You mean,” says Taehyung, and Yoongi prays to whatever deity is available right now that he’s not about to make him explain himself. “You’re letting me top?”

Okay, that’s better. Not ideal, but better. Yoongi plays it cool, acting like his palms aren’t sweaty against the bedsheets, cocking a brow at him. “Don’t make it weird,” he warns, in an almost perfect imitation of his usual deadpan voice.

Taehyung either falls for it or doesn’t question it, shooting Yoongi a grin that’s way too rectangular to be belonging to that same body that’s trailing his hands down Yoongi’s back now to give his ass a good squeeze, actually making Yoongi suck in a breath. “When do I ever make things weird?”

This level of self irony, in the middle of the night with two handfuls of ass and his dick hard against Yoongi’s boxers, almost pulls a laugh from Yoongi. But his breath gets stuck in his throat when Taehyung captures his lips in a kiss instead, fiery and hungry now like he’s trying to let Yoongi know he’s in good hands or something, but Yoongi guesses he already knew that.

“You’re gonna have to take those off for that,” Taehyung murmurs right into his mouth, not pulling back one inch as he tugs at the waistband of Yoongi’s boxer shorts. Equally unmotivated to break the kiss now that there’s tongues sliding against each other and teeth tugging at lower lips, Yoongi keeps his head right where it is and only reaches down with both hands to push his boxers down. He probably looks ridiculous, keeping his mouth firmly attached to Taehyung’s while somehow shimmying out of his underwear without actually getting up from the warm body underneath him, but he doesn’t care, nobody’s seeing it anyway. Taehyung’s eyes are closed, and he doesn’t say a word about it when his hands find Yoongi’s ass again the second Yoongi is done with kicking his boxers off the bed and goes back to straddling him.

Yoongi fists both of his hands in Taehyung’s hair, enjoying the way Taehyung’s unbridled groan bounces off the walls of his mouth. He finds himself panting right back into Taehyung’s when he feels the hands on his ass squeeze a little harder and pull his cheeks apart, lifting them off Taehyung’s pelvis a little, and when he pushes him back down, Taehyung’s cock is nestled between his cheeks, sliding against him urgently as Taehyung’s fingernails press deeper into his skin.

Oh, this was a good idea. Taehyung shoves his hips upwards, rutting against him with little moans tumbling into their kiss, and Yoongi already feels a bit lightheaded when he rolls his hips to meet Taehyung’s movements, the heat from his stiff cock in the cleft of Yoongi’s ass enough to get him hard, too. Taehyung drags his hands upwards, fingernails leaving burning trails up Yoongi’s back and he hisses softly, but presses back into it, taking every touch he can get to remind himself that this is good, this is what he needed, and it’s fine to let Taehyung do his thing.

Yoongi breaks the kiss to breathe, canting his head back and allowing himself a soft moan when Taehyung immediately seizes the opportunity to muffle his own grunts against Yoongi’s collarbone instead. He can feel him suck a mark there, then another one in the juncture of his shoulder and neck, all while their bodies still move against each other in a lazy rhythm. And it’s when Yoongi grinds down with more force than before, when his tiredness has finally gotten smaller than the incessant
heat pulsing through his veins now and he presses his ass back against Taehyung’s cock, that Taehyung pulls back from his skin and throws one arm to his side to fumble the lube from their nightstand.

“Shit,” he breathes, voice deep and guttural, and Yoongi wants to let him know that he doesn’t just swear more after sex, he also swears more during sex. He only gets as far as smirking and taking a breath though, no words leave his mouth when Taehyung’s palm smoothes over the inside of Yoongi’s thigh, where he’s always been sensitive, so he chokes on a whine instead.

Yoongi did not want to whine. He hates whining, it’s embarrassing and it doesn’t happen to him often, and he can actually feel a little flush creeping over his chest, but Taehyung has enough decency (or survival instinct) not to mention it. And maybe Yoongi needs to accept some things in the process of leaving the upper hand to someone else. Maybe he needs to allow himself a whine or two.

Taehyung sits up and scoots back a little, leaning his back against the bed’s headboard as he pulls Yoongi along carefully. Yoongi hears the sound of a bottle being popped open before he feels Taehyung’s arms reach around him, one hand pulling one of his cheeks aside a bit before there’s the soft press of a slick fingertip against him. Taehyung’s breath is ghosting over Yoongi’s face again and Yoongi doesn’t know when he started clutching to Taehyung’s shoulders like that, but maybe it’s not that bad.

“Tell me if I do something you don’t like,” he murmurs, his lips just barely brushing Yoongi’s, but he doesn’t kiss him. Instead, he starts mouthing down Yoongi’s jaw, only pulling back a little when Yoongi nods quickly.

“I will, just get on with it,” Yoongi rasps out, though the last syllable gets lost in a shaky inhale when Taehyung’s index pushes past his rim. His eyes flutter shut, and he stills for a second -- it’s been a while, honestly. Four months, at least, if Yoongi had to guess, though his mind is way too clouded for any useful memories right now. It’s good though, Taehyung’s long finger pushes in slowly, lets him adjust before he starts moving it back out and thrusting carefully, and Yoongi remembers to breathe.

He rolls his hips back against him until Taehyung catches on and adds a second finger, making Yoongi slow down his movements again. The stretch is gentle, a soft burn up his spine that’s less like pain and more like embers of a fire waiting to flare up, the good kind of fire, the one that’s hopefully going to make white flash behind Yoongi’s eyes sometime soon, if Taehyung plays his cards right.

And with the way Taehyung is already thrusting his fingers in and out, not taking long to find that angle that makes Yoongi suck in a sharp breath and arch his back, he thinks he probably won’t play those cards completely wrong at least.

The third finger burns a little more, but Yoongi feels too far gone to care. Taehyung is good with his hands, the free one rubbing soothing circles on Yoongi’s thighs, where it makes him quiver and jerk his hips for more friction, more fingertips brushing over his prostate like that, more anything, more. He scratches mindlessly over Taehyung’s shoulders, lips busy with dragging over this collarbones, nipping and sucking here and there, dipping his tongue into the hollows and tasting sweat, vaguely, in the far back of his mind.

“Ready?” Taehyung asks from somewhere, voice husky and low, and Yoongi wants to nod and be quiet, but he says yesgodfuck instead, and maybe that’s the more convincing answer anyway.

He clenches around nothing when Taehyung pulls his fingers back, but he doesn’t let him wait too
long. Yoongi has no idea where the condom came from, but he doesn’t care. Taehyung’s hands are on his hips and he steers him down on his cock slowly, inch by inch, the sting shooting up his spine mingling with pure fucking bliss, making Yoongi feel dizzy. His own soft moan gets lost, thankfully, in the shaky groan floating out of Taehyung’s throat, and for a few seconds, neither of them moves.

It’s Yoongi who starts gyrating his hips first, pulling another noise from Taehyung that seems to quiver in the air between them. Yoongi lets his eyes fall shut, enjoys the drag, his forehead leaning against Taehyung’s shoulder as he raises his hips off of him slowly, then drops them back down with twice the speed. They moan in unison, Taehyung’s fingers pressing into Yoongi’s skin and Yoongi can’t even tell where exactly they are, he just knows that Taehyung’s warmth is all over him and he’s in him so deep, and Yoongi can’t stop moving now.

After a few more rolls of his hips, Taehyung starts moving upwards to meet him halfway, and it sends him in even deeper, making something sharp and hot sear through Yoongi’s body -- but it’s not quite right. For a bit, he’s too unfocused to find out why he’s still thinking that, when they’re both breathing heavily and clutching onto each other and rolling their hips against each other in perfect collaboration, but it dawns on him eventually. It’s not perfect collaboration, not yet. Yoongi forces his eyes open to try and get a glimpse of Taehyung’s face, and Taehyung is biting his lower lip and watching him, but he watches him like he’s worried, and yeah, that’s where the problem lies.

He’s gentle and that’s fine, usually, it’s not like Yoongi wants people to be rough without asking him first, only assholes do that. But Taehyung treats him like he’s scared he might fall apart under his touch any second, and not in the good way, and that’s too gentle. He moves his hips up carefully, he ghosts his hands over Yoongi’s back, he’s leaving the pace entirely up to Yoongi, and that’s nice and all, but it’s not what he was trying to achieve here.

Yoongi reaches behind him, puts his palms on Taehyung’s hands and pulls them down, makes them run over his body and right back to his ass, pressing them into the skin there. “C’mon,” he breathes, barely audible, but enough to make Taehyung swallow thickly. Yoongi leans towards him just enough to brush his lips over Taehyung’s, licking over his lower lip without actually kissing him. “I did tell you to fuck me. Do it properly.”

He slams his hips down harder to punctuate the end of that last sentence, and he can feel Taehyung tense beneath him, feels his fingers twitch on his ass, and looks up just in time to see his eyes darken with the hint of a smirk creeping to his lips and, fuck, that’s hot.

“Holy fuck,” he whispers into the empty space above him -- Taehyung’s hair brushes past his chin as he drags his teeth down Yoongi’s chest, both of his hands holding his hips in place while he keeps thrusting into that spot relentlessly. Yoongi tries swearing again but he can’t, the very first syllable gets stuck in his throat already and leaves him in a choked moan instead, and he’s pretty sure his throat isn’t going to be able to do anything else for the time being.

Taehyung’s pace isn’t fast or brutal or anything, but Yoongi still feels his head spinning. His thrusts are still hard, but they’re slow, well-aimed but so slow, and it gives them a kind of intensity that makes the blood boil in his veins, makes fireworks go off behind his eyes and he’s holding onto Taehyung’s hair for dear life now, both hands clutching the soft strands like he’s at sea and Taehyung is the only thing holding him afloat. Naturally, that rips a groan from Taehyung’s chest,
rumbling softly against Yoongi’s skin where Taehyung is pressing his lips on his ribs. His hands start wandering, moving from Yoongi’s hips to his thighs, fingernails brushing over the sensitive skin hard enough to make Yoongi arch his back for more, but just soft enough to leave no marks. One of his hands lifts one of Yoongi’s legs, presses it against Taehyung’s chest after Taehyung leaned up a little, lips now detached from the hickey blooming on Yoongi’s skin. He’s still close though, close enough to almost make Yoongi feel like he’s being folded in half with his leg thrown over Taehyung’s shoulder, but it changes the angle just right to get Taehyung in even deeper, to make it even better, however the hell that was even possible.

Yoongi doesn’t have any hair to hold on to now, so he’s clutching at bed sheets instead, and he can’t remember the last time he had to do that. Then again, he probably wouldn’t be able to remember his own last name if someone asked him right now, something with an M maybe, maybe not, maybe he wouldn’t care if he had the most ridiculous name in the world as long as Taehyung keeps plowing into him like that. He feels hot all over, can’t quite believe that just a few minutes ago (Minutes? Hours? The concept of time is beyond him at this point) he thought that Taehyung wasn’t fucking him properly, thinks that maybe it happened in some sort of parallel universe or something, because this version of Taehyung -- wherever it came from just now -- definitely fucks him right.

Taehyung’s breath comes in ragged gasps and stuttered moans, his deep voice breaking around the edges and Yoongi wants to listen to that forever, doesn’t even have time to tell himself that that’s a weird ass thought and he’s not supposed to have those, too busy rolling his hips down to meet Taehyung’s, to take everything he can get out of that angle that makes everything so fucking perfect. His body feels like it’s on fire, the good kind of fire, he can practically feel it burn up whatever stress he had built up because he definitely also feels light as a feather, even when he’s being shoved back into the mattress with every thrust now. Taehyung has been starting to fall out of rhythm, his movements losing their grace for something more animalistic, more desperate, and Yoongi isn’t really doing any better.

Their thrusts don’t meet anymore, both of them slamming their hips together chasing release now, and Yoongi thinks he might actually manage to come untouched if they continue like that, if Taehyung just doesn’t stop moving now, but before he can even think about saying anything, a large, warm hand wraps around his throbbing cock and Yoongi is gone.

It barely takes him two strokes of Taehyung’s hand before he unravels completely, dissolving in the climax washing over him in giant waves, the static in his head extending to his eyes and ears. He doesn’t see or hear anything, he thinks he might be cursing his soul out, but he might also just be hissing a bunch of garbled words that don’t actually make any sense, he’s not really sure. He vaguely registers Taehyung letting go of his leg and grabbing his hip instead, but his other hand is still on Yoongi’s cock, fisting him through it loosely until Yoongi winces from the overstimulation.

His mind clears a little around the time Taehyung stops thrusting into him, but he still feels a little dizzy. Or maybe not even a little dizzy. Yeah, he’s feeling a big dizzy.

Taehyung’s head is heavy on his chest, breath warm against Yoongi’s rapidly cooling skin. “Was that,” he says, pausing to clear his throat because his voice is a raw disaster, “proper enough for you?”

“Shut up,” Yoongi rasps. He’s pretty sure the last time his voice sounded this wrecked was when he’d been yelling into a microphone for three hours straight. He’s still trying to catch his breath, which is hard with Taehyung on top of him, so he’s going to tell him to get off already. “Yeah, it was,” he says instead.

Okay, well. Credit where credit is due, he guesses.
It does the job too and makes Taehyung move off of him with a stupidly happy little grin. Yoongi grimaces just slightly when he pulls out and leaves him cold and naked and empty, but he’s too tired to complain now. Taehyung plops down on his back next to him, and then he places the box of tissues right on Yoongi’s chest, so Yoongi is forced to actually move his heavy arms and clean up the absolute mess he left on his own stomach. He chooses to blatantly ignore the way Taehyung seems to wait for him to finish and crawl back under the blanket before Taehyung actually tucks himself up again too, he’s way too exhausted to be thinking about kind and caring people now, fuck that.

“Sleep well, Yoongi,” Taehyung says softly. Yeah, fuck that, too.

Yoongi actually tries to answer something (it was something nice, okay), but it ends up as a muffled grunt against the blanket he pulled up right to his nose, while his eyes are drooping shut. He falls asleep quickly after that, and sleeps like a log through the rest of the night, and most of the morning.

Taehyung’s phone falls to the floor. It hits the carpet with a dull thud and Yoongi opens his eyes to a half empty bed, blankets tangled in a huge heap in the middle, and to Taehyung standing in the room in nothing but boxers, a towel around his neck, his hair wet.

“Oh, fuck,” says Taehyung, and shoots him the usual box grin. “Morning.”

Yoongi doesn’t say anything, because he rarely does that within the first fifteen minutes of waking up. He scrunches his face a little to squint at him, but he doubts Taehyung even catches that because he’s busy bending down to pick up his phone and inspect it for any cracks. Yoongi inspects him in return, from afar of course, without actually moving one inch. He has marks all over, the bite mark on his shoulder still disturbingly prominent, and his thighs look exactly the way Yoongi has been wanting them to look for weeks now. It’s a little more satisfying than it should be, maybe.

Taehyung catches his glance when he looks up from his screen again, and giggles quietly. “I know. I look like someone tried to murder me.”

“You look like someone had sex with you all night,” Yoongi answers, almost groaning at his own voice. He sounds like someone had sex with him all night. Although he probably looks the part, too. There are some very distinct memories of Taehyung’s lips firmly attached to his collarbones when he tries to remember last night.

Taehyung giggles some more about that while crouching down to fish for clothes in his suitcase. “Did you sleep well? Is it too early to ask what you wanna do today?”

“It’s too early to ask anything,” Yoongi mumbles, and pulls the blanket up over his head. Unsurprisingly, it smells like sex. Or maybe he’s just smelling himself.

“Alright,” he can hear Taehyung say from outside his sex blanket fort. “Maybe that means I can get through breakfast without dirty talk this time.”

There’s another giggle, and before Yoongi can stop himself, he’s grinning stupidly into the dark.

A little later, when they’re both showered and dressed and fed (without dirty talk), they’re on their way to the Statue of Liberty. Yoongi feels a little weird doing the classic touristy stuff, but it’s something he wants to have seen at least once in his life, something he wants to have on his camera to stare at later, to somehow help him realize that this trip actually happened. The ferry ride alone is
enough to impress him, and he’s pretty thankful for the fact that Taehyung seems just as impressed. Taehyung might have grown up a lot richer than him, but neither of them have seen this before, and it’s nice to feel sort of even.

“By the way,” Taehyung says into the silence. Both of them are leaning against the railing staring out into the water, Yoongi with his camera, Taehyung with his phone in hand. “I wanna go see the American Museum of Natural History while we’re here. I mean, you don’t have to come if you don’t care about that, I just --”

“I’ll come,” Yoongi says. Because natural history is interesting, probably. He might not have Taehyung’s professional mindset thanks to his major when looking at stuff like that, but he likes museums and he’s sure it’ll be cool. He’ll come. “I was thinking about going to the Museum of Modern Art, too. I’m not, uh, really big on visual art when it’s not photography, but we’re here already, so…”

He trails off while Taehyung is already nodding enthusiastically. “Yeah, sure! Let’s go there, too.”

It’s quiet for a few more minutes after that, both of them taking in the scenery, getting the occasional shot. Yoongi likes this; he knows Taehyung can be loud and excited and he doesn’t particularly mind that, he guesses, but it’s good like this, too. It’s good that they can both enjoy this without it getting dangerous for Yoongi’s nerves, he thinks. Then, Taehyung says, “Oh my god.”

Yoongi throws him a short frown, then looks back at the water, thinking that maybe Taehyung saw something there that made him burst out. “What?”

“Are we gonna fuck at the MoMA?”

Okay.

It doesn’t even sound like a suggestion, it sounds like an honest question instead, like Taehyung isn’t sure how far they can really take their public restroom thing. Truthfully, neither is Yoongi. Yoongi only knows that there’s a mischievous grin tugging at the corners of Taehyung’s mouth, and he himself doesn’t feel that disinclined either. Photos might be a nice memory, but knowing you got sucked off in famous museums sounds almost as good.

So, Yoongi snorts as he turns his head away again, not even fighting the stupid smirk anymore as he shrugs. “Probably. You’re really gonna have to practice being quiet for that, though.”

“That’s true,” Taehyung says. “I wonder who’d be willing to help me with that.”

Yoongi doesn’t answer that, because Taehyung knows, and they’re both busy now with grinning silently at Liberty Island.

The day passes quickly like that. Both of them are still tired from the flight, the time difference, the night that was more moaning than sleeping, so even Taehyung doesn’t talk much. No, Taehyung watches.

Yoongi notices. While gaping at the Statue of Liberty up close, while walking around and taking pictures from every angle, while reading through some information and history about it, he always notices. Taehyung is fascinated by New York too, no doubt, but Yoongi can feel his gaze linger on him whenever he’s done with his round of sightseeing. Like Yoongi is another tourist attraction, only one that doesn’t leave his side.

He’s noticed that Taehyung is perceptive. He always seems to read people, and he’s really good at it. Yoongi first thought about it when Taehyung brought up things about random classmates he talked
about that were weirdly specific, and by now he’s even made some observations about Hoseok that seemed spot on. He even brought up how Namjoon is obviously helplessly in love with Seokjin, though Yoongi guesses that one’s pretty blatant for everyone that’s not Seokjin, or Namjoon.

Now, Yoongi has been called mysterious before. At this point he has accepted that he is, though he prefers to just call it private instead. He’s private. He’s not a big talker and he doesn’t like sharing, and he knows that Taehyung can still read between the lines a lot in their everyday interactions, but he guesses that overall, he might not be as easy to read for Taehyung as other people are. After yesterday’s dizzying realization that he does kind of trust Taehyung, he guesses there wouldn’t be any real harm in telling him about his messed up past, but there’s nothing in it for him, really. Yoongi would have nothing to gain from that, he’d just be doing Taehyung a favor so he can stop shooting him confused looks out of nowhere, but Taehyung might just have to find a way to survive without knowing every little detail about Yoongi. Yoongi doesn’t have to talk. Probably.

(Yoongi has been to enough counseling sessions to know that talking can help. That talking to people who aren’t your closest friends can help. He even admitted to himself that calling Taehyung during his freakout after getting the job helped, for those exact reasons. Yoongi has also been to enough counseling sessions to know what repression is. Not like that is of any concern right now.)

So he leaves Taehyung to wonder through most of the day. The one tour to the island and back was enough for both of them, they’re still trying to get their energy back and it’s only the first day in the city, so they settle for getting real american hot dogs at a street corner (Yoongi thinks they’re kind of gross and Taehyung says they’re super disgusting and he loves them) and going back to their hotel in the late afternoon. Taehyung still watches him closely during everything he does, but at this point, Yoongi feels exhausted enough to not think about that anymore and ready to crash in that soft bed for the next twenty hours or so.

He’s wide awake of course, when Taehyung chooses to take his pants off before crawling on the bed next to him. Taehyung starts switching through TV channels, and about fifteen minutes later, Taehyung is sucking a mark right below Yoongi’s navel while Yoongi has a hand fisted in his hair, to some weirdly loud american talk show running in the background that Yoongi barely understands half of (some dude named Thomas is the father, though).

Taehyung rides him for all he’s worth while the sun sets outside their window. He stops wondering about Yoongi during sex, he thinks -- maybe Taehyung thinks he’s already got him all figured out on that part, maybe he’s just too distracted. During sex, Yoongi is the one who stares.

The fading light from outside makes Taehyung look unreal, his muscles moving under taut, bronzed skin as he rolls his body down onto Yoongi’s cock, and Yoongi catches himself thinking that he’d kind of like to reach to the side and pick up his camera from the nightstand to capture this. He doesn’t, of course. He settles for running his hands up and down Taehyung’s sides and watching his every move, like this time around it’s him who can’t quite grasp how or why Taehyung works the way he does.

Taehyung falls asleep quickly after that, on his stomach next to Yoongi with his face buried in pillows so deep that Yoongi isn’t actually sure how he still manages to breathe. Yoongi himself still has time to think that he’s probably facing another sleepless night -- right before he, too, passes out easily.

The entire day felt nice and somewhat calm, and satisfying, but his dreams don’t work with him on that front. Yoongi dreams about Taehyung bringing up what he told him at the party while high on weed, dreams about cop cars pulling up outside some tiny new apartment he apparently lives in now,
even dreams about Hoseok staring at him with a look of pure horror after everyone somehow witnesses how he’s getting arrested, because Taehyung ratted him out. When he wakes up with a sick feeling in his stomach and lights blinking through the night from the city outside, he thinks that maybe part of his subconscious hasn’t quite gotten the memo yet about trusting Taehyung.

Yoongi sits up to look outside, because that feels better than staring at the ceiling. He can hear cars honking and sirens blaring outside, but inside, he hears Taehyung breathe softly.

He probably won’t be able to sleep anymore now. The alarm clock on the nightstand says it’s just past four in the morning, so that’s alright. Yoongi’s had worse. Maybe he should take his camera again and take more pictures. Maybe he should take pictures of the view from their window every night, see if he can make out any small changes in what’s happening down on the streets.

“Sweet,” Taehyung says.

Yoongi turns his head to the other side to watch him. Right. The sleep talking. Taehyung is on his side, turned towards Yoongi’s part of the bed, one hand next to his face, the other resting on his own hip. He looks sound asleep, which is still weird to Yoongi. He’s never seen anyone sleep talk like that.

“Taehyung?”

Taehyung doesn’t even budge, just smacks his lips a little and nuzzles into the pillow some more. “That’s me,” he says, his voice slow and drowsy, and deeper than Yoongi has ever heard it before. Yeah, he’s nowhere near awake.

Yoongi remembers the sick feeling in his gut. It’s almost gone, but not completely. The longer he watches Taehyung, the more he thinks that maybe Taehyung deserves to know the truth, but the longer he thinks that, the more he thinks that maybe Yoongi deserves to tell someone the truth. The truth about the one thing he hasn’t shared with anyone, not even with Hoseok, not even with one of the counselors he saw while roaming around the country. The one thing that’s still inside him, the thing he doesn’t want to feel bad about but does, very rarely, sometimes, in foreign beds at four in the morning.

“I didn’t kill my father, Taehyung,” he says, before he can actually plan any of this through, before he can somehow come up with a good reason to do this while Taehyung sleeps instead of giving them both the chance of having an actual conversation. His voice is low and he can hear his heart pounding between his ears, but Taehyung stays where he is, unmoved, breath soft, eyes closed.

“Okay,” he says.

“He was sick,” says Yoongi, still watching Taehyung, like he’s scared he could wake up any moment and punch him in the face. “And he wanted me to take care of him, but I hated him. So I gave him the wrong meds, the wrong doses. And it didn’t kill him, it just made him worse, so I had an excuse to send him away to a nursing home, get him off my back. But he died there a year later, and I keep thinking that maybe he would have made it a little longer if I hadn’t poisoned him like that.”

Yoongi’s palms feel wet and too warm, but too cold at the same time. He’s sitting between his sheets and watching Taehyung, waiting for him to wake up and tell him about how horrible he is. It’s still not the whole story of course, the whole story would come with a lifetime of child abuse and countless reasons to hate his father, but Yoongi doubts that Taehyung would deem any of them good enough to do what he did. Not Taehyung, not the nicest boy Yoongi has ever seen (and he has seen Jung Hoseok), not the guy who once stopped during their dog walk to pick a rain worm off the
ground with a little stick he picked himself, and help it get back into the grass where it wouldn’t get trampled. Yoongi stands by the fact that he feels better now that his father is dead, but he’s not so sure about feeling good with what led up to that.

“My dad always says,” Taehyung says after a short silence, still slightly muffled against his pillow, “that some people just don’t need to be in this world.”

Yoongi’s eyebrows shoot up. “Your dad said that?” That doesn’t sound right. So far, Taehyung’s dad just seemed like a more mature, professional version of Taehyung, a gentle family man.

But Taehyung hums his yes, and then his hand slips from his hip and lands on Yoongi’s pillow, petting the fabric like his sleeping brain expects Yoongi to still lie there. “Don’t worry so much,” he mumbles. “You’re a good person. So good. You are so soft.”

Briefly, Yoongi wonders if Taehyung just tried to call him, as a person, soft, or if he just said that because he’s petting a pillowcase. Then he tries to focus on the other part instead, the part where Taehyung told him not to worry, the part where he still seemed to take this all in a lot better than Yoongi thought. Maybe it’s because he’s asleep. He was drunk first, and now he’s asleep, and maybe that’s why he still thinks that Yoongi is good. He probably didn’t actually understand a word of what Yoongi said.

“I’m sorry your parents hurt you.”

Yoongi freezes. He’s heard it before, of course, from his friends. He’d usually shrug it off and tell them it’s not their fault, evade the topic. Avoid talking about it again because they already know, he’s already told them any detail he was willing to share. But Taehyung doesn’t know. Taehyung knows very little, and he still sounds like he meant it, like he meant it with all his heart actually, his sleeping face now scrunched up into a soft frown, his fingers stilled on the pillow.

“Thanks,” Yoongi says, and he means it, too. He doesn’t know when his voice got this croaky.

He doesn’t go back to sleep after that, but he stays in bed, doing to Taehyung what Taehyung has been doing to Yoongi all day. He watches, and he wonders.

Hours later, when Taehyung is awake enough to sit on the edge of the bed and try to put his pants on the right way, he thinks that maybe he should tell Yoongi that he remembers most of the conversations he has when he talks in his sleep.

Chapter End Notes

shoutout to my fiancé for sleep talking and actually remembering our weird conversations when they’re asleep and im not. always an inspiration tbh

also shoutout to myself for writing 8k of (vague hand gestures) this instead of the paper i wanted to finish by the end of this month :’)}
It’s raining.

Taehyung is sitting on the floor between the window and the bed, Yoongi curled up on his side and still under the covers behind him, and they’re watching the rain fall and drench the entire city in cold, dissolving colors from neon signs and the reflection of traffic lights on the streets. People are running around pulling their coats over their heads, or briefcases, newspapers, anything. Some of them have umbrellas, but even they seem to be trying to get under the nearest roof as quickly as they can.

“So much for going to Central Park today,” says Taehyung. He’s not too heartbroken about it. There’ll be enough non-rainy days, they still have almost the full two weeks ahead of them, and it’s nice to be in here right now, where it’s warm and dry and comfortable. He shifts a little to look at
Yoongi over his shoulder. “Somewhere else you want to go?”

Yoongi is still staring outside, he has his phone in one hand and an earbud in the ear that’s pressed to his pillow, and Taehyung can hear faint music playing from the other earbud dangling from the bed. He watches Yoongi scrunch up his nose as he shifts a little closer to the edge to peek further outside. “Man, it’s really pouring,” he says to the sound of rain hitting rooftops everywhere growing louder. “I don’t think I wanna set one foot outside, even if it’s just to sprint to the subway station. Let’s just stay here until it calms down a little.”

“All right.” Taehyung can’t imagine Yoongi sprinting somewhere anyway. Then again, he has this little habit of surprising Taehyung. Someone who tells him about performing something that Taehyung guesses could at least classify as bodily harm on his father, out of the blue and in the middle of the night, might also be able to sprint to subway stations quicker than Taehyung would have thought.

Taehyung doesn’t know when he’s going to tell Yoongi. It’s a tough decision to make for him, weird and unexpected, something he’d normally talk through with his friends, but he can’t do that this time around. He’s not going to tell anyone what Yoongi said to him. He’s only going to tell Yoongi that he knows, that he remembers, and then he’s going to see how things go from there. But he can’t do that now. Not when everything feels so nice and calm and Yoongi basically just said that he doesn’t mind spending a big part of the day locked up in here alone with him.

(Truthfully, Taehyung half expected Yoongi to avoid him at all costs today after what he told him in the early morning hours when Taehyung was still asleep, but that’s obviously not happening. Taehyung doesn’t dare to think about what that might mean.)

“You could show me your Australia photos.”

Taehyung blinks and stares at him for a second before he catches himself. Before he realizes what exactly Yoongi just said, without having Taehyung remind him, just like that, and a big, warm grin spreads over his face. “I could do that!” he says, scrambling to his feet. “Hold on, I’ll get my laptop.”

And so they end up on the bed together again, but they manage to calmly sit next to each other this time. They’re both in a shirt and underwear, one blanket pulled over their laps and Taehyung’s laptop perched on his thighs, and Yoongi even paused his music and pulled the earbud from his ear to listen to the first waves of rambling as soon as Taehyung opens the first picture he took at the airport back then. He can’t really help himself -- the semester in Australia was definitely one of the best parts of his life, and he has a lot to say about it, and he’s a little bit thrilled that Yoongi is actually willing to listen.

His family and friends always listen to him when he goes on rants, and Taehyung is past that stage where he felt alone and stupid because other people found him weird when he got too excited. But with people that aren’t Jimin or Jungkook, he still sometimes finds it hard to say just how off-putting they’ll find him once they realize he’s not going to stop talking about sea life anytime soon, and it’s one of the many ways in which Yoongi has been hard to read for him.

But he listens. He’s a quiet listener, but he does definitely listen. With rain still drumming against their window, Yoongi’s eyes are fixed on Taehyung’s laptop screen, only sometimes flickering over to Yoongi’s hands when he waves them around because he’s stumbling over his own words. But Yoongi always seems to understand what he’s trying to say, which is a strangely huge relief. The only times when Yoongi actually asks questions is when Taehyung goes too deep into his bio terms and says stuff Yoongi’s never heard before, or when it’s things that just sound plain unbelievable to him, like Taehyung’s story about counting rings on shark vertebrae like trees to find out how old they got.
And sometimes, he smiles. Usually not about Taehyung’s underwater shots of various kinds of animals, or the pictures he took in labs or parks he worked at, but about the other things that are in there. Taehyung’s picture folder isn’t exactly organized, so there are more private photos in there too, from his dorm room to college parties he went to, to food he ate and selfies he took. Taehyung very rarely finds things he does embarrassing, but having Yoongi smile quietly at the photos he got a friend to take of him at the beach while exaggeratedly posing like a model for shits and giggles does kind of make heat creep up his neck.

But Yoongi stays quiet, which Taehyung is actually glad about in this rare case. There are other pictures after those anyway, and Taehyung accidentally falls into a rant about how plants survive in rain forests. Yoongi seems mildly impressed.

Taehyung thought the picture of his hand waving at the airport was going to be the last, but there’s another one he took on the plane, which is just a blurry photo of his feet. Yoongi gives it a bemused look, and Taehyung kind of does, too -- he forgot he took that. Probably because he was pretty busy being nervous about meeting Yoongi for the better part of that flight, so once again, he’s glad that they’re not talking much right now.

“Okay, that was it,” he says softly, glancing out the window when he hears thunder rumble somewhere close. Yeah, they’re not getting out of here anytime soon.

“That was nice,” says Yoongi, so Taehyung throws him a broad smile that Yoongi probably doesn’t catch because he’s stretching half his body over the headboard with a pleased little groan. Not like Taehyung is staring or anything.

“Do you wanna show me your photos too?” he asks tentatively. “I still don’t actually know where you even went.”

Yoongi stops stretching, but keeps his hands over his head as he watches Taehyung’s feet on the laptop screen. “I went everywhere,” he says after a second of hesitation. “Pretty much all around the country, returned to Seoul now and then, left again, visited almost every other city I could find.”

“So, like a backpacking trip?” Taehyung shoots Yoongi’s gigantic backpack that’s leaning on the wall next to the bed a short glance before he closes his picture folder.

“I guess.” Yoongi shrugs. “I just had to get away for a while. Like, you know when I called you back in Seoul? I was like that all the time back then. Twenty-four seven. Needed a break, and staying in motion helped.”

Taehyung looks up at him, only for a second. Yoongi’s voice sounded casual, but his face is giving him away, how he’s still staring at the laptop, gaze hard, all of his facial muscles seeming tense like he’s trying his hardest to keep his grip on composure, or at least make it seem like he has that grip. Taehyung doesn’t know why he’s telling him this, he’s glad of course, but he’s not sure what made him open up for exactly five sentences just now. Maybe he’s actually trying to get a certain reaction out of Taehyung, maybe he’s trying to find out if he remembers last night.

He already has the timeline all figured out. It wasn’t hard after remembering that Yoongi said his father died within a year of being put away, and remembering that Jungkook said it was just a few months ago. It makes sense now. Yoongi made him worse, put him in the nursing home, left for his trip. Not exactly surprising that he needed a break after that. Then, his father dies, and just a little later, Yoongi comes back. And maybe now he’s trying to see if Taehyung is going to talk to him about that, and maybe Taehyung should, but maybe Taehyung doesn’t want to. It’s selfish, but he wants to sit next to Yoongi in this warm bed and listen to the rain outside and look at photos they took, and he wants to believe that they can still do all the other stuff later.
So, he just nods with a little hum instead. He gets it, is all he wants Yoongi to know right now. He does.

While Taehyung puts his laptop away, Yoongi pulls his out of his backpack and they resume their positions on the bed. He watches Yoongi’s laptop struggle to life loudly and slowly; it quite literally looks like it’s about to fall apart, but he’s not going to say anything about that. He gets distracted by the fact that Yoongi’s desktop wallpaper is a photo of him, Hoseok, Namjoon and Seokjin standing arm in arm in an apartment Taehyung doesn’t recognize, all smiling, and then he gets distracted by a folder labeled compositions in the upper left corner. While he was staring though, Yoongi shoved an SD card into the slot and his laptop, now whirring loudly, is starting to load his pictures, so Taehyung is going to have to postpone the question burning on his tongue.

“It’s mostly just landscape pics, and some food,” Yoongi says quietly, fingers ghosting over his touchpad. “So uh, if that bores you, just tell me.”

He sounds less sure of himself than Taehyung has ever heard him, which makes him throw Yoongi a confused glance, but he just giggles afterwards. “Man, I just told you basically everything I know about rain forests, and you sat through it. One, I have no right to complain, and two, landscapes are cool. I’m looking forward to it.”

Yoongi snorts and gives a one-shouldered shrug, and Taehyung has no idea what that means, but he opens the first photo, so he guesses they’re good.

What’s also good, and a lot better than Taehyung would have thought, are Yoongi’s photos. He’s seen the huge camera, he’s seen the dedication and concentration Yoongi puts in his shots, but he’s never seen one up on an actual screen, and it’s a little mindblowing. Taehyung doesn’t really know much about visual composition or colors or anything like that, he just knows that Yoongi’s photo of a mountain range clouded in mist is something he’d print as a poster and put on a wall.

Yoongi doesn’t talk much at first, which comes as no surprise to Taehyung. He just tells him where he was when he took the respective picture, this is Suwon, this is Kwangju, this is Ulsan, but he seems to get used to talking after a while. He starts telling Taehyung about the motels he stayed at, the bus routes he took, about the time he almost forgot his backpack on a train and then actually forgot it in some fast food joint in Daejeon, about the clubs he worked at in between to scrape together some more travel money. He reminds Taehyung of when his father drove them to the airport; he’s still calm, his voice quiet and deep, but he speaks without hesitating and there’s actual life in his face, and even with the soft tone of his voice there’s some sort of passion in it that almost makes Taehyung feel like he was right there with Yoongi. It’s beautiful, and from time to time, Taehyung has difficulties focusing on the pictures instead of watching Yoongi talk.

There are some Instagram-worthy pictures of food mixed in here and there, and then Yoongi snorts softly about a photo of a ground-out cigarette bud. “Last cigarette I smoked,” he says quietly. “Took that to remind myself.” He wordlessly checks the date the picture was taken, and Taehyung realizes that it’s been over half a year.

He wants to tell Yoongi that he’s proud of him, but Yoongi has already moved on to pictures of a sunset over the sea.

“You’ve seen so much of Korea,” he says instead, when they’ve reached Yoongi’s first photos back in Seoul, subway stations and city lights Taehyung actually recognizes. He doesn’t bother to keep the awe out of his voice. “I had no idea.”

For a split second, Yoongi smiles softly, while closing the picture folder. “Yeah, it was good. Probably more my cup of tea than Australia. I might have died there.”
“Well, it’s not really as deadly as everyone always says it is, if you just--” Taehyung starts his usual lecture, when Yoongi already laughs low in his throat and makes him shut up quickly again.

“No, I mean, because of the heat. Animals wouldn’t even get to me in the short time it’d take me to dehydrate, probably catch fire, shrivel up and die.”

“Oh,” Taehyung says with a giggle, since, yeah, Yoongi doesn’t exactly look like the type of person who takes heat well, though he’s also noticed that he doesn’t take cold well either. Which makes him sound a lot more fragile and vulnerable than Yoongi would probably like to hear, so Taehyung chooses to not comment on that any further. No, he’s going to say something else that still seems mildly scary to him. “Is that your music there in the compositions folder?”

Yoongi’s fingers still on the touchpad, but only for a brief moment. Then, to Taehyung’s delight, he moves the cursor up towards the folder while humming his yes. Inside the folder are two other folders, one labeled school, the other labeled fuck.

“What’s,” Taehyung laughs, “what’s in the fuck folder?”

“Everything that doesn’t belong in the school folder,” Yoongi says flatly, which, Taehyung guesses, makes sense. “It’s my personal stuff. The rest is music I wrote for college.” He pauses, while opening the school folder, that’s again sorted into more folders that look like assignments to Taehyung, but he’s not sure. “Most of these have lyrics. Just so you know.”

Taehyung shoots him a wide-eyed glance, but Yoongi’s eyes are fixed on the screen. “Did you write those, too?” he asks.

“Most of them.” Yoongi is flicking through assignments now, and Taehyung dares to hope he’s trying to decide which tracks to show him.

“And… Did you sing them, too?”

Yoongi huffs a laugh, but doesn’t answer at first. He leans to the side and pulls his headphone cable out of his phone to plug it into the laptop instead, then he pushes the earbuds in Taehyung’s lap. “I don’t sing. Listen with those, my speakers are garbage. Also, I use this to vent a lot, so, I don’t know. Be prepared, or something.”

Taehyung feels his heart beat in his throat. He suddenly thinks that there are a million questions he needs to ask first, he needs to know how much of this Yoongi did himself, if he played instruments for this track too, what he meant when he said he doesn’t sing like that because it sure sounded like he was trying to tell him something here, what genre the song is going to be, how long it is -- what he vents about in music. Because Yoongi told him to be prepared, but he doesn’t feel prepared for anything at all, actually, not for Yoongi letting him listen to something that he made, he wasn’t expecting him to just play something for Taehyung this easily, but before he can say anything, as soon as he has the earbuds in, he clicks play.

It starts off with a deep, heavy bassline before sharp rhythmic clapping announces percussion. This time, Taehyung can feel Yoongi’s gaze linger on him while he himself is staring at the screen even though there’s nothing to see there. He’s still trying to brace himself for whatever venting is about to happen and whoever’s voice is going to sing it, but for some reason, nothing could have prepared him for what he hears instead.

The Yoongi in his ears takes a deep breath at first, nothing more, but Taehyung would recognize that anywhere. It’s vocal in its own special way, as vocal as a breath can be, but Taehyung doesn’t have time to think about that because barely a second later there are words, a lot of words, and Yoongi is
Taehyung doesn’t listen to much rap outside from what his friends listen to. He likes it, he just doesn’t exactly know anything about it, he doesn’t know what’s considered good or bad, but he knows that the bassline is still there with merciless percussion but no other instruments, and it somehow seems enough to accompany Yoongi’s voice, which is... *something*. It’s deeper than Taehyung’s ever heard it before, it sounds *raw*, emotional with highs and lows that catch Taehyung off-guard whenever they change, there’s snide laughs in between lines that are so fast that it takes Taehyung embarrassingly long to even realize what he’s rapping about.

And even once he’s able to distinguish actual words, he still needs a second to process that essentially, Yoongi is talking about how fucked their education system is. His eyes flicker over the screen to make sure they’re really in the *school* folder and not in the *fuck* folder, but they are, he turned this in for some sort of assignment after he literally just told the ministry of education to kiss his ass for making him want to die.

There’s a bridge with some backing vocals that sound strangely familiar to Taehyung, but he hasn’t managed to put his finger on it by the time the second verse hits him like a fist. It’s not so much about the system anymore as it is about being a student with no money, about working his way up with underpaid jobs and no valued connections, and for a second there, just for a few words, Yoongi’s voice gets so clear and honest it makes soft pain flare up in Taehyung’s chest. Right afterwards though, he goes on about still being able to make it because he’s *just that fucking good*, and Taehyung feels better again.

It ends with another one of those irritatingly attractive laughs with the bassline slowing and dying, and Taehyung stays still for a few more seconds, like he’s waiting for something to happen, before he gingerly pulls the earbuds out and turns his head towards Yoongi.

“This was for college?” is the first thing he gets out, his mind still trying to process what he just heard.

There’s a grin on Yoongi’s lips now that makes him look young and plain mischievous, and Taehyung thinks he’s a bit dizzy. Yoongi shrugs. “Had some awkward talks with my professors afterwards, yeah. Nothing too bad though.”

Vaguely, Taehyung remembers Namjoon saying that Yoongi was an exceptionally good student, so maybe he was popular enough with his teachers to pull stunts like this. The memory makes him realize something else, and his eyes go wide. “Was that Hoseok screeching in the background during that one part?”

“Screeching,” Yoongi echoes with a breathy little laugh, before he nods, eyes on Taehyung. “Yes, that was Hoseok. You’ve got a good ear.”

Taehyung doesn’t know why that makes heat spread up his neck. Maybe because Yoongi very obviously knows his stuff and being told that he has good hearing by someone who wrote what he just heard feels like a big compliment. He takes a breath because he wants to say something else, but he really doesn’t know how to put his thoughts into actual words right now. “That was really good,” he just says instead, deflating a bit because *good* doesn’t even touch it, and it’s not just about the music, those lyrics were fucking *poetry* and Yoongi’s voice alone made him feel them with all his heart, but he doesn’t know how to convey that.

It’s enough, though, to make Yoongi look away with an awkward smile, shrug his shoulders once, twice, and pointlessly drag his fingers over his touchpad before he mutters out a thanks.
“Can I hear more?” Taehyung blurts out. He doesn’t know if Yoongi is ready to show him more, he doesn’t know if he himself can even take more, but he kind of really wants to.

The smile is still there, and Yoongi is already digging through more assignment folders by the time Taehyung manages to wrench his gaze away from his face. “Yeah, hang on. I have something you might like. I don’t know why I didn’t think of that sooner.”

Again, he’s motioning for Taehyung to put the earbuds back in before Taehyung feels even remotely prepared, and opens a track that’s just labeled d.

It’s a sweet piano melody and Taehyung immediately catches himself imagining Yoongi sitting on a piano and playing it. He’s not at all sure what to expect from this one, and for some reason, he’s surprised again when it turns out to be another rap. It feels vastly different this time though, starting off with the fact that it’s not prefaced by one of those brutal intakes of breath but a soft sigh, and then Yoongi’s voice is calm and even, leaving Taehyung with another instance of this feeling of whiplash Yoongi tends to give him.

He’s talking about a city, one where ‘everything’ started, and the further he gets, the more he describes, the more Taehyung feels a soft smile creep on his lips. Yoongi is rapping about Daegu, and before he even drops the name at the end of the first verse, Taehyung knows.

It’s a nicer track, gentler, talking about buildings and bus stops and parks even Taehyung remembers, occasionally alluding to what it was like to leave that for a city like Seoul, but even Seoul comes off pretty well this time. It’s less spite and more nostalgia, but in a peaceful way that makes Taehyung feel warmth in his chest. He’s still smiling by the time the piano fades, and it’s disorienting to think that this is all because of the guy sitting next to him with his eyes never leaving Taehyung’s face.

“That was pretty,” he says when he takes out the earbuds, which still feels like an understatement, but it’s better than just calling it good, he supposes.

The awkward smile returns, as Yoongi finally looks away again and back to his laptop. “You ever miss it? Daegu, I mean. When did you even move away?”

“I was eight,” Taehyung says quietly. They still haven’t really talked much about their shared hometown, but he still feels too fuzzy from the music to ponder about why Yoongi is actually asking him personal questions now, and, thankfully, too fuzzy to think about how it’s usually the one thing he doesn’t like talking about. “So, I don’t really remember that much about the city. My aunt still lives there though, I miss her. I guess I miss the people more than I miss the rest.” Yoongi hums and nods, and Taehyung watches him from the side, thinking that he can probably risk it now. “You?”

“We moved right before I started high school,” Yoongi says with a little snort, still watching his cursor fly over the screen. “I think it’s the other way round for me. I don’t miss anyone there, but I do miss the place a little.”

Silently, Taehyung moves his head to frown at him. He’s trying to think of pictures in Yoongi’s photo folder that he said were from Daegu, but there were none. He went all over the country but he didn’t go home, even if he says he misses the place. And somewhere, in the part of Taehyung’s mind that knows what Yoongi did, and what he must have gone through to go that far, it makes a horrible kind of sense.

“Anyway, those two were pretty simple,” Yoongi says then, making Taehyung blink for a good couple of seconds before he realizes he’s talking about his music again. “I’ve got other stuff with bigger instrumentals, some without vocals, some more with Hoseok… Namjoon and Seokjin are in there too sometimes, actually. You get the idea.”
Taehyung wants to tell him that he doesn’t get the idea (he does, he guesses) and he needs to hear more, he wants those bigger instrumentals and the tracks without vocals, he wants to hear Yoongi’s friends, but most of all he wants to hear more of that apocalyptic growling that apparently happens to Yoongi’s voice when he’s passionate about something. He wants to hear the more personal tracks and he wants to see the *fuck* folder, but Yoongi is already shutting down his laptop, and Taehyung can’t say he’s all that surprised.

“Thanks for letting me listen,” he says instead, and he means it. He has to appreciate the little things, too. Like the curt nod that’s Yoongi’s only reaction to that.

The rain lets up in the afternoon, after they’ve spent the first half of the day in bed already. Taehyung has to admit that he would have thought they’d fuck more if something like this were to happen, but maybe he’s glad that they didn’t. Maybe it’s better to know that they can lie next to each other and Taehyung can read his college textbooks and Yoongi can mess around on his phone with his earbuds back in, without everything escalating into carnal hunger and hickies. It was a nice kind of silence too, calm and not awkward, but Yoongi is good at those silences anyway, he knows that much about him.

Now that it’s just a gentle drizzle outside though, grey clouds occasionally opening up to rare bursts of sunlight, Taehyung wants to do something. Nothing big maybe, but *something*.

“We could go shopping,” he says. “American shopping malls are big, it’s cool. I mean, I think actually the Manhattan Mall isn’t as big as the COEX, but, still.”

Yoongi snorts, not looking up from his phone. “Literally whenever I go to the COEX Mall I buy one pack of sweets and then stand by watching Seokjin buy stuff that could pay two months’ rent for me.”

“I can buy you stuff! They have a Radio Shack there.”

Yoongi squints at him for a split second. “Are you baiting me?”

“Is it working? There’s also a Korean place close to the mall, we could go there for dinner. I kind of miss jjajangmyeon.”

“Taehyung, it’s been three days.”

“So what! Don’t tell me you don’t miss kimchi.”

Yoongi stays quiet for a bit, watching his phone, but not actually moving his fingers on the touch screen. Then he sighs. “I’ll put on some pants.”

So they both put on some pants, and in the end it’s Yoongi who takes Taehyung to the mall, because Taehyung gets them lost twice before that. Of course, Taehyung thinks it’s hilarious, and he also thinks it’s cool that they got to see even more of the city that way, and he’s delighted to see that Yoongi at least seems very calm about it. He usually doesn’t mind Taehyung’s antics, he’s pretty sure, and that’s something not everyone can say for themselves, and Taehyung is thankful whenever it happens. His insistence to buy something for Yoongi must be a lot to take in too for someone who, Taehyung knows, is low-key proud of working for the things he wants, but it’s not like Yoongi has made a big secret out of the fact that he mostly agreed to the entire fake-dating plan to get on his rich parents’ good side. Taehyung doesn’t mind. But if Yoongi lets his dad get him a job and his mom get him an apartment, he’s going to have to let Taehyung get him a decent pair of gloves.
Fortunately for Yoongi, it’s April and gloves aren’t really sold everywhere anymore. Unfortunately for Yoongi, Taehyung still finds a pair of fluffy baby blue mittens he thinks would look adorable on him. Fortunately for Taehyung, Yoongi tries them on, and unfortunately for Taehyung, he then proceeds to punch him in the shoulder with them. Yoongi ushers them out of the store before they get thrown out for Taehyung’s relentless giggling.

Just a few steps further along, he catches Yoongi staring at a pair of sneakers in the window of a shoe store. He’s been wearing the same pair of tattered boots every time Taehyung has seen him so far, and they don’t really look fit for the approaching summer. So, Taehyung stops walking and nods towards the shop. “You want them?”

Yoongi stops too, throwing Taehyung a frown before glancing at the shoes. He shoves his hands into the pockets of his jacket, and shakes his head. “I can’t let you pay for everything,” he says quietly.

“Sure you can.” He gets Yoongi’s hesitation with this, sort of, but Taehyung has never understood why he shouldn’t spend his money on people he likes, since he has so much it wouldn’t exactly make a difference. He grins. “You can pay me back in orgasms.”

Maybe that’s not how Yoongi usually works for his stuff, judging by the way he’s rolling his eyes at him now. “That,” he says, stomping past Taehyung and the shoe store, “makes us sound like some sort of sugar daddy deal and I am so not into that.”

Taehyung hops after him giggling, ignoring the warmth he felt when Yoongi called them *us*. “You wouldn’t want me to be your daddy?”

“I’m throwing up in my mouth a little just thinking about it,” Yoongi deadpans, but then they only get a few feet further before he stops dead in his tracks and sighs loudly, like he’s fed up with himself. “You know what, fine. We’re going back there and you’re buying me shoes, but only because I need sneakers.”

Taehyung beams at him, even though Yoongi might not catch it because they’re turning around again. (He does catch it.) “So are you going to call me daddy now?”

“No, but I might strangle you with my new shoelaces.”

“Come on, at least once?”

“You’re getting pretty cocky for someone who can’t actually handle dirty talk.”

That shuts him up. Taehyung buys him a pair of sneakers, and then he buys himself some cute socks, and then Yoongi buys a pack of sweets saying things wouldn’t feel right otherwise.

Usually, Taehyung isn’t the type to overthink things, but by the time they’ve found their way to the Korean restaurant (this time, Taehyung was successful in leading the way), he somewhat regrets making that joke. Yoongi doesn’t actually seem fazed by it, behaving the same way he always does, but Taehyung still feels bad for making daddy jokes when Yoongi actually has (or had) real dad problems. He’s somewhat aware that Yoongi doesn’t seem to mind and Taehyung probably just worries too much about him, but it reminds him that there’s still something he wanted to talk to Yoongi about. Something they need to clear up and get out of the way so Taehyung can stop doing mental backflips like this.

It’s a bit intimidating now that they’re in a place where people actually responded to their greeting in Korean, where people will understand them if they listen in, but Taehyung and Yoongi end up in a
nice secluded corner of the place with a small table between them, and he thinks that maybe he can do this. Maybe it’s even better to do this while they’re outside and not at the hotel so they can get some distance between each other in case that’ll be necessary. Not that he hopes it will. Not that Taehyung has any idea how this is going to play out.

He waits until he has his jjajangmyeon and Yoongi has his bibimbap, so he can be sure no waiters are going to approach their table for a while. And then he waits a little more, because he doesn’t know what to say. Yoongi is digging through his rice with a spoon when Taehyung finally decides to do it the simple way.

“I remember what you said last night,” he says calmly, and watches Yoongi still his movements. “I almost always remember what people say to me when I sleep.”

Yoongi doesn’t look at him. He sits, unchanged, holding onto his spoon and watching his rice, even though he’s not moving a single inch anymore. “Okay,” he says.

Okay. Taehyung takes a soft breath. Next step. “I’m usually also brutally honest when I sleep talk, though,” he says, chopsticks still stirring his food just so he has something to do and doesn’t feel like the entire world stopped around them. “Like, the last couple times I sleep talked to Jungkook, I kept telling him to get a better haircut because he looked like a thumb.”

There’s a nervous flare in his chest, getting stronger when Yoongi looks up at him, brows raised. “Are you,” he says, his voice very steady and controlled, “comparing me deliberately mismedicating my father to Jungkook having bad hair?”

Taehyung almost chokes on his breath. “No!” he says quickly. “No, I mean, I’m just saying that…” He exhales, focusing on the fact that they’re in public and he didn’t want to be nervous and Yoongi actually still looks very composed and not like he’s about to walk out on him. Taehyung straightens his back and continues softly. “I meant what I said last night. I know I told you not to worry, and you’re good, and…” He looks down at his chopsticks, feeling weird repeating his dad’s words when he’s awake. “And some people don’t need to be with us. I meant that. I still do.”

He looks up again to face Yoongi, to underline his point, and Yoongi is looking right back at him. Several seconds pass in which Yoongi still holds on to his spoon silently, studying Taehyung’s face like he’s still expecting him to take it back any second, to do a complete flip on him, which Taehyung can’t exactly blame him for -- Yoongi’s family might have been messed up, but he has no idea how Taehyung grew up. How he had to grow up. How his views on certain matters might not be what Yoongi is expecting them to be.

“Really?” Yoongi says finally. His voice is still quiet and steady, but by now it’s so steady that it’s really starting to sound forced. “You’re not gonna give me some sort of lecture? No revenge is bad, no you need to love your family no matter what?”

Taehyung frowns. That’s the exact opposite of what he wants to tell Yoongi after all this. “Is that what I seem like to you?” he asks, out of genuine curiosity, but he might not have been able to stop that tinge of hurt in his undertone.

So Yoongi blinks at him for a second, opening his mouth and closing it again before performing a huge shrug and looking back into his bibimbap. “I don’t know,” he mutters, eyes flickering up now and then. “You just, I mean, you seem very pacifist and like you, you know, value family a lot.”

“I value my family,” Taehyung answers without hesitation, though he’s deliberately keeping his voice soft now because it’s kind of hard to take how Yoongi shrinks when he thinks he said something wrong. “Because they were good to me. And I do think that revenge doesn’t give you the
kind of satisfaction you might hope for, but I -- think,” Taehyung clears his throat quickly, trying to hide how he had to force himself to say I think instead of I know, “that there must be some sort of liberation in knowing that, whatever your dad did to you, he can’t do anymore. Not to you, not to anyone. I think that can be satisfying, and important.”

Yoongi stares at him, and Taehyung kind of stares back, trying to process that he just basically recited values he was brought up with in a mafia family, values you could go to jail for if you’re not careful. Values he’s not necessarily supposed to share, but he needed Yoongi to believe him. He needs Yoongi to know that Taehyung is really, truly, on his side here.

Like a completely automated motion, Yoongi’s hands start moving again and he puts a tiny portion of rice into his mouth. His gaze is lowered again and he’s poking around in the bowl with his spoon, swallowing a little too loudly before he speaks. “He was an abuser,” he says, enunciating the word carefully like it’s still new vocabulary to him. “He and my mother both, emotionally. She wasn’t as bad as him, she was … just good enough for me to miss her like hell when she died. But he, he…”

Yoongi takes a breath, and Taehyung almost says that he doesn’t have to do this, doesn’t have to tell him this if it hurts too much, but there is that touch of bitter determination in Yoongi’s voice that keeps seeping through his entire being, always. So he lets him talk. “The emotional part would have been bad enough. Like, I was messed up enough just from that. But dad, he had to take it further.”

Yoongi snorts softly, without a hint of amusement. “Go the whole nine yards. He made it sexual.”

It hits Taehyung like a train. Maybe in some part of his mind he had already pieced together the way Yoongi called sex his coping mechanism and the way he talked about his father, but it still hits him like a goddamn train. He feels like someone punched him in the gut, and then when he tries to imagine what it must be like for Yoongi, he feels like someone actually ripped out his guts and is currently strangling him with his intestines.

It’s only when he swallows and tastes bile on his tongue that he realizes he’s angry. Taehyung might have grown up with violence, but if there’s one limit he was raised to respect, it’s this one. If there was one thing he was taught to never, ever do to anyone, no matter who, no matter why, because it harms people in a way not even his father’s clan wants to harm people, it’s this. And the thought that someone did it to Yoongi, someone who was supposed to take care of him, Yoongi who’s been trying so hard to just get through life in one piece, the thought makes Taehyung clench his teeth and grip his chopsticks until his hands and jaws hurt.

By the time Taehyung manages to take two deep breaths and steady himself, Yoongi is looking at him a little questioningly. “I hope,” Taehyung says, doing his best to eliminate the quiver from his voice, “that during his time in that nursing home, your father found it in himself to be glad you didn’t to anything worse to him. God knows he deserved it.”

Maybe it’s surprising for Taehyung to hear that from his own mouth, but it’s even more surprising for Yoongi. His eyebrows disappear in his hair and he looks at Taehyung with an expression that seems like the equivalent of damn, kid, and then he smiles. And Taehyung wonders how much strength it must take someone to smile through this.

“I guess he did,” Yoongi says, and then he goes back to stirring his bibimbap, and jerks his chin in Taehyung’s direction. “Your food’s getting cold.”

Around half an hour later, when they’re already trying to find their way back to the hotel, Taehyung doesn’t feel angry anymore. Anger is rare for him anyway, he’s actually pretty sure he hasn’t felt angry ever since that teacher kept bugging Jimin in high school, and even then it never actually lasted long. It got replaced with pure, malicious drive, and then unbridled glee once they were done
vandalizing the car. (And then afterwards he felt a little bad, because teachers don’t make that much money and the car was probably expensive, but really only a little bad.)

He usually manages to replace anger with something more positive, and right now, he’s actually pretty sure that what he’s feeling is pride. He’s proud of Yoongi for making it this far, maybe with hiccups like the occasional freakout and panicked traveling, but even those always seem to end way better than they could have. And somehow, he’s a little proud of them both, for talking about it. He’s pretty sure this means that Yoongi trusts him in some way, so he’s proud of Yoongi for still trusting people and proud of himself for being trustworthy, and it feels a lot better than pointless rage aimed at someone who’s already dead anyway.

What he’s not sure about right now is how things are going to continue between them, but Taehyung is going to do his best to just keep everything the way it was before.

“Was that the first time we went to eat somewhere without fucking in their restroom?” Yoongi asks casually. Apparently, they’re on the same page.

Taehyung laughs as he squints over his shoulder to the restaurant, pretending like he’s thinking this over even though he already knows the answer. “I think so.”

“We’re gonna have to make up for that then and fuck at the hotel.”

“In a bed? Again?” Taehyung says with mock boredom, trying to ignore the weird side taste the sexual theme is giving him now. “Are you discovering your vanilla side or something?”

Yoongi squints at him. “How dare you call me that.”

“What, vanilla? Hey, you’re the one who wants to fuck in a place where no one can see or hear.”

Taehyung is still giggling when Yoongi slaps his shoulder. He’s also giggling when they take the subway into the wrong direction, and the tingling in his chest that usually goes along with happy giggling gets a little warmer when he realizes that Yoongi is grinning, too. He’s even still grinning a bit when they run across the street towards the hotel in another round of pouring rain and he tells Taehyung that he should have bought a ‘goddamn’ umbrella instead of expensive shoes.

Once the elevator doors close behind them, Yoongi shoves one of his hands into the back pocket of Taehyung’s pants. It makes Taehyung jump a little, before he throws him an amused glance.

“My hands are cold,” Yoongi says.

Taehyung nods sympathetically. “That’s just one hand, though.”

“I’ll put the other down the front of your pants in a second. Just thought I’d wait until we’re in our room.”

“Vanilla.”

This time, Taehyung’s giggle gets lost in a shocked gasp when Yoongi presses his cold, wet hand to the side of his neck. He cringes to the side, which only results in Yoongi grabbing his ass tight enough to make him give up on trying to escape and accept his fate. “You’re so cruel,” he whines, slapping at Yoongi’s arm helplessly while Yoongi just slaps back.

“If those doors open and someone’s waiting outside and you get arrested in the States with my hand down your pants, I’m not sure your parents would still be so fond of me.”
“You have no idea.” Taehyung wheezes out a laugh. “They might just officially make you part of the family if we got arrested for something.”

Yoongi’s confused glance makes Taehyung bite his tongue, but luckily for him, the doors ding open right after that, and since nobody is actually outside waiting for the elevator, Yoongi seizes the opportunity to pull him along by the hand in his pants pocket. With the urgency in the way Yoongi drags him into their room, Taehyung almost expects to get slammed against the door the second it falls shut, but Yoongi seems to have different plans.

Their room temperature is nice and warm against the cool rain from outside drying on their shoulders, but Taehyung feels a lot warmer than he should when Yoongi slips his second hand into his other back pocket (not the front; liar) and pulls him into a kiss. It’s open-mouthed and sloppy already, because Yoongi is walking them backwards through the room, but Taehyung’s hands are busy yanking on the zipper of Yoongi’s jacket and Yoongi exhales softly at that, so he doesn’t really care.

He only starts a little when they come to a halt because Yoongi bumped into something, but he knows they can’t be at their bed yet. He pulls back, tongue darting out to lick his lips automatically (they taste like Yoongi and bibimbap), and peeks past Yoongi’s head to find the sleek wooden surface of the desk they never bothered to use so far behind him.

“Oh,” he says very softly, feeling something hot and nervous flare up in his stomach. “I’m gonna have to take back what I said about the bed, huh?”

Yoongi smirks up at him when Taehyung looks back into his face, his hands already sliding over Taehyung’s shoulders to push his wet jacket to the floor. “Changed my mind about wanting to bend you over the table,” he murmurs as he leans up to brush his lips past Taehyung’s jaw. His teeth sink into Taehyung’s earlobe and then Taehyung can feel his breath ghost past his ear as he huffs out a laugh. “I think actually I deserve to get fucked on a piece of furniture that’s probably more expensive than everything I currently own.”

Taehyung can’t help but laugh softly too, even if there’s a certain quiver to his voice already. “I don’t know,” he says, pressing his thigh in between Yoongi’s legs and enjoying the shiver that runs through Yoongi at that, “those sneakers were pretty pricey.”

“Fuck you,” says Yoongi, nipping at his neck with those pointy little teeth and giving Taehyung’s ass a good squeeze before he pulls his hands back to shrug his jacket off.

Taehyung watches it go, and then his hands immediately dive under Yoongi’s sweatshirt. Yoongi flinches a little and Taehyung guesses even his hands aren’t as warm as they usually are after coming back from outside, and then he can sort of feel his leg bump against the edge of the table between Yoongi’s legs and then they’re both tense for two seconds because Yoongi is cold and Taehyung is reminded that that’s still a wooden desk they’re leaning against, so Taehyung pulls back again.

“Hold on,” he says, stepping away from Yoongi a little reluctantly. He makes an effort to ignore Yoongi’s confused look when he goes towards their bed and pulls one of the blankets off, folds it carefully, and then drapes it over the desk like a very soft and thick tablecloth.

By now, Yoongi has turned a bit to watch him, brows raised, a hint of amused resignation on his face. Taehyung clears his throat before just grabbing Yoongi’s hips and pinning him against the desk again since that’s apparently what he wanted anyway. “Wouldn’t want you to dislocate a vertebra or something like that,” he explains himself, to which Yoongi cocks a brow, his head tilted a bit, and that is so fucking attractive Taehyung needs to fight back a groan.

“You planning on being that fucking brutal, Hulk?” Yoongi says dryly.
There’s a delighted comment about the blatant pop culture reference from Min Yoongi’s mouth right there on Taehyung’s tongue, and there’s something else on Taehyung’s tongue when Yoongi’s fingers ghost over his skin just above the waistband of his pants, but Taehyung swallows it all. Something about this won’t let go of him, something about making sure that Yoongi is comfortable and something about Yoongi making jokes about people being brutal with him, and Yoongi is opening his fly now, but Taehyung can’t forget things that quickly.

“Listen,” he gets out, voice too strained for his liking. But it is also distinctly non-sexual, and Yoongi’s hands come to a halt on the zipper of his pants, and that makes things easier. “If there’s anything you don’t…I mean, if I ever make you uncomfortable, just, if there’s anything at all, you can--”

He stops himself when Yoongi sighs loudly. His hands disappear from Taehyung’s pants completely, and that doesn’t feel good, and Yoongi leans back against the desk and looks to the side with his tongue between his teeth and his brows furrowed. All of a sudden, his entire aura is so explicitly pissed off, it almost makes Taehyung physically wince back from him.

“I can tell you,” Yoongi finishes for him. His voice is quiet and very steady again and Taehyung vaguely registers that his own hands are still on Yoongi’s hips, but he can’t bring himself to move. “I know, Taehyung. See, this is why I hate telling people who also happen to sleep with me about this. Now you think you have to treat me differently.” (Taehyung wonders how many people Yoongi has slept with who know about it. He guesses Hoseok probably knows. He still has time to think that that’s good.) “What happened to me wasn’t sex. It has nothing to do with sex, it never does. It has to do with power and with people being vile assholes, it’s not sex. This, though? What we’re doing?” Yoongi looks back at him, finally, one of his hands releasing its grip on the desk to gesture back and forth between them. “That’s sex. And that’s two different things and don’t you ever, ever fucking dare mix them up again. I don’t want to hear about it, you get that?”

Taehyung tries swallowing quick enough to give an answer to that, but it doesn’t really work, so he just nods. He gets it, he thinks. It makes sense. Yoongi makes it sound like it makes sense, and Yoongi makes it sound like he knows what he’s talking about, like he already figured this out forever ago, and Taehyung wants to trust him enough to believe in that.

“Good,” Yoongi says, and Taehyung is at least fifty percent sure his face softens a little. Yoongi’s gaze drops to Taehyung’s open pants hanging haphazardly off his hips, and then back up to his face. “The only thing that’s making me uncomfortable is being made to think about my father during sex. Kinda kills the boner.”

Carefully, Taehyung dares to grin, just a little, apologetically. “I’m sorry,” he says quietly. He bites his lip, and then his gaze drops too, and his hands are still there on Yoongi’s hips, and when his teeth release his bottom lip, he looks back up at Yoongi with a completely different sort of grin. “Would it help if I performed CPR?”

Yoongi snorts, the sound a dizzying kind of relief in Taehyung’s ears. “Boy, you’re a quick learner.” With that, he finally touches him again, hands on Taehyung’s shoulders with gentle pressure until Taehyung is on his knees. “Go on and perform, then.”

So Taehyung lets Yoongi fuck his mouth until he’s very sure that Yoongi is absolutely not thinking about his father anymore, and by the time Yoongi leans back against the blanket on the tabletop and wraps his legs around Taehyung’s waist so tightly it pushes him in as deep as he can go, neither is Taehyung. The last bits of worries he still could have had dissolve into thin air around the time Yoongi’s mouth falls open into a silent moan while his eyes fall shut, face lax in an expression of bliss so pure you couldn’t possibly fake it, and Taehyung’s last coherent thought is that they made
the right choice here.

Yoongi’s legs seem a little shaky when he carefully slides off the table, and Taehyung is pretty sure he hears a quiet crack when Yoongi straightens his back. “That blanket was a good idea,” Yoongi says hoarsely, before grabbing said blanket and just pulling it with him when he wobbles a few steps through the room to drop on their bed with a groan.

“You’re welcome,” Taehyung says with a little laugh that’s just as hoarse. His condom hits the edge of their trash can with a wet noise that makes both of them snort, then it slides down inside and Taehyung falls face-forward into the mattress next to Yoongi.

Yoongi peers past him out the window, where it’s still raining, just not as much. It’s also barely even nightfall. “Let’s go downstairs to the buffet once I can feel my legs again,” he says.

Taehyung nods against the mattress. He thought he’d still feel full from jjajangmyeon, but sex does tend to make him hungry again.

When he turns his head, Yoongi isn’t looking at his face. He’s looking down a bit, and it takes Taehyung a second to realize that he’s watching his side. The one with the scar. And for a moment, the pleasant buzz from his orgasm fades much too quickly and he wonders if now, after Yoongi opened up and shared his past with him, Taehyung is up next. He wonders if Yoongi is going to ask what happened to his side there, and he wouldn’t be the first to ask, he wouldn’t be the first person Taehyung would lie to about it, but he doesn’t want to. He doesn’t want to have to lie, but he doesn’t want to tell the truth either, he doesn’t want Yoongi to ask. He keeps his eyes trained on Yoongi’s face, and hopes he won’t ask.

But Yoongi just closes his eyes again and nuzzles the blanket a little, which is fucking adorable, and the soft climax buzz returns to Taehyung’s limbs. “We can go to that museum tomorrow,” he mutters.

Taehyung smiles. “The MoMA?”

“No, yours. The natural history one. You can talk about jellyfish and stuff.”

“Okay.” Taehyung’s smile is broad enough now that he almost feels it sting a bit in his dry lips. He’s already talked about jellyfish just a few hours before, when he was showing Yoongi his underwater photos, which seems oddly long ago now, but knowing that Yoongi wouldn’t mind hearing even more rants from him tomorrow makes him feel pleasantly warm. The general aftermath of how this entire day went makes him feel pleasantly warm. Even with what he learned about Yoongi today, the fact that things between them seem to remain unchanged save for the realization that Yoongi must trust him in some way at least, and that he’s doing okay and that Taehyung in turn can trust him to continue doing okay, still makes him feel warm.

Thankfully, Taehyung knows that this warmth is strictly platonic.
Yoongi friendzones himself and is pretty happy with it.
Also, they visit the MoMA. :-)

**Chapter Notes**

disclaimer: my usage of the word friendzone is entirely ironic.

**warning** for porn. who would have thought

hi! sorry this took so long.
this thing can be tough to write sometimes (i'm sure it can be tough to read too), so i
gave myself a little break to work on other stuff. in the meantime, we surpassed 700
kudos, 350 subscriptions and 200 bookmarks, and i am so, so grateful to you all for
sticking around and being patient and letting me know that i'm not just yelling into a
void about taegi here.

also, on a more personal note,
if you're going through something, i hope you find at least a few seconds of calm today.
i hope the hurt will lessen soon and you'll feel warm again. and i hope you'll find it in
you to keep going on, to continue fighting for yet another day, because there's always
something better waiting just around the corner. i promise. i promise.

[08:54] dickbutt: hows your honeymoon going

[08:55] you: good. Hows your fuckathon going now that you got the apartment to yourself

-- dickbutt has sent a picture --

Yoongi’s snort is somewhere weird between amused and disgusted, so it’s no wonder it makes
Taehyung look up from his own phone and peer over at him. He’s not usually the type to look at
other people’s phone screens, Yoongi knows that, but with a picture of someone’s naked upper body
right there on his screen, he can’t exactly blame Taehyung when he does a double take.

“One sec,” Taehyung tells his own phone and mutes the video call with his parents to lean a bit
further into Yoongi’s direction. “Is that my best friend with a heart made of hickies on his back?”

Mildly impressed, Yoongi raises his brows. “You can tell that’s Jimin just from this?”

The picture doesn’t even show much of his head because that’s buried between pillows, it’s mostly a
bare back with said tacky hickey heart between the shoulder blades and a blanket barely covering his
ass, but Taehyung shrugs and throws him a sheepish grin. “Ex-boyfriends, remember?” Yoongi just
answers with a vague grunt because he’s not sure he could tell Hoseok’s back apart from others and
this is a weird thing to think about, but Taehyung is already turning back to his video call with a
chuckle. “Tell Hoseok to be good to my Jiminnie.”

[08:57] you: tae says youre gross

[08:57] dickbutt: liar

[08:58] dickbutt: ‘tae’ huh

[08:58] you: what

[08:58] you: its quicker to type

[08:58] dickbutt: uh huh

[08:58] dickbutt: you only give people nicknames when you like them

[08:59] dickbutt: mister ‘i fucking hate him’

Yoongi rolls his eyes at his phone. Of course he doesn’t hate Taehyung. He does remember saying that, but Hoseok should know better than to believe him. Back then, Yoongi hated how good he looked when he expected him to be some gangly loser, he hated how hot his legs were and how much he seemed to love his parents, he hated his amazing living situation and the way he managed to make a horrible idea like fake dating sound appealing. He didn’t hate Taehyung. And he doesn’t hate him now. He has no trouble admitting that.

Next to him, Taehyung is now in a video call with his dog. Yoongi watches him coo at Boop from the side, and watches Boop on his phone screen wag her tail. They seem like they’ve done this before, which Yoongi didn’t know, but it doesn’t surprise him either.

He and Taehyung are in bed, again, after coming back from the breakfast buffet. They both just wordlessly took off their pants again and climbed back under the sheets, because they agreed on not leaving the hotel before ten. Whenever they’re in here, they spend most of their time in or on this bed actually, which makes the whole trip feel soft and cozy and warm, which is, of course, the best kind of trip. Also, there might have been a soft blanket involved, but he very much still feels like someone fucked him on a wooden table yesterday, so the mattress under his ass is much appreciated right now.

They haven’t talked about what Yoongi shared with him yesterday. Yoongi isn’t planning on bringing it up again anytime soon, and he’s silently thankful that Taehyung doesn’t seem inclined either. It’s out of the way now and Yoongi doesn’t regret telling him, but he doesn’t necessarily have to talk about it every day. He’s content just listening to Taehyung tell his dog that they’re going to a museum today.

[09:02] you: yeah i guess were friends by now im not gonna deny that

[09:02] you: i wouldnt have gone to nyc with him otherwise

[09:03] dickbutt: friends

He really doesn’t know where Hoseok gets off constantly repeating everything Yoongi says with that judging undertone. Yes, he can hear that undertone even in text based chats.

[09:03] you: like, with benefits

[09:03] dickbutt: friends with benefits who pretend to date
[09:03] you: is there something in particular you want to tell me here you scrotum

[09:03] dickbutt: just dont be namjin okay?

[09:04] dickbutt: also YOURE a scrotum

[09:04] you: namjin. Whos namjin

[09:04] dickbutt: namjoon and seokjin duh

[09:04] dickbutt: theyre ~*just friends*~ too and you and i know exactly whats going on there

[09:05] dickbutt: so dont be like them

[09:05] you: im not

[09:05] you: namjin are like, married and i barely even know tae. Like it hasnt even been two full months. So chill maybe

[09:05] dickbutt: :D you called them namjin

They proceed to talk about what Namjoon and Seokjin have been up to lately, which is a lot better. (Namjoon has been contemplating moving in with Seokjin because he’s always there anyway and Seokjin really wants a puppy.) By the time Hoseok disappears for work, Taehyung is also hanging up on his parents, but he’s shoving his phone into Yoongi’s face a second after that.

“Here, mom sent me pics of an apartment she wants you to look at. Flip through them, let me know what you think. When I’m back, though. I’ve been needing to pee for at least twenty minutes.”

With that, Taehyung leaves his phone in Yoongi’s hand, and flails his legs around until he’s kicked off the blanket and fought himself out of bed. Yoongi feels a little perplexed with how Taehyung apparently has no problem leaving him alone with his phone, but it’s not like Yoongi is planning to do anything stupid with it. He pulls his knees to his chest under the blanket and wakes the screen, swiping his thumb over the photo of Boop Taehyung has as his lock screen, and starts flipping through the pictures Taehyung opened for him.

Yoongi can feel his pulse between his temples. Thanks to this whole trip, he’s been able to distract himself from the fact that he’s about to move into a new apartment, and the realization still isn’t sinking in properly. But maybe it’s the warm bed and peaceful atmosphere here, maybe it’s the very nice looking place in those pictures, that makes him think he can probably deal with it. It’ll be nice to have a place, something to call his own. Something that will, maybe, someday, feel like home.

It has a bathtub like Yoongi wanted, a small room he could turn into a studio, a cute living room with an open kitchen, and a nice spacious potential bedroom. It’s amazing, in short. It also looks like nothing Yoongi could ever afford. It’s going to take him a while to get used to that. He tries to picture himself living there, and he can’t, but maybe he’ll get there.

Yoongi zooms into every picture, inspects the photos carefully, but eventually, he gets to the end of them. When he swipes right, suddenly there’s no apartment anymore, but a photo Taehyung took of the Korean place they had dinner at yesterday. Out of sheer reflex, Yoongi’s thumb darts down to press the backwards button, but of course it just closes the photo entirely and guards him back to the album on his phone. Unsurprisingly, it’s mostly pictures of New York, and Yoongi isn’t going to go through them because he’s not an asshole, he’s just going to open the apartment pictures again and act like nothing happened because Taehyung is probably about to come back from the bathroom, and…
And he can see his own face in one of those pictures. Yoongi frowns, thumb hovering over the screen. He can hear Taehyung hum in the bathroom. He’s probably spacing out. Yoongi touches the photo, gingerly, like it could burn him.

Taehyung must have taken it during their flight. He’s on it too, looking pretty happy with the situation, and Yoongi is asleep resting his head on Taehyung’s shoulder. Something hot creeps up Yoongi’s neck.

Then something cold creeps into his stomach, something dangerously close to fear, and he closes out of the picture and finds the stuff Taehyung’s mom sent him again, thumb nervously flipping through those until Taehyung barges back into the room and throws himself onto the bed. Yoongi still feels like he’s swallowed a bucket of ice water when he gives his phone back to him.

“Did you like it?” Taehyung asks with a wide smile. Yoongi thinks about the fact that he has a high quality photo of Taehyung sleeping on his own camera roll.

“Looks great,” he gets out with a nod, hoping it comes across at least somewhat natural. He could probably act like the nervousness is because of the new apartment. Maybe he should tell that to himself, too. “She’s sure I can afford it?”

“Yeah! Hang on, she sent me details about rent and the area and stuff, too. I’ll show you.”

Yoongi tries, but he barely listens. He watches Taehyung’s fingers navigate through his phone, and wonders if Namjoon and Seokjin have sleepy pictures of each other on theirs.

It gets better once they’re outside and the cool air clears his head. Taehyung is bouncing up and down with every step next to him, he’s still bouncing on the subway, he doesn’t stop bouncing when Yoongi once again has to grab his sleeve to drag him into the right direction. Yoongi has lost count of how often Taehyung has told him about the current exhibits now, the stuff he wants to see, the stuff he’s learning about in college right now. Yoongi could probably recite some of the things Taehyung keeps saying by heart, but he doesn’t mind.

He likes seeing people be passionate about something. It’s nice. Also, he’s on a mission.

“I hope they have jellies here. We need to look at jellies,” says Taehyung as soon as they have their tickets and enter the museum. Yoongi presses a button on his phone and puts it back into the pocket of his sweater carefully, making sure nothing is blocking the microphone. “I don’t talk about jellies nearly enough. Have I ever told you about Turritopsis dohrnii?”

Yoongi pulls his brows into an honest frown - Taehyung has told him about a lot of animals by now, but he doesn’t think he’s heard that one before. “Not that I remember, no.”

“Oh, they’re so cool,” Taehyung sighs. “They’re called immortal jellyfish. Or, well, immortal jellies, really. We usually don’t say jellyfish anymore because they’re not actually fish, we just call them jellies. All of them I mean, not just T. dohrnii. Anyway,” he starts throwing his hands in the air now to gesture wildly, and Yoongi tries to navigate them both through the small crowds of people without Taehyung smacking someone over the head, “they’re immortal. Basically. They’ll die if you kill them, but if nobody does anything to them, they can live forever. Because they don’t reproduce like most other organisms, they don’t produce an offspring in that way, they just… clone themselves. They produce a new organism with the exact same DNA as them, so basically a copy of themselves, and so when they die, another version of them still exists. It’s maybe not what comes to mind at first when you think about immortality, but technically, they are immortal. If nobody interferes, they can
live for as long as they want. I think that’s so cool. Some animals have such mindblowing life spans, did you hear about Greenland sharks? They found some that got to be four hundred years old. Four hundred years! That’s so long. I think it feels even longer to us when it’s *animals* that live that long, like, you get amazed when you hear of turtles living for a hundred years even though humans can do that too. But I think it’s more amazing for us because we think animals don’t do as much, in their lives. A human who lives for a hundred years probably did so many things in that life, but a turtle probably just ate and slept and, like, fornicated. For ten whole decades. That’s so hard to imagine for us because we have to go to school and work and buy houses and stuff like that, but turtles and Greenland sharks and immortal jellies don’t have to do that. Which is cool. I think I could probably spend hundreds of years just eating and sleeping and fucking, or an eternity swimming around and cloning myself. Yoongi?” He looks around now, like he’s scared he lost Yoongi while talking, but Yoongi is still right beside him and Taehyung’s shoulders relax when he spots him. “…What?”

“Oh.” Taehyung clears his throat with a sheepish grin. “I was done, I think, actually.”

A lie. Taehyung is never done. Not when they’re in a natural history museum. He might be done talking about old sea life and cloning himself, for now, but Yoongi knows that there’s more bubbling under the surface, and he’s not about to stop him now. Instead, he gestures towards the exhibit next to them. “Okay, well, can you explain to me what the hell this is, then?”

So Taehyung perks up like a goddamn puppy, taking two steps forward to examine the thing, and Yoongi thinks his ears and neck might have gotten several shades darker, but he doesn’t let it show in his voice. “Oh man, this is the skeleton of a Platybelodon. They were ridiculous. You see that skull? Wait, maybe they have a picture here of how they looked with, like, flesh and stuff, it’s hilarious.”

Yoongi lets him talk. He stops recording after Taehyung has told him everything there is to know about the Platybelodon, but he still lets him talk. And he listens, too. Some things are actually interesting to Yoongi too, he actually tries to understand and keep in mind most of the stuff Taehyung tells him about polar bears, and other things he doesn’t care about at all, but he still listens. It’s the least he can do, really. Taehyung has been doing a lot for him - and maybe it’s not about the money, maybe Yoongi is slowly learning to accept that Taehyung doesn’t mind spending money on people, but after all that hasn’t even been everything he’s done for Yoongi. After his conversation with Hoseok he can barely shake off the thought that they’ve only known each other for two months, and if Taehyung can sit down and literally listen to Yoongi’s darkest secret and accept it and move on like nothing happened, nothing at all, then for all Yoongi cares he can tell him about arachnids and succulents as much as he wants.

Somewhere between butterflies and ape evolution, Yoongi wonders how much of this Taehyung actually knows from college, and how much he knows because he looked it up himself. He’s only in his second year after all, and Yoongi kind of doubts that all the information he’s dumping on him right now actually comes from class. He thinks Taehyung must be a lot smarter than people maybe tend to give him credit for, than he himself used to give him credit for. It’s probably because he does kind of seem like a five-year-old when he bounces on his feet and gushes on and on about animals, but a five-year-old with very distinct knowledge about biochemistry. Yoongi wonders if people take him seriously as a scientist. He hopes they do. He still remembers how nobody took him seriously when he started getting into musicology, some kid with no money and a loud mouth, how nobody expected him to be able to write a single verse, be it lyrics or music. And he thinks that maybe, he and Taehyung aren’t quite as different as they act.
“Hey, are you okay?” Taehyung asks hours later, when they’re on their way back to the subway and he pulls the hood of his sweater over his head against the cool, gentle drizzle. “I didn’t talk too much, did I?”

“No, of course not.” Yoongi huffs a quiet laugh. “I haven’t learned this much in one day since college. Actually I guess even that didn’t come close.”

Taehyung gives him one of the happiest grins Yoongi has ever seen on him, right before it turns into a soft frown and he runs his fingers over his throat. “I think I might be losing my voice, though.”

Yoongi snorts at that, almost comes up with a jab about people outside the music business not knowing how to take care of their vocal chords, but he changes his mind when a particularly large and particularly cold rain drop lands right on his neck. “Wanna find a café for some tea or something?”

“Yeah, I could go for some hot chocolate,” Taehyung says, and gracefully ignores Yoongi’s scoff. They ditch the subway station and just continue walking down the street instead, with Yoongi quietly deciding to put faith in the way Taehyung puts faith in the city to throw a nice cozy café at them if they just walk long enough. And maybe it’s said quiet, or maybe it’s just Yoongi being Yoongi, that makes Taehyung once more throw him continuous glances, like he never stops wondering about him. “Are you nervous about apartment hunting?”

Maybe Yoongi does seem different than normally. And maybe Taehyung is getting better at reading him. With very mild shock, Yoongi realizes that he doesn’t mind.

He shrugs. “A bit. It’s weird,” he says, turning his head to watch cabs creep past through the heavy traffic in light rain, like he’s looking at every media depiction of New York City at once. “I remember when I got my first apartment, I worked my ass off for that. Like, I’m not ashamed to admit that Seokjin and Hoseok literally had to hold my hand now and then to keep me from losing my goddamn mind. I worked really hard to get the money for it, and then it was a pain in the ass to even find a place that was affordable and close enough to college. I mean, I loved the place - it was small and shitty and usually the heating wouldn’t work, but it was mine, and I put my back into it.”

He frowns now, running the tip of his tongue over his teeth. Yoongi throws Taehyung a short glance, hoping he’s not about to word this in a way that might hurt him again, like back at that Korean place. “It feels strange to have your parents, just, give me stuff. I mean don’t get me wrong, I’m really thankful, it’s just… I’m getting a great job and a really fucking pretty apartment, and I haven’t worked for any of this.”

“You have,” Taehyung says immediately. His voice is so soft it almost gets lost when someone honks right next to them, but the sound of him still keeps Yoongi from flinching. When he looks at him again, Taehyung is smiling back at him, like he’s never seen a purer, better person in his life, and maybe it makes Yoongi’s chest ache, but maybe he’s just nervous about apartments. “You’ve been working so hard, Yoongi. First of all, by acting like you’ve been dating me for eight months, I know that can’t be easy.” Taehyung laughs and Yoongi wants to tell him that it’s actually been so easy it’s a little scary, but he just snorts instead. Then he looks away quickly once he notices Taehyung’s gaze softening again. “But also just by coming back to Seoul. That must have been tough, but you made it. You made it all the way here, you survived everything up to this moment. You work so hard every day, just being alive, and being okay. You deserve a nice apartment, and a job that makes you happy. That, and so much more.”

Yoongi must be catching a cold, with all this rain. Because his throat is burning and he’s breathing through his mouth all of a sudden, he even feels a little lightheaded with the way he can hear the smile in Taehyung’s voice even if he keeps his eyes trained on the pavement. He has no idea how to
reply to that, and he swallows once, twice, just trying to find his voice and some way to tell Taehyung thanks without risking a full-on breakdown.

“Oh, look!” Taehyung says and stops dead in his tracks, almost making Yoongi trip next to him. “Starbucks!”

So for the first time, they manage to go to a Starbucks without giving each other handjobs or head in the restrooms. Taehyung drinks his hot chocolate and Yoongi drinks his tea, both of them talking quietly about their plans for the rest of their stay, then they somehow end up talking about Japan and how much they want to go there too, and then about movies they want to see, and Yoongi doesn’t even realize how he drinks his tea as slow as possible, so they can stay like this a little longer.

That night, when Yoongi comes back from his very hot shower, Taehyung is in bed with his glasses on and a textbook propped up against his knees. Yoongi creeps under the covers next to him, and now and then, they talk idly about the parts of the city they want to go and see tomorrow. Eventually Taehyung puts his book away and lies down too, and then he tells Yoongi about all the funny stuff Boop did on camera earlier, and a few minutes after that, he’s out like a light. And Yoongi lies next to him and watches his lashes flutter against his cheeks and thinks about the fact that this is the first night they don’t spend fucking. And that, for some reason, he doesn’t even mind.

Because they’re friends, now. He’d probably still feel weird saying it out loud, but he wrote it to Hoseok and he meant it. With benefits, yes, but still friends. They’re people who can talk and go to cafés and lie next to each other without taking each other’s clothes off, and apart from his already established friendships, that’s a kind of connection that Yoongi hasn’t made in a very long time.

After listening to Taehyung’s even breaths for a few more minutes, Yoongi falls asleep, too.

It is now their second night without sex.

Taehyung isn’t going to keep count. He wouldn’t usually mind, either - he’s used to having a lot of sex, but nowhere near as much as he’s been having with Yoongi, and he can survive just fine without it. Plus, it’s actually really nice to know that they can function like this too now, especially because they didn’t at first.

No, normally he’d be fine just lying next to Yoongi in their soft warm bed again and falling asleep in his boxers and a shirt with no body fluids drying on questionable parts of his skin. It’s just that they have a certain schedule planned for the next day.

“Yoongi,” he whispers. He knows he’s awake. They only went to bed half an hour ago, and Min Yoongi takes at least twice that time to fall asleep. They’ve been walking around the city all day and Taehyung thought he himself might pass out quicker, but now that he’s actually in bed and all relaxed and starting to feel his feet again, he’s feeling a lot more awake than anticipated.

It’s completely quiet for a brief second, then the heap of blankets and pillows next to him starts shifting until he can see Yoongi turn his head and look at him, in utter silence. Taehyung grins at him.

“Is the MoMA fuck still happening?” He’s whispering, again, and there’s a nervous pull in his stomach, because part of him isn’t sure how Yoongi is going to react to this topic. The last time they fucked was after Yoongi had told him something very personal, and Taehyung thinks it still went really well, but he can’t be sure. He wants to think their one night (and two days) without sex was just a byproduct of being both tired and able to spend time together fully clothed, but he still can’t
completely shake the fear that it might be something else.

Yoongi just grins back at him though, and the nervous pull dissolves into happy flutters through his chest. “Do you want it to still be happening?”

Taehyung’s nod might be a little too enthusiastic, but he’s past the point of caring. Once Min Yoongi has made you almost pass out in a bathroom stall and also casually talked about fucking you in the middle of a hotel buffet, your boundaries of shame start to blur a little. Yoongi answers with a single nod himself, and Taehyung shifts a tiny bit closer to him. “You said we’d practice.”

After all, they haven’t had restroom sex since they got here, and Taehyung has very little trust in his ability to keep quiet. He thinks they should at least make some sort of battle plan, since museums are pretty different from movie theaters or coffee shops. Yoongi seems to consider this, then he turns away again briefly and Taehyung can hear him pick up his phone from the nightstand to check the time. Before he can worry about that though, Yoongi has already turned back to him with a smirk that makes his insides do a backflip.

“Sit up.”

Oh. Oh, okay. Taehyung thinks his eyes might have gotten a tiny bit wider at the commandeering tone to Yoongi’s voice, but he complies. Of course he complies. He sits up in bed, his blanket dropping into his lap, and from the corner of his eye he watches Yoongi sit up too and shift around until he’s seated directly behind him. Taehyung feels something shockingly cold brush past his legs before he realizes that Yoongi put his feet under his blanket, then the thought is gone in a pleasant shiver when he feels the tips of Yoongi’s fingers under his shirt.

Yoongi’s thighs are warm next to Taehyung’s own, and his breath fans over the back of his neck, making the hair there stand up. Taehyung has a good idea as to what’s about to happen with the way Yoongi’s hands travel back and forth between his sides and his stomach, pushing his shirt up further and further, but he feels very unequipped to handle it. Yoongi is already mouthing at the skin just above his shirt collar and Taehyung is fisting his hands in his blanket, because he doesn’t know what else to do with them.

“Why are you always so horny?” Yoongi asks, with what sounds like genuine curiosity. While he pushes Taehyung’s shirt off over his head, Taehyung has time to think that maybe Yoongi fears there might be a reason similar to his own behind it, something deeper like using sex to cope, and he wonders what would happen if it actually was like that. But Yoongi kisses his shoulder blade and rakes his nails up his chest and Taehyung exhales shakily as he shrugs.

“I like sex, is all,” he says, trying to keep his voice steady while Yoongi’s mouth travels past his spine towards his other shoulder. “Feels good, helps me clear my head.”

“From like, school and stuff?” Yoongi barely raises his lips off his skin when he speaks, and his fingertips dip just beneath the waistband of Taehyung’s boxers. He hums when Taehyung nods, and then there’s teeth in his shoulder and Taehyung chokes back a whine. “Alright. We’ll get those behaviorism graphs off your mind, then.”

Taehyung almost manages to say something about how Yoongi must have been watching him reading his textbooks, or how it’s actually chemical equations troubling him more than behaviorism right now, but Yoongi is already tugging his boxers down. Automatically, Taehyung raises himself off the mattress just enough for Yoongi to pull them down further, then he kicks them off under the blanket just in time to feel a shiver go through his entire body when both of Yoongi’s hands ghost over the spots where his legs meet his hips.
“I want you to be as quiet as you can,” Yoongi murmurs, lips still pressed to the skin somewhere between Taehyung’s shoulder blades. They travel up towards his neck as he speaks, though. “Cover your mouth if you have to. Remember, even loud breathing can get us in trouble. Just imagine there’s someone taking a piss three feet from us and the only thing between us and them is a plastic wall.”

Taehyung is absolutely not going to imagine that. “Okay,” he still says, head rolling back to rest against Yoongi’s shoulder while Yoongi sucks a good chunk of skin between his lips. He tries taking deep breaths through his mouth as quietly as he can, but ends up just not breathing at all instead as he feels Yoongi’s fingers ghost over his length.

Yoongi laughs quietly about something, maybe about the fact that Taehyung is half hard already, and in the second it takes for Yoongi’s body behind him to disappear and lean to the side somewhere Taehyung gathers the wits to at least form a sentence in his head about how Yoongi is gonna have to shut up tomorrow too, but then he can hear him opening the lube bottle and decides to pipe down. Yoongi’s clean hand is quick to find his hip again, fingernails drawing soft circles while he noses along Taehyung’s jaw, blowing hot air over the side of his neck.

He’s not fucking touching him.

The anticipation alone is enough to make Taehyung get gradually harder, but the hand Yoongi presumably just lubed up isn’t touching him, and Taehyung’s entire body suddenly strains with how much he has to hold himself back to not press against him and beg for it. “Breathe,” Yoongi says behind him, and Taehyung finally releases the breath he forgot he was holding. “Don’t forget you’re supposed to enjoy this.”

Taehyung considers unclenching his grip on the blanket to ram his elbow into Yoongi’s stupid ribs for that, but instead, a slick hand closes around his dick and suddenly he’s busy keeping the moan at bay that’s bubbling up in his chest. His eyes fall shut and he allows himself to roll his hips forward into Yoongi’s hand once - maybe he can keep quiet better if he moves or something, he’s going to have to fucking try. And maybe he still hasn’t forgotten that Yoongi thinks this is the right time to tease him.

“I am enjoying th--ah,” he tries saying, and fails as Yoongi bites his neck hard enough that Taehyung is pretty sure he’s going to have another imprint of his teeth blooming there in a few minutes. “What the fuck.”

“You’re not allowed to talk,” Yoongi hums, but Taehyung can’t hate him for being smug right now, when he’s finally moving that hand. He’s dragging it all the way up, flicks his wrist just right before going back down, but Taehyung isn’t giving up that easily.

“Why are you still talking?” he chokes out. Hey, at least he’s not moaning.

“Cause it gets you hard,” says Yoongi, before running his tongue over the spot he just bit. He’s not wrong. Taehyung’s gonna have to admit that. “And because I already know I’ll be able to shut the fuck up tomorrow.”

Taehyung guesses that’s true, but he’s done arguing anyway. While Yoongi was talking, he built up a rhythm with his hand, slick and warm around Taehyung’s cock, and if he wasn’t fully hard before, he definitely is now. His head is still thrown back and resting against Yoongi’s shoulder, he’s taking deep shaky breaths that are actually a lot quieter than he’d thought, but he wants nothing more than to release the whine that’s been waiting in his throat, forget about practice and groan as loud as he wants because the walls are thick and nobody cares anyway.

“You’re doing great,” Yoongi murmurs somewhere close to his ear, and it doesn’t even sound like
praise, he still somehow manages to make it sound dirty, predatory, like he’s just waiting for Taehyung to falter.

He presses his lips together, and all he hears is his own breath and the sounds of Yoongi’s hand working his cock, which is bordering on gross and should not be hot, should be anything but that, but still one of Taehyung’s hands flies up and he presses the back of it to his mouth. He squeezes his eyes shut as he rocks his hips forward into Yoongi’s hand, warm and slick and firm and just right to make him feel like he’s about to explode with all his held back noises, and he is doing great, but it’s so fucking hard.

“C’mon, you can do it.” Yoongi’s voice is the closest thing to a purr Taehyung has ever heard from a human being, but he doesn’t have time to think about it. Yoongi flicks his thumb over the head of Taehyung’s cock and he wants to scream, hips bucking helplessly against the tip of his finger dipping into the slit. He doesn’t think he’s ever felt this close to crying during sex, but Yoongi firms his grip around him and keeps doing that thing with his thumb that makes Taehyung’s entire body feel like it’s burning, and he doesn’t know what to do with all this goddamn arousal. “Come quietly for me, Taehyung. Come for me.”

Fuck.

Taehyung needs to breathe, so he drops his hand again, doesn’t care where it lands, just takes deep gulps of air, and he has no idea how Yoongi even noticed the whimper on the tip of his tongue before he actually released it, but just as he’s starting to feel less lightheaded again, Yoongi’s free hand is on his mouth instead. “Ah, ah,” Yoongi says softly. Somewhere in the back of Taehyung’s mind, he vows to make him jizz his damn pants tomorrow for being a sardonic prick. “Keep your mouth busy.”

He doesn’t know if he opens his mouth first or if it’s Yoongi starting the thing by slipping his fingers past Taehyung’s lips, and he doesn’t care. All he knows is two of Yoongi’s fingers are resting against his tongue and he’s sucking like his life depends on it, because it does help in a way. Maybe he has to breathe through his nose again, but maybe that’s quieter anyway, and he can do it. He presses his tongue up between Yoongi’s fingers just to distract himself from the way he wants to moan into his hand, and there’s something hot coiling in his stomach, a fiery pull that makes stars pop up behind his closed lids as the rhythm of Yoongi’s hand on his cock grows faster and faster.

But it happens when he’s just tiptoeing on the edge of climax, he moans around Yoongi’s fingers, feeling his own noise vibrate through them and immediately praying to any deity out there that Yoongi isn’t going to mess with him for that. Yoongi just shushes him though, which is irritating enough in itself - not that Taehyung cares right now, once he’s realized that his hand is still moving, and Taehyung is still thrusting into it. With one more flick of Yoongi’s wrist he’s gone, pressing his head back against Yoongi’s shoulder so hard he can feel bones pressing against his skull, lips still closed firmly around Yoongi’s fingers. Taehyung has no idea how, but he ends up doing what Yoongi told him to, he comes without a sound save for his breathing, shallow and exhausted, but relatively quiet. Yoongi sure as hell doesn’t make it easy, pumps him through every last wave of pleasure washing over him from head to toe, and Taehyung vaguely registers one of his hands clawing at Yoongi’s thigh at some point, but he stays silent even as his mouth falls open around Yoongi’s fingers so he can take deeper breaths again.

Once Yoongi pulls his hands back, Taehyung slumps heavily against him, very much uncaring about the fact that Yoongi is struggling to lean to the side and reach for tissues. His head is swimming as he tries to catch his breath, and this time he doesn’t even manage to feel insulted by Yoongi’s pleased tone of voice.
“Feel better about tomorrow now?”

“I’m feeling great about pretty much everything right now,” Taehyung mumbles. He’s pretty sure the whole thing about holding his voice back made him even more lightheaded than usually. Tomorrow is going to be a very long, hard day of admiring modern art.

Yoongi chuckles lightly as he slips away from behind Taehyung, hands still on his shoulders to lay him down. Like Taehyung is going to sleep now. Like he put two fingers in his mouth for nothing. Might as well use that vague feeling of emptiness between his lips for something good.

He rolls over on his stomach and towards Yoongi with a grin that’s just dark enough to make him throw Taehyung a look that beautifully illustrates how it catches him off guard. This night isn’t over yet.

What follows is the most silent blowjob Taehyung has ever witnessed, the only way for him to tell that Yoongi is enjoying himself being the warm hardness in his mouth and the way Yoongi claws at his hair, and he wonders if they’re starting a war here. He wonders if this is turning into some sort of competition to one-up each other as quietly as possible.

And he’s right.

When he gets up the following morning and creeps into the bathroom to brush the taste of cum out of his mouth he doesn’t expect Yoongi to wake up, not this early. But he’s just done putting toothpaste on his toothbrush when Yoongi casually strolls in, comes to a halt behind him, and tugs on the pair of sweatpants Taehyung threw on quickly.

“Final rehearsal,” he announces, peeking over Taehyung’s shoulder with a grin that makes him look like they’re about to rob a bank together.

“Can I brush my teeth first?” Taehyung says, toothbrush still hovering in his hand halfway to his mouth, watching Yoongi in the mirror.

“No,” says Yoongi, and pushes his pants down. “You manage to brush your teeth while I’m sucking you off, and I think we can be sure you’ll be just fine today.”


A moment passes between them in which Yoongi just watches him over his shoulder, waiting for him to either turn him down or give a proper okay that sounds more convinced. Eventually, Taehyung just shoves the toothbrush into his mouth and nods at him. He can do this.

Taehyung is immensely thankful for all those diving courses he took. He didn’t quite think that this was going to be the way he’d put his breathing techniques to use, but at least he didn’t choke on his toothpaste.

“I don’t get it,” Taehyung says quietly, tilting his head this way and that staring at a particular piece, once more thankful to know that most people here don’t speak his language.

“It’s art,” Yoongi says, and turns towards the next one. “You’re not supposed to get it.”

With a frown, Taehyung hops after him. “You’re an artist. Am I not supposed to get your music?”

Yoongi seems to seriously consider this for a while, then he shrugs very slowly. “I may have written
a handful of lyrics knowing perfectly well nobody was gonna understand them.”

“Or maybe you were just bullshitting an assignment,” Taehyung dares to venture. He’s watching him closely, because with Yoongi being as passionate about music as he is, Taehyung isn’t exactly sure if he’d ever bullshit anything about it, but then again, Taehyung is passionate about biology and has had his fair share of bullshitting assignments.

Either way, Yoongi throws him a grin that Taehyung stares at for several seconds, before they continue following each other around through the large rooms. “You nervous?” Yoongi asks airily as they pass a big group of tourists.

Lying, Taehyung shakes his head. He is nervous, but more importantly he’s been fucking horny ever since he recovered from that bathroom blowjob this morning. It definitely outweighs the nervousness, and he’s really trying to appreciate art here, but he also keeps wondering when they’ll falter and pull each other into the next restroom. “You?” he still asks back casually, because if Yoongi can act perfectly calm, so can he.

“Nah,” says Yoongi, last night’s smugness still plastered all over his face. “I know I’m gonna keep quiet.”

Taehyung rolls his eyes at him, but he doesn’t think Yoongi sees, because he’s already staring at another work. Joining him, Taehyung tries really hard to focus and appreciate the art this time. Then, Yoongi says, “What the fuck is that.”

If two months ago someone had told Taehyung that he’d spend hours walking through the MoMA with Yoongi, giggling helplessly to Yoongi making extremely dry jokes about art, he would have found that very hard to believe. Even better, Yoongi himself laughs now and then, and it makes his face look so entirely different that sometimes, Taehyung has trouble looking at the art on the walls instead of him. Around the time they start getting frowns thrown their way for giggling into their hands all the time, Yoongi finally grabs his arm and drags him into the men’s restroom on the second floor, and Taehyung really, really tries to stop laughing now, but it doesn’t quite work out.

It all results in what has to be the least erotic sex he’s ever had with Yoongi, but Taehyung doesn’t even mind. He supposes it’s less about sex itself and more about the knowledge that they’re fooling around in a world famous art museum, and it’s less about being sexy and more about having fun. He can see Yoongi pressing his lips together in a suppressed chuckle when they sneak into a stall together as quietly as they can because at the far end of the room, there’s someone peeing into a urinal with their back turned towards them. Luckily, the place seems empty save for the three of them, but it’s still very quiet in here and the stall walls leave a little too much room over the floor to still feel comfortable, so they arrange themselves in a way that’ll make it look like only one person is in here.

Which means that Yoongi is standing facing the toilet (so if someone looks they’ll think he’s pissing in a stall, why not), and Taehyung is on the toilet, legs crossed on the toilet lid for lack of a more comfortable position that still allows him to keep his feet off the floor. By the time Taehyung tugs his pants down, he can see Yoongi’s abs quivering violently with suppressed laughter because he probably looks ridiculous, and it actually only gradually dies down once he gets his mouth on him.

So Taehyung doesn’t keep last night’s vow to himself to make Yoongi jizz his pants because he ends up swallowing, but he doesn’t remember said promise that distinctly anyway. Yoongi is running a hand through his hair while catching his breath, and they both stay like this for several seconds listening to the world outside their stall, to make sure they’re alone for the next part. Which is rearranging themselves so they can switch places, and Yoongi looks so small curled up on a toilet seat but it’s also really fucking surreal, a lot more surreal than the pieces they were staring at outside,
Taehyung finds it hard to concentrate on the fingers running over his dick at first.

As per usual though, Yoongi manages to rile him up quickly enough, and Taehyung ends up with both of his hands pressed to his lips, bucking into Yoongi’s fingers, and temporarily forgetting where they are.

Not for long though. Yoongi leaves the restroom first, then Taehyung counts to thirty and follows after him, and when he meets him in the hallway outside he looks so forcefully serious Taehyung almost laughs at him then and there. “Where were we?” Yoongi asks casually, looking around like either of them could remember what piece they were looking at before leaving to climax in a restroom, but Taehyung can see the corners of his mouth twitch.

“I think we were just about to leave, actually,” says Taehyung, the post-sex buzz making him hungry as always. He could go for some ramyun right now. That should get rid of the current taste in his mouth, too.

Yoongi doesn’t seem opposed, so they make their way downstairs again, quietly this time, both trying hard to keep it together, but Taehyung starts giggling the second they step foot outside. “Jesus,” he mutters between breaths, walking quickly as if he expects someone to chase after them for what they did now, while Yoongi keeps up next to him and keeps peering back at the building over his shoulder.

“That has got to be some sort of record,” Yoongi says, and he sounds dangerously close to giddy, making Taehyung shoot him a grin so big it almost hurts his exhausted cheeks.

“What’s a record?”

“In the past twenty-four hours, we gave each other a grand total of three blowjobs and two handjobs,” Yoongi declares. They round a corner so he can’t turn and stare at the museum anymore, so he straightens his back instead. “I, uh,” he says and fakes clearing his throat, adapting an expression that Taehyung guesses is supposed to look sophisticated, “I love art.”

That just about does it. Taehyung actually has to lean to the side with how he’s snorting with laughter now, wheezing into his sleeve trying to contain himself somehow. “Me too,” he gets out to the amazing sound of Yoongi giggling into his scarf. “Art is… Art’s great.”

“If Namjoon ever finds out about this he’s going to be so pissed at me,” Yoongi says, and now they’re both laughing, and Taehyung feels warm all over.

He wiggles his eyebrows at him conspiratorially. “Nobody has to know.”

“Yeah, that might be better for everyone,” Yoongi snorts, and shoves his hands into the pockets of his jacket as they walk. One day Taehyung is going to buy those gloves for him.

Yoongi is quicker than him to calm down of course, but eventually Taehyung is back to breathing normally through his nose, too. But whenever he looks to his side, there’s still this tiny hint of a smile playing on Yoongi’s lips, and just knowing that he made him enjoy himself so much today is enough to keep one on Taehyung’s lips, too.

“I think,” Yoongi says finally, while Taehyung is scrolling through his phone for restaurant recommendations and also maybe a hint as to where exactly they are, “I’ll take the apartment.”

Taehyung looks up. “Yeah? I’ll let mom know.” He grins at him, first out of pure joy, then with a different edge to it. “Is that what you thought about while getting your dick sucked at the MoMA?”
“Yep,” Yoongi deadpans, but then even he breaks again and laughs softly into his jacket collar. “Also, I wanna celebrate.”

“Okay,” says Taehyung, turning back towards his phone because the screen went black.

“Like, get shitfaced. Here in New York, before we leave. You and me.”

Oh. Taehyung looks up again, but Yoongi isn’t looking at him. He’s watching the streets, with that look still on his face, this soft contentment, like life could really be going worse for him right now, like he’s been having a day that doesn’t necessarily make him want to crawl into bed and stay there for twelve hours. Like he feels good. Like he is, maybe, somewhere close to happy.

Later, when Jungkook texts and asks him how he liked the museum, Taehyung finds that he has trouble remembering any of the artwork. What he does remember, is Yoongi’s face in the New York street lights, all soft lines and rough turns, cheeks a soft pink from laughter, eyes glinting with amusement, and the way his lips curve when he smiles.
Pillow Laughter

Chapter Summary

Lots of giggling, with a splash of troubled mafia kids.

Chapter Notes

10k hits!!! you guys!!!!
i don’t wanna make this into a huge author's note again, so:
i've been thinking about doing a bonus chapter for you guys, probably once we're past
1k kudos or something, but i’m not sure what you’d like to read for that. if you're
interested, read this pls, and let me know what you think! thank you ♥

now, warning for alcohol and failed porn.

When Yoongi said he wanted to get shitfaced with Taehyung, apparently what he meant was
Taehyung getting shitfaced and Yoongi paying for it.

Before they entered this bar, Taehyung was thinking about how he’s never seen Yoongi drunk, only
high, and now he’s half sure he’s never going to see Yoongi drunk. Either the bartender has been
lying about what he’s been giving him, or Yoongi can take his booze ridiculously well. Taehyung
feels warm and fuzzy and a lot like having fun, his face feels hot and his limbs are tingling, but
Yoongi still seems the same as always.

There’s a thought somewhere in the back of his head about how Yoongi said he was drunk through
most of his college time, and he combines it with the knowledge of what Yoongi went through to
make some sort of sense, but Taehyung is absolutely not in the right mindset to spend too much
energy on that right now. Yoongi is a lot more used to alcohol than he is, and that’s all he has to
know right now.

That, and the fact that Yoongi still refuses to let him pay.

“Let me pay this round,” Taehyung says immediately, the second they get their new drinks.
“Pleerase.”

“Nope,” Yoongi answers, under the curious gaze of the barman who’s been watching them whine at
each other in another language for a while now.

Over his glass, Taehyung throws him his best pout. “Why not!”

“You’ve been paying for everything for over a week now, trust me, I have enough money to pay for
a couple drinks tonight.” When Taehyung sighs into his straw, it puts bubbles into his drink and he
giggles, and he can hear Yoongi snort quietly next to him. “You save your money for more trips you
can take me on, alright, fake boyfriend?”
“I can’t believe you’re only fake dating me for my real money,” Taehyung says without taking the straw out of his mouth.

“And the real sex,” Yoongi says casually. Taehyung watches him take a big swig and wonders if his cheeks are finally reddening, or if that’s just the dim lights here. “I wanna go to Las Vegas next.”

“Okay,” says Taehyung, finally lifting his head a little more to grin at Yoongi. “I’m not sure if they actually fly there, but if you want me to spend money on you and travels, there’s a particular Emirates plane that has showers on board. It’s two-storied, and on the upper floor are showers for first-class passengers. Would you agree to plane sex if we had those showers?”

Yoongi makes a contemplative sound that seems a little elongated by alcohol. “Maybe.”

“Good, then we’ll do that. One first class ticket for that plane is around ten thousand dollars. That’s roughly--”

“I know how many Won that is,” Yoongi interrupts, glaring at him over his drink now. “Don’t you dare, Kim Taehyung. You ever spend that much money on me, I’ll tell your parents everything.”

The fake threat elicits a fake gasp from Taehyung, then he giggles some more and shakes his head. No plane shower sex, then. He guesses his father might actually want to have a few choice words with him if he did blow that much money on his boyfriend, so he wasn’t being serious anyway.

Las Vegas, however, is still entirely possible. He’s going to keep that one in mind.

“Are you gonna dance tonight?” Taehyung asks, airily changing the topic. “You didn’t dance at all during that party we went to at home.”

Yoongi shrugs, hunched over the bar now that Taehyung is already turning his body towards the dance floor behind them suggestively. “Not much of a dancer.”

“Seriously? Come on, you dated Hoseok.” Taehyung slips off his seat and shuffles closer to Yoongi, grinning from one warm ear to the other. “Also, we both know you can move your body well.”

“Shut up,” Yoongi snorts and reaches out with the hand not holding his drink to shove Taehyung’s shoulder very lightly. “You’re drunk. Don’t make me dance, or I’ll order you water next.”

Again, Taehyung gasps, sprawling a hand over his chest in shock. “You wouldn’t.”

“I would. I’m just filled with extremely serious threats tonight.” While Taehyung pouts, Yoongi turns towards the dancefloor on his stool, resting his elbows on the counter behind him. “You go dance,” he says, and then his eyes are on Taehyung, and Taehyung’s stomach does a flip. Yoongi’s cheeks have definitely darkened by now, but they’re not nearly as dark as the gaze he’s throwing him, head lowered just a little, watching Taehyung like he’s prey waiting to be devoured. “I’ll watch.”

Taehyung has noticed. Yoongi likes watching him move, and Taehyung knows. He’s noticed the looks he gets during sex, the way Yoongi likes to lean back and just let his eyes roam, and he’d be lying if he said it didn’t give him some kind of ego boost. Which is probably what makes it so easy to say yes to this.

“Alright,” he says quietly, leaving his drink at the bar and going backwards towards the dancing masses, already holding eye contact with Yoongi. He doesn’t mind dancing alone. Years of being the weird kid in school have taught him to do many things alone, dancing included, and now that Yoongi wants to watch him it’s different anyway. He’s going to have to put on a show.
Of course, there are different shows for different occasions. There’s Hoseok’s *Look, I’m a dance major* show, Jimin’s *I could be a dance major if I wanted* show, and of course Jungkook’s *Who wants a piece of this* show. Usually when Taehyung goes out and dances, it’s for his own amusement, so there isn’t that much elaborating show off involved. Occasionally though, when he did go out with the set goal of getting at least one or two phone numbers, he had his own show, and it usually worked.

This is different, though. Taehyung rarely went out to fuck, not a fan of messy drunk sex with strangers, he went out to tease and intrigue, so that’s what he did on dancefloors. Show some but not all, he only went all out when he was sandwiched between Jimin and Jungkook and they all rolled against each other, for fun, but never for other people.

He’s going to go all out for Yoongi. If he wants to be boring and sit on a stool with that hungry but repressed look in his eyes (Taehyung can see it even through alcohol and dim club lights), this is what he’ll get.

Taehyung, personally, is a big fan of his own face and what it can do. Partly because he’s always been a phenomenal actor, but also partly because he’s perfectly aware that it only takes one well timed blink of his eyes, and something as simple as letting his tongue hang out his mouth becomes sexy. He’s done it often enough to impress someone, holding eye contact with his tongue between his teeth, but while his eyes are locked with Yoongi’s, he full on swipes it over his lips wetly and leaves his mouth open for a good bit afterwards. His lips hopefully glistening in the spotlights from above him now, he breaks the gaze to cant his head back, and yes, he does in fact know what he’s doing when he exposes his throat like that. His hips never hold still in between, the song the club is playing is a little too fast to do any sexy hip rolls, but that’s what the whole tongue action is for.

Raising his arms above his head, he finds Yoongi’s gaze again, holding it as he pumps his chest out once, twice, then breaking it again as he turns away with his best smirk. It’s time to let Yoongi stare at his ass for a bit.

It’s when he sharply shakes his hips sidewards to the beat that he notices movement in the crowd around and before him. A head of blonde hair is bouncing towards him, some girl around his age dancing her way in his direction until they’re face to face. “Hi!” she beams, muffled against the music. She greets him in English, of course, so Taehyung immediately switches languages in his head too. “I’ve never seen you here before.”

It’s kind of a lame pick up line, really, with the mass of people here Taehyung doubts she’s seen everyone else before, but it’s fine. She seems nice. Her hair is sticking to her forehead and neck, she’s a little out of breath like she’s been dancing for an hour and there’s a plastic cup in her hand, she looks like she’s enjoying herself. Taehyung can already guess that he’s going to disappoint her, but he’s going to be gentle about it. Who knows, maybe she just wants to make friends.

“I’m on vacation,” he answers, leaning into her direction a little to make sure she understands him.

“Oh yeah?” she smiles, interest glinting all over her face. “Where are you from?”

“South Korea.”

“Really? You sound Australian.”

Taehyung laughs, the sound almost inaudible with the beat thumping through the room, the air, their bodies. Half a year was enough to give him an accent, he knows, and he’s noticed the confused glances he occasionally got from people he talked to here in New York. He’s about to explain his semester abroad to the girl when she inches closer, eyes on his face, and bites her bottom lip with a
“How long are you staying in the city?” she asks, and she doesn’t have to yell anymore because she’s so close now. Yeah, she’s not looking for new friends.

Taehyung clears his throat and leans in a little more. He makes sure their bodies don’t touch, he just really wants her to hear him clearly so this doesn’t get any more awkward. “Only a few more days. Then my boyfriend and I are flying back home.”

Heat slithers down his back upon calling Yoongi that, but it’s fine, he tells himself, it’s cool. That’s what fake dating is for, right? To tell other people that they’re boyfriends. That’s their whole deal.

The girl pulls back now and Taehyung catches a brief, wide-eyed stare before she throws her free hand over her mouth and laughs. “Oh, I’m sorry!” she says, yelling against the music again, and Taehyung can’t help but giggle along with her as he assures her that it’s fine. “Oh, my god. Sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it,” says Taehyung, grinning because he means it. She smiles back and reaches out to pat his arm.

“I’ll go embarrass myself somewhere else. Enjoy NYC!”

“Thanks, I am!” Taehyung calls after her, but she’s already turned her back to him, disappearing in the crowd swaying to the music.

When he turns back around, automatically looking for Yoongi, he’s not in his barstool anymore. Taehyung blinks, but before he can waste much time looking around, Yoongi shows up in front of him, drink abandoned, shoulders just on the verge of forcefully relaxed. Taehyung grins at him.

“Changed your mind?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, though Taehyung pretty much has to read his lips to make it out. Just when he tries convincing himself that it has probably definitely nothing to do with the girl just now, he sees Yoongi’s eyes dart behind him for a second. “Who was that?”

Taehyung is way too drunk to hide his smirk now. “Just some girl who was hitting on me.” He shrugs, still moving his hips to the music, and watching as Yoongi automatically starts doing the same now that he’s here. “Why, you jealous?”

“No.” Yoongi doesn’t sound convinced himself, and now Taehyung is definitely sure that the alcohol is finally getting to him too. “You just happened to open my eyes to the joy that is dancing in full clubs.”

“Oh, I see,” Taehyung laughs, and leans down a bit further. “I told her I have a boyfriend.” Yoongi just looks up at him quietly at that, like he’s unsure what he’s supposed to do with that information, and Taehyung’s grin widens. “That means you should probably touch me now, or she’ll get suspicious.”

Yoongi’s hands are on his hips in a matter of milliseconds. “How convenient,” he says dryly, like he isn’t the one with a firm grip on Taehyung now, like he doesn’t look unashamedly pleased with this situation. Taehyung isn’t going to point it out. If Yoongi needs to play it cool, he’s going to let him. He’s not sober enough to be poking fun at him right now.

He gets distracted too easily when drunk, sometimes by music, or by other people’s outfits, sometimes even just by sweat rolling down his own neck, something usually manages to make him forget what he was just thinking about one way or the other. Most of the time it’s something nice,
ending in happy thought carousels that make sure he’s never bored, but right now it doesn’t quite feel like a carousel.

Taehyung’s arms are around Yoongi’s shoulders and they’re very, very close, and it feels like a roller coaster.

He’s found Yoongi pretty from the very beginning, even when he was just a pixelated mass of pale skin and dark hoodie on his laptop screen. Every time Taehyung is up close with him it feels like there’s something new to find on him, a freckle he hasn’t seen before, a new curve of his lips, the way his hair falls into his eyes, or just the way his face moves when he talks. Something would always catch Taehyung’s attention, but right now, it’s all of those little things at once, everything playing together to make Yoongi’s face shine with the blush of alcohol and the colorful lights from above them, and it almost knocks Taehyung off his feet.

Yoongi steadies him with a tighter grip on his hips. Taehyung didn’t quite expect to actually stumble, but with the way the world seemed to stutter to a halt around him just because of Min Yoongi’s stupid perfect face he guesses it’s no surprise.

With one raised eyebrow, Yoongi cocks his head at him, which seems to be a recent habit of his and always makes Taehyung want to push him up against the next wall and make out with him until they see stars. “Should’ve ordered you that water,” Yoongi says, close enough to Taehyung’s face to keep himself from screaming over the current dance remix, and, yeah, maybe he’s right. Taehyung does feel a little dizzy right now.

He just shrugs though, grinning at him as he pulls his arms tighter around Yoongi and their movements become increasingly off-beat. “You’re pretty,” he informs him.

Confusion ghosts over Yoongi’s face, just for a second, but even clouded like this, Taehyung’s perceptive mind still catches it. He blinks, surprised, and Taehyung doesn’t bother fighting back his giggle. He sincerely doubts that Yoongi hasn’t heard that before. Not with an ex like Hoseok who, according to the group chat with Taehyung’s best friends, has been paying Jimin enough compliments on a daily basis to make him adopt some sort of permanent blush. No, Taehyung is pretty sure Yoongi has heard that one before, maybe he just didn’t expect to hear it from him. Or maybe he didn’t expect to hear it while drunk and sweaty, looking messy with damp hair starting to stick to his forehead and his shirt clinging to his body with awkward stains, all while proving that neither of them are masters of tipsy dancing.

“I know,” Yoongi says finally, air casual and confident again, like nothing happened in that brief second in between. Taehyung doesn’t quite notice his own fond grin at that answer, and even if he did, he wouldn’t be able to stop it.

They decide to take it somewhere else soon after that. Yoongi kept looking more and more uncomfortable with how full the club was growing to be, and while Taehyung did enjoy the mass of people around him, he also didn’t mind Yoongi’s offer to continue getting drunk in the privacy of their hotel room. So after acquiring some beer and actual soju for themselves (and a loud giggle fit from Taehyung because according to a very suspicious store clerk, Yoongi doesn’t look his age), they’re on the subway back.

“Why Vegas?” Taehyung asks into silence. He’s definitely still pretty drunk, but the cool air outside helped clear his head just enough to push him back into happy thought carousels that have nothing to do with the arch of Yoongi’s Cupid’s bow. He saw blinking street lights outside and that somehow reminded him of Las Vegas and Yoongi’s wish to go there, so now he’s going to ask about it. “You
know it’s really hot there, right? And like, full and loud all the time. And full. Wait, I already said it’s full. I mean, like, it’s never really night there. You know the bats and birds and shit there keep getting fucked up because of the, uh… The…”

“Light pollution,” Yoongi says while Taehyung still waves his hands around helplessly.

“Right! Thanks. Anyway, doesn’t really sound like your kind of city. Or are you some sort of,” Taehyung giggles, “gambling legend I didn’t know of?”

“I don’t know.” Yoongi shrugs. “It was kind of a joke, actually. But I guess I wouldn’t mind seeing it, either. It wouldn’t really be my first choice or anything, but I still wanna, like, see the world and shit.”

They get up as the train nears their stop, and Taehyung staggers a little, grabbing Yoongi’s arm to steady himself and grins at him. “Wanna marry me? We can do that there.”

“We can marry everywhere in the States, Taehyung. Read the news sometimes.”

“Oh, you’re right!” Yoongi pulls Taehyung out when the doors open, and Taehyung just hops after him gesturing happily. “We can. We can go where no fake boyfriends have gone before. Reach for the stars. Touch the untouchable, break the unbreakable. Row, row--”

“Stop quoting anime at me,” Yoongi says, but Taehyung is pretty sure he can see a grin on his face as he catches up with him. Taehyung gasps.

“You know Tengen Topp… Ten… You know TTGL?”

Yoongi rolls his eyes with a sigh that definitely counts as exaggerated, fumbling for their key as they make their way through the hotel lobby. “Of course I know TTGL,” he says quietly. “It’s a classic.” When Taehyung just squeaks happily because he’s otherwise preoccupied with trying not to feel sick in the elevator, Yoongi starts eyeing him in the mirror. “Did you just propose to me?”

“As a manner of fact, I did.”

“Matter.”

“Oops. Matter of fact. I’m sorry I don’t have a ring.”

“I wouldn’t have accepted anyway,” Yoongi says. “I’m not ready for married life. I still have--”

He doesn’t get any further than that because Taehyung fake a dramatic sob and throws his forearm over his eyes. “I can’t believe you’re turning me down! What am I supposed to do with myself now? What will I tell my dog?”

“Shhh.” Yoongi looks around the hallway while they exit the elevator, but Taehyung is already falling quiet on his own because he heard Yoongi laugh and he wants to savor that. Even more importantly, Yoongi turns a little bit to throw him a promising grin over his shoulder as he unlocks the door to their hotel room. “I’ll make it up to you.”

“Oh.” Taehyung says, leaning heavily against the door as it closes behind them and Yoongi’s hand fists in his shirt collar. “Okay.”

Hot breath fans over his face, and then Yoongi’s lips are on his. They’re cold from being outside, but it’s not like Taehyung has a whole lot of feeling in his face right now, so it doesn’t really matter. He kisses back sloppily, fingers skittering over Yoongi’s chest to try and push his jacket off, even
though he’s very obviously too clumsy to manage that right now. Yoongi laughs into his mouth as he shrugs the jacket off himself though, and the sound is so contagious it makes Taehyung huff a laugh against his soft lips too. Yoongi’s hand returns to his collar and he pulls them both backwards into the vague direction of their bed.

Taehyung still has time to think that that’s a bad idea before both of them stumble. He sees his life flash before his eyes (not really; he sees a blurry whir of bleached hair and dark brown eyes), then a thump goes through them both because Yoongi bumped into a wall. Which is better than falling to the floor, he guesses. Laughing softly, again, Yoongi nips at his lower lip and keeps his hand right where it was as he pushes Taehyung further backwards through the room.

“I’m gonna fall,” Taehyung mumbles, giggling about the mental image of them stumbling through the dark room, not inclined to get his mouth off of Yoongi’s. “I’m gonna fall and I’ll take you with me.”

“You’re not gonna fall,” says Yoongi, apparently better at estimating the general room size as he gives Taehyung a hearty shove and watches him tumble backwards with a yelp. His ass hits the mattress, sure, but Taehyung also instinctively reaches out for Yoongi to hold onto something, pulling him down by his sweater. Taehyung’s head knocks against Yoongi’s shoulder and Yoongi ends up awkwardly straddling his lap, one hand still clinging to the paper bag with their booze. Yoongi huffs quietly at Taehyung’s incessant giggling, both of those actions making the kiss increasingly complicated. “I think we might be too drunk for this.”

Taehyung pulls back with an accusing pout, attempts to stare him down, gets distracted by Yoongi’s lips and leans in again. He misses and kisses his cheek instead, open-mouthed and messily, and then he deflates a bit. “Maybe we are,” he wheezes out, resting his forehead against Yoongi’s collar bone. “Why’re you still so competent, then?”

Wait, that’s not what he was trying to say. Taehyung frowns at nothing as Yoongi clumsily swings himself off his lap to land on his back next to him with a heavy exhale. He blinks at the ceiling, then shoots Taehyung a quizzical look. “Coherent?”

Right. “Eh, whatever,” says Taehyung, waving his hand around and lowering himself on his back too, carefully, like he’s afraid the bed might slip away from under him any second.

“Tongue always works,” Yoongi says. He sounds like he was trying to say something else, but Taehyung is already giggling loudly.

“It sure does.”

“Shht. I mean I can always talk, even drunk. I can’t do fuck all else, as you can see.”

“Fuck all else?” Taehyung echoes, another laugh shaking his shoulders against the mattress. He turns his head to look at Yoongi, who’s looking back with a shrug, and almost asks why he’s such a quiet person if he claims to always be able to talk. But even in his state, he thinks that’s kind of a dick question. He has a better idea, anyway. “Okay, then show me how you empty that bottle we bought and then say hypomix... hypermixo-- Wait, I got it. Hi...pom...olydia? Close enough.”

“Hypomixol,” Yoongi says, then stills abruptly, staring at Taehyung with a dumbfounded expression that makes him want to lean over and kiss him again. “Fuck. Hypomixolydishhit. Shit.”

Taehyung cackles. It’s an ugly, throaty laugh from a mixture of being piss drunk and lying on his back, but he doesn’t care. It makes Yoongi laugh, and then it makes Yoongi sit up with undying determination on his face and pull the bottle out of its bag to unscrew it.
“I can do this,” he says. “Fuck you, Kim Taeh–,” he halfheartedly suppresses a burp, “Taehyung. I can do it.”

So instead of making out, they share the rest of their drinks while challenging each other to recite increasingly long words. When Yoongi says *anhemitonic pentatonic scale*, he says *Fuck yeah* afterwards and kisses Taehyung on the mouth. They fall asleep that night almost fully dressed, feet dangling off the bed, with giggles still in their throats.

A big part of getting better, for Yoongi, has always been taking better care of his health. It’s something he still has to work on occasionally, but at least he doesn’t drink as much as he used to anymore. Alcohol helps him sleep, which has always made it terribly appealing, but he still doesn’t do it as often anymore, and even last night he had way less than he might have had two years ago.

Still, he slept well. He wakes up in a sea of pillows and blanket, everything around him white and blinding, can feel the headache coming before it’s even there. It’s a mixture of soft and gross, his cold feet in the warm bed, still in yesterday’s socks, but comfortable and well rested. Yoongi sits up, ignoring the unmistakable feeling of being in bed with jeans on, and looks around blearily. There’s sunshine coming through the window, and there’s Taehyung sitting on the edge of the bed staring out said window. He’s topless but holding his shirt in his hand, like he pulled it off and then forgot what he was going to do. Yoongi follows his gaze briefly but there’s nothing outside, so he guesses Taehyung is just sleepy and zoning out again.

“Dude,” Yoongi says. Or croaks. Taehyung blinks and turns his head. “Did we almost get married last night?”

It’s the first memory that came back to him, and apparently also the first he wants to talk about. Taehyung sits still for a second, before his grin gets the better of him. “I think so. I definitely remember proposing to you.”

“I remember you crying when I said no.”

“I didn’t cry!”

Taehyung laughs, and then Yoongi laughs too, so hoarse he ends up coughing a little. “What would your parents say to that?” he asks casually, while he leans to the side and manages to find the water bottle between the beer and the soju.

“They’d probably be happy for me,” Taehyung shrugs and Yoongi almost rolls his eyes while drinking because yeah, sure, his angelic parents would be happy about him drunk marrying some dude in New York, “after I guess at least six months of being very, very concerned and suspicious. But in the end I think they’d be happy.”

Okay, yeah, that seems a bit more realistic. The part about his parents being suspicious; not the part where they stay married for over half a year. But hell, Yoongi’s gonna play along. “Maybe until we’re forty and I kill you for your fortune,” he says, screwing the bottle shut again and then slowly peeling himself out of his uncomfortable jeans under the blanket.

“Oh,” Taehyung smiles a kind of smile Yoongi has never seen before, but maybe that’s just the morning light and his hangover, “you wouldn’t wanna do that. Mom and dad would most definitely avenge me, and it’d be ugly. You wouldn’t have a whole lot of time with all that money.”

Yoongi raises his brows at him, as Taehyung finally gets up from the bed and drops his shirt in the
suitcase to find a clean one instead. “Avenge you? I could see your parents making sure I land my ass in jail for that, but you’re making it sound like they’d come for me with fire and pitchforks when I least expect it.”

“Yeah, they would,” Taehyung says casually, still digging through his suitcase for clothes. “You wouldn’t see jail, trust me.”

Sometimes Taehyung says things Yoongi doesn’t get. And it’s not like when he mixes up his words or just says weird shit in general, Yoongi can usually somehow translate his occasional brainfarts. No, it’s stuff like this that he sometimes says, rarely, and it always feels like there’s some sort of joke that Yoongi isn’t in on, hanging in the air between them. Yoongi’s still sitting in bed watching him, frowning. It’s not like it doesn’t make sense, Yoongi knows that there are parents out there who would go to great lengths for their children. Yoongi of all people is very aware of how far someone is willing to go if you just mess with them badly enough. But it’s still weird. It doesn’t sit right with Yoongi’s image of Taehyung’s parents, and there’s that weird undertone in Taehyung’s voice he absolutely cannot decipher.

Taehyung turns his head and throws Yoongi a smile over his shoulder. “You know my parents basically built an empire with dad’s company, right?” When Yoongi nods, the smile grows wider and he shrugs. “They didn’t get this far by being nice.”

That makes sense, Yoongi guesses. He also guesses he only knows the civil and polite versions of them, the version they present their son’s boyfriend. Maybe they’re both the same in that aspect. Yoongi is friendly and smiley with them to make sure they can’t see he’s messed up, and maybe they’re friendly and smiley with him to make sure they don’t seem like whoever they had to be to get to where they are now.

“Actually, I think Kookie might kill you even before they’d get to you,” Taehyung says now and straightens up with an armful of clothing.

Yoongi snorts. “Okay, I don’t know about your parents, but I’m pretty sure I could take Jungkook in a fight.”

Taehyung grins at him on his way to the bathroom. “That depends.”

“On what?” Yoongi calls after him with a frown, but Taehyung has already disappeared and turned on the shower.

What the hell. He could take Jungkook, of course he could. He looks big and he has these broad shoulders and thighs, sure, but it’s not like Yoongi doesn’t know how to fight. He can throw a punch, and he’s quick, and Jungkook is, like, barely even a teenager. Of course, he’s not going to have to fight Jungkook, because he’s not going to murder Taehyung for his fortune. That would require them getting married first, and they’re not going to do that.

The topic doesn’t come up again, neither the weird part about Taehyung’s family nor the irrevocable fact that they literally discussed the possibility of marriage. Which is still mildly surreal, so Yoongi really doesn’t mind not talking about it. They spend the majority of the day hungover and tired, only going out briefly in the afternoon to eat at a restaurant Taehyung wanted to try out, and stay inside for the rest. It’s the second week of their stay by now, they’re nearing the end and have already done most of the things they absolutely wanted to do here. Of course, there’s always something new to explore when you’ve never been to a city like this, but right now, they’re both fine sitting on the
floor in front of their window and watching other people be outside.

Or at least Yoongi has been trying to watch the people on the street. Taehyung is working through biology textbooks again and he’s only wearing a shirt and very short boxers, so Yoongi has been having trouble keeping his eyes trained on the window. He’s glad they didn’t attempt drunk sex last night because he can’t see that ending very well, but he also can’t help but feel a tiny bit starved right now.

Damn Kim Taehyung and his thighs.

“You know,” Taehyung says without looking up from his book, making Yoongi blink and turn his head away quickly. “We’re flying back in a few days and we never did end up leaving ass imprints on this window.”

Okay. Yoongi turns his head back towards him now, brows raised in mild surprise. “I guess I was kinda bluffing with that,” he admits. “I’m pretty sure I’d have to, like, hoist you up on my hands for that? How am I supposed to do that?”

Taehyung clicks his tongue disapprovingly and shakes his head while turning a page. “Disappointing. Were you bluffing about the shower sex, too?”

“No, we can have shower sex if you want.” Yoongi almost says something about how Taehyung could try holding him against the window instead since Yoongi is smaller and lighter than him, but he’s not sure if Taehyung’s arms would play along with that, and more importantly he’s not sure if he really wants his naked ass pressed against a window in New York. Maybe he should occasionally reconsider the stuff he says when trying to rile people up. “I can still finger you in the bathtub, too.”

“Good,” Taehyung says. He puts a neon green post-it note on the page and closes his book. “I mean, this’d sure feel like a completely wasted trip if we didn’t use every inch of this hotel room.”

He grins at him, and Yoongi grins back, eyes flickering down when Taehyung rearranges his legs to cross them in front of him. There’s a handful of hickies on his inner thighs, but they’re fading quickly, and something about him saying they’d have to use every inch makes him swallow and take a determined breath.

“There’s something else I want to try,” he says.

Taehyung cocks his head. For a second, Yoongi remembers the shocked expression on his face when he first suggested fucking in the cinema restrooms to him, and now when Yoongi starts suggesting new stuff there’s something entirely else in his eyes, scheming, interested. He’s not scared or even nervous anymore, just curious and almost certainly already on board.

Yoongi clears his throat. “I want to fuck your thighs.”

Okay, maybe now there’s confusion in his expression too. Taehyung just looks at him for a few seconds, then at his thighs, then back at Yoongi. “Well,” he says, “that’s a new one.”

“I’ve never done it before either,” Yoongi says, swallowing the comment about how he can’t believe nobody has proposed that to Taehyung yet. It’s been low-key on Yoongi’s mind ever since he first saw him on cam in those goddamn red shorts. “But I’d like to, if you’ll let me.”

Taehyung seems to consider this, watching his own thighs now. “So, do I just…?” he starts, pressing them together tentatively. Yoongi tries not to groan at the way he can see them flex.

“Yeah, I’d be pushing them together, like this,” he says, leaning forward and putting one hand on
either leg, pushing carefully, just to demonstrate. Touch comes easily now, and Taehyung doesn’t even flinch at his cold hands anymore, but Yoongi doesn’t have the concentration to think about that anymore.

“And just fuck in between them?” Taehyung completes the explanation for him.

Yoongi nods. “I mean, there’s not much in it for you, I guess, but the bathtub offer still stands.”

Still watching his thighs in contemplation, Taehyung starts grinning at that, and when he looks back up at Yoongi he nods, and Yoongi feels heat rush down his body just from that. “Sounds like a deal.”

He’s looking at him expectantly, and Yoongi hesitates. “Right now?”

“Whenever you want.” Taehyung shrugs, and the grin gets a little more sheepish. “I’m really curious now though, I’ll admit that.”

And how could Yoongi say no to that?

They relocate to the bed, with Taehyung pinning him down at first. He’s smug now, rubbing his thighs against Yoongi as he straddles him, but Yoongi lets him. He likes it, likes Taehyung being confident and encouraged by Yoongi’s blatant fascination with his legs, focusing all his energy solely on riling Yoongi up. So of course it’s working, quick and easy, sloppy kisses to his jaw and a hand sneaking into his boxers, but Yoongi doesn’t let him tease for long.

He rolls them over and grabs Taehyung’s ankles, nosing down his calves as he pushes them apart. Which is the opposite of what he announced to do, but fuck if he’s going to let this opportunity to get his mouth all over Taehyung’s thighs go to waste. They’ve got time, anyway, and Taehyung doesn’t seem to mind with the way he hooks his legs over Yoongi’s shoulders and cards both of his hands through his hair. Yoongi sinks his teeth into the skin right where the older hickies are, making sure they won’t fade completely before adding new ones. He’s running both his hands up and down the outside of Taehyung’s thighs until he can’t take it anymore and shoves one down the front of his own boxers instead to stroke himself. That way at least he’ll save himself some dignity, not letting Taehyung know how embarrassingly close he was to rutting against the bedsheets.

When he’s satisfied with the marks blooming darkly on Taehyung’s skin, he pulls back a little, throwing Taehyung a glance, who’s leaning back comfortably against the pillows and looking at him with what could definitely be classified as bedroom eyes. There’s just the hint of a grin playing with the corners of his mouth, answering Yoongi’s unspoken question about him being ready, and yeah, yeah he likes this smug version of him.

Yoongi leans to the side to reach for lube, then he just shoves his boxers down a little while staying on his knees on the bed. Taehyung automatically pushes his legs back together and Yoongi wraps one arm around them, leaning them against his shoulder carefully. He’s pretty sure that’s how this is supposed to work. Admittedly he’s a little nervous now, contemplating longer than necessary over taking Taehyung’s tiny shorts off or not. In the end, though, he thinks it feels a good bit filthier with Taehyung still clothed, so he’s going to keep it that way.

When he throws Taehyung a short glance, he’s crossing his arms behind his head, getting comfortable, and when Yoongi feels him also crossing his ankles somewhere behind Yoongi’s shoulder, he snorts quietly and looks back down to properly slick himself up. As quick as it came, the nervousness is leaving him soon too, calmed by how easy it is to do things like this with Taehyung. How easily he gives in to Yoongi’s ideas and wants and needs, all while still making him feel like Taehyung would definitely make him stop if it went to places he doesn’t like. It’s a kind of
safety he hasn’t had with anyone since Hoseok, which might be partly because he didn’t let anyone get close enough in the first place, but now that he’s apparently ready to do so he’s also come to the conclusion that Taehyung was the right person to do it with. He could have done a lot worse, at least.

“Alright, you tell me if you’re uncomfortable,” he still says, out of sheer habit. He’s not used to not talking during sex anyway, and he guesses by now he got Taehyung used to it too.

“Sure,” Taehyung says, sounding the exact opposite of uncomfortable. “Go on. You’re so hard already.”

Taehyung is getting very used to talking during sex.

Tongue caught between his teeth, Yoongi lowers his gaze and positions himself, both hands outside on Taehyung’s thighs to keep them together as he pushes in. He’s not applying too much pressure so far, unsure how much he needs to make this good, but even that first slide makes him exhale shakily already. It feels different, obviously, it’s still slick and hot and tight, but it’s a new kind of heat just from the difference in texture around him, smooth and maybe not quite as snug as he wanted it yet. It is definitely good already, but still nothing compared to when Yoongi carefully pushes Taehyung’s legs further together.

With a groan, he lets his eyes fall shut. Yeah, that’s better. Slowly, Yoongi pulls his hips back and then snaps them back forward, taking his time adjusting his grip on Taehyung’s thighs while setting a rhythm. The slap from skin against skin is loud like this and Yoongi wants to drink it all up, lets it fill his ears as he slowly gets used to the new feeling, keeps moving with a little more ferocity, letting himself slam against the soft wall made of the back of Taehyung’s thighs just to see what it does for him.

When he opens his eyes again, Taehyung has his face turned to the side and pressed into one of the pillows. Yoongi doesn’t think much of it at first, wonders if he’s maybe bored or embarrassed or something, even though none of that really sounds like Taehyung. He keeps moving for a few more seconds, panting harshly already while his hips work all on their own, but then he sees Taehyung’s chest quiver and the small part that’s visible of his face contorts, and Yoongi immediately stills all movements.

He’s not sure what exactly he could have done to make Taehyung feel bad but he’s convinced there’s something, maybe the slap was too rough, or his grip too tight. Yoongi pulls back, loosening his hands around Taehyung’s thighs and swallows against hoarseness in his throat, watching Taehyung warily.

“Tae?” he says, doing his best to not sound as breathless as he feels. “Tae, you alright?”

“Hm?” Taehyung pulls the pillow away from his face and turns his head towards Yoongi, blinking up at him, and for a split second, Yoongi can’t decide if he wants to hug him or slap him. He’s not in pain. Yoongi only needs one look at his face to know. He’s been laughing. “Oh my god,” Taehyung says then, barely suppressing the next giggle. “I’m-- I’m sorry, yeah, I’m alright! Don’t worry. Go, uh, go on.”

Right. Yoongi gives him the deadliest glare he can muster with his dick still half hard, lets go of Taehyung’s legs and sits back on his own calves. He’s not going to ask what’s funny. He’s not going to stoop that low. He’s going to stare at Taehyung until he tells him.

“Fuck,” says Taehyung, pressing the pillow back to his face to muffle a weirdly high-pitched laughing fit. He says something but obviously Yoongi doesn’t catch it, so he reaches out and tugs on the pillow to make Taehyung remove it again. Taehyung resurfaces with a deep breath. “I wasn’t
gonna say anything, okay, it felt, like, good? I guess? But it looked so funny, I was lying here and I just kept staring at your dick poking through my thighs like it’s…” He giggles with his mouth closed, sounding shockingly close to exploding. “Like it’s playing peek-a-boo. I’m sorry I laughed, but your dick was playing peek-a-boo with me.”

Yoongi is pressing his lips together tightly in a vain attempt to act serious. It’s kind of hard to admit, but that does sound funny. Eventually he just huffs loudly and pushes Taehyung’s legs out of the way completely so he can flop down on the mattress next to him. “Nobody’s ever laughed at me during sex before.”

“I’m sorry!” Taehyung repeats, almost wailing now with a mixture of honest remorse and undying laughter. “I didn’t mean to. We can try again? Or I’ll give you a blowjob or something. Anything you want.”

“No,” Yoongi says, feeling his cock soften against the bedspread. “Mood’s dead and so is my boner.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says, so Yoongi finally releases the chuckle he’s been holding in to let him know he’s not entirely unamused by the mental image of his penis poking in and out from between Taehyung’s thighs.

“It’s fine, don’t worry. That was definitely still an experience. Trial and error, or something.”

“Okay.” Taehyung releases his iron grip on the pillow he was snickering into so he can fluff it up again and push it underneath his head. Yoongi lies still, watching him get comfortable and looking at the ceiling, then watching a bemused little smile sneak on Taehyung’s lips. “You called me Tae.”

That’s true. He’s only done that in text form before, and even then only when he was talking about him to other people. Never to Taehyung’s face. Yoongi hums quietly. “Is that okay?”

“Yes,” Taehyung says immediately, then he turns his head to grin at him. “You can do it more often. And maybe not just when you worry about me. Alright?”

“Alright,” Yoongi says. It’s still a bit muffled because half of his face is pressed against the mattress, but the other half smiles back at Taehyung. He thinks he should probably move off of this bed and get himself cleaned up again, but he really isn’t feeling it right now.

He contemplates taking a nap like this, with his boxers bunched up halfway down his ass and his dick still covered in lube somewhere between him and the mattress, when there’s a very sticky sounding smacking noise somewhere to his left and Taehyung laughs again. Frowning, Yoongi blinks, looking from Taehyung’s face down his body to his thighs, where Taehyung is pulling them apart slowly and watching a mixture of lube and precum thread messily between them. Then he smacks them back together with a loud, wet sound.

“I’m glad you’re having fun,” Yoongi says dryly, and then Taehyung laughs louder, and then Yoongi laughs, too.

[08:32] : we should tell jimin

Their flight back to Seoul is in two days, sunlight is creeping in through the closed curtains, Taehyung’s eyes still feel heavy and tired and Yoongi is breathing softly next to him, and he really didn’t expect to be reading this message first thing in the morning.
Rubbing his eyes with his free hand, Taehyung rolls over to his back and sighs as quietly as he can. He would really like to keep playing dumb, but somehow Jungkook has already managed to see through that. He’s tired, but not tired enough to not understand that Jungkook is talking about the family business.

you: why

you: did something happen??

: no nothing happened

: u being gone just reminded me again i guess. i was thinking abt it a lot while u were in aus and, yeah

: ive been living w him for over a year now

: hes still asking questions about why im keeping my major and why its so important to my family and i just

: i hate lying to him

: i hate all these half truths

: hes our best friend tae he deserves to know the truth

: id tell him on my own but youre still kinda involved and i think its more trustworthy if we do it together since weve both been lying to him

Taehyung turns his head very slightly to catch a glimpse of a sleeping Yoongi. He frowns and swallows in his sleep, then he pulls his blanket up higher. Suddenly, Taehyung can feel the scar on his side like it’s still a freshly stitched wound, and he, too, pulls his blanket up higher.

you: how do you think hell react

: oh hes gonna freak out

: but he’ll come around

: look its not like i wanna be all like ‘taes dad kills people and ill be in his place one day’ thats bullshit

: we’ll tell him the truth about all their bs politics no matter how long that takes for him to understand we’re not some hollywood gangsters so i hope thatll calm him down

you: you know there is still a real possibility that youll take over dads clan one day right

: real my ass

: like how big are the chances tae both our dads would have to kick the bucket like simultaneously and even then im actually pretty sure your mom would just run the business instead

: closely supervised by your aunt probably look they wouldnt let me do shit theyve known
me all my life your mom saw me piss my pants in kindergarten

[08:55]  : more than once

[08:55]  : i know my dad likes to think differently but im not taking over the clan lol

[08:56]  : we’ll tell jimin all that. and we’ll tell him that youre not really involved at all you were just born into it and thats all

[08:56]  : ill be blunt and tell him im really not sure what ill be for the clan in the future but im sure as fuck not gonna be out there like murdering people or whatever

[08:57]  : ill be fine

[08:57]  : i just really think he should know? i feel bad

[08:57]  : he shares everything with us

[08:58]  : i dont want us three to have secrets anymore

Forever ago, Jungkook had a hard time warming up to Jimin. Taehyung still remembers what a weird trio they used to be, but Jimin trusted them both almost right from the start. They were the first to know about his ventures into gender identities, and for a long time, the only ones. They were there for him, and with everything that didn’t have to do with their fathers’ clan, Jimin was there for them too. Jungkook is right, he deserves to know who he’s friends with, even if the prospect is making Taehyung incredibly anxious even as he’s typing his answer and telling Jungkook that they can do it in person once he’s back home. It’s kind of endearing that Jungkook is the one to set this all in motion now, considering the wonky start he and Jimin had so many years back.

Next to Taehyung, Yoongi sighs softly in his sleep.

Besides, it’s not like Taehyung himself doesn’t feel bad about lying to people who have been nothing but honest with him.
Chapter Summary

Taehyung and Yoongi return to life without a shared hotel room. Jimin learns something.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The tan lines have faded off of Taehyung’s body like his diving suits never even existed, like Australia was nothing but a fever dream that they both had. It feels like that, sometimes. Yoongi still fails to wrap his head around the fact that a little over two months ago, Taehyung was still a stranger to him, some dude behind a webcam, always wearing the bare minimum of clothing and sending him pictures of stuff Yoongi didn’t care about. Two months really isn’t a long time, but Taehyung elbowed his way into Yoongi’s mind and made himself at home, and now they’re close, so close.

In fact, Yoongi’s naked ass is directly touching Taehyung’s equally naked hips. The everlasting heat of Taehyung’s body burns into the sides of Yoongi’s thighs now that he’s taken the last few inches of his throbbing erection. Yoongi breathes steadily through his mouth, hands roaming from where he used them to support himself on Taehyung’s abdomen. Taehyung swallows thickly somewhere but Yoongi takes his time, scratching softly at his sides, thumbing over the stray hickey somewhere above his navel.

When he starts rocking his hips gently, Taehyung’s fingers twitch to life and he digs them into Yoongi’s thighs, pulling a sigh from him but not keeping his voice from still sounding relatively collected when he speaks.

“You have a mole right above your dick,” Yoongi says, thumbs running briefly through wiry pubic hair. He can’t see it right now, but he saw it earlier, when he blew Taehyung to get him hard.

“I know.” Taehyung’s eyes are closed in bliss, but he opens them when he feels Yoongi’s gaze on him, and shoots him a lopsided grin. “I used to shave.”

Yoongi snorts, which makes the whole dick in his ass thing feel a little weird, but not too much.

Why?”

“Solidarity.” Taehyung shrugs, but Yoongi keeps watching him, keeps rocking his hips ever so slightly without actually moving too much. It makes Taehyung’s voice strain, though not quite as much as Yoongi can feel his fingers flex against his thighs. He wonders how much Taehyung wants to give up and fuck into him right now. He wonders when he’ll dare.

“Did you and Jimin and Jungkook have some sort of pube pact going on, or what?” he says. Taehyung giggles (Yoongi feels his stomach quake underneath his fingers) and nods, and maybe there’s something flashing over his face for a split second, something anxious and unsure, but maybe that doesn’t make a whole lot of sense right now. Yoongi closes his eyes and smiles while he slowly lifts himself off of Taehyung’s hips. “In my second year of college we all got stoned and put hair remover on our balls. I’ve never seen Jin cry like that before, or ever again.”
Taehyung actually laughs this time, but it gets stuck in his throat halfway and the rest comes out in a choked moan when Yoongi rolls his hips back down. “Oh, fuck,” he says weakly, his nails barely scratching the skin of Yoongi’s thighs when he does it again. He raises himself up until only the head is still inside him, then rolls back down in a fluid motion. It’s good, sure, but Yoongi is perfectly aware that it’s not enough, neither for him nor for Taehyung. He keeps doing it though, always the same movement, setting a lazy rhythm that doesn’t do anything but rile them up, holding eye contact. The look on Taehyung’s face gets increasingly frustrated while Yoongi’s gets increasingly smug, but Taehyung doesn’t budge, apart from digging his nails deeper and deeper into the skin of his thighs.

Which feels good, really. And Yoongi guesses it’s not necessarily a bad sign that Taehyung still wants verbal confirmation before starting shit during sex. For once though, he decides to take it easy with the dirty talk and just mouths Come on at him while giving a particularly sharp roll of his hips, and it’s enough to do the trick. Taehyung’s expression goes from frustrated to dark in less than a second and he rakes his nails up, leaving gently burning welts in Yoongi’s thighs and a gasp in his throat as he grabs Yoongi’s hips instead to keep them still while he jerks his own upwards.

Immediately, Yoongi’s breath hitches and he scrambles for hold, automatically reaching behind himself to cling to Taehyung’s naked thighs. He doesn’t want to fall forward and support himself on the mattress just yet because the angle is so good, the angle is fucking amazing, and Taehyung fucks into him again sharply and Yoongi swears all air leaves his lungs. His eyes fall shut and he tries to breathe, the air stuttering in his throat when Taehyung digs his heels into the mattress behind him and thrusts up with more force.

“Good?” he asks from somewhere underneath Yoongi, and Yoongi can’t even come up with anything sassy to answer that so he just nods, his mouth hanging open and his head tipping back. Taehyung takes that as his clue to start building a rhythm, steady and merciless, constantly thrusting up and making Yoongi want to fuck himself back down on him but he can’t. He tries, but he just doesn’t manage to meet Taehyung’s movements. Whenever he rolls his hips down he just ends up getting pushed upwards again, so eventually he just gives up and ends up bouncing helplessly on the sheer power Taehyung has apparently been saving up for this occasion. He listens to the swears tumbling from his own lips, revels in the sparks flying through his veins every time Taehyung brushes over his prostate, but eventually, he can’t hold himself up anymore.

Yoongi lets his whole upper body drop forwards, forearms on the mattress and face nestled in the crook of Taehyung’s neck somewhere. He winces in the way it changes the angle again but Taehyung, ever the damn pleaser, is quick to adjust. Within the next few thrusts, he manages to find just the right way to cant his hips up again to make Yoongi groan right in his ear, pulling a shaky gasp from Taehyung, too.

Not like that’s actually enough for Yoongi, of course. Even through his own pants and moans, he busies himself with sinking his teeth into the smooth, salty skin over Taehyung’s neck, biting and sucking until he can hear Taehyung’s breath quiver in his chest, until he can feel his heartbeat race against his lips. Every time it happens, Taehyung firms his grip on Yoongi’s hips, fingertips digging into his ass until Yoongi is sure he’s going to have bruises there later, but he guesses that’s just fair. And plane seats are soft enough, after all.

Taehyung’s skin slips out of his mouth with a quiet popping sound, dark red and glistening in the morning light from outside, at a particularly well aimed thrust that almost made Yoongi choke on his own breath. “Fuck,” he gets out, quaking on top of Taehyung when he automatically frees one arm from the mattress and tries to wedge it in between their bodies. “Fuck—”

He doesn’t get any further than that because Taehyung shushes him, and Yoongi somehow still
manages to send him a glare in that split second before Taehyung’s large hand wraps around Yoongi’s aching cock and his eyes flutter shut. Yoongi presses his forehead against Taehyung’s collarbone, mouth hanging open as he feels his hips jerk forwards and backwards again, his body unsure which direction to throw itself in with fire surging through every limb and pooling right below his stomach. There’s a broken moan coming from somewhere but Yoongi doesn’t care where right now, not with Taehyung both moving his hand urgently and falling out of rhythm with his thrusts, letting Yoongi know he’s not going to have to pull himself together much longer.

It’s when Taehyung flicks his thumb over his tip that Yoongi sees white flash behind his eyes and makes a point to slam himself down against Taehyung as hard as he can, mind set on sending both of them over the edge now. It works out, too, at least that’s his last coherent thought when he notices Taehyung’s hips stuttering against his ass and feels fingernails digging into his flesh, everything past that is a pleasant whirl of breathless moans and dizzying static between his ears. Yoongi keeps rutting through it against Taehyung's hand, shuddering with every wave washing over him until he slumps, his whole body going slack save for his head turning to the side so he can catch his breath better. Slowly, he unclenches his grip around the sheets, something he didn't even realize he had until just now. “I can't believe you held small talk about shaving and my dick mole while I was inside you,” says Taehyung, another thing Yoongi pretty much forgot he even did.

He just offers a noncommittal grunt to that and doesn't move when Taehyung pulls his hand free from between them, presumably reaching to the side to get tissues somewhere. Yoongi doesn't care right now, he's still enjoying those last buzzes of another fucking orgasm.

They've been at it since they woke up two hours ago. Mostly because soon, they'll have to actually get dressed and head to the airport, and both of them know what waits for them back in Seoul: Taehyung’s parents’ penthouse and Hoseok’s couch. Sure, Yoongi will go furniture shopping as soon as he can, but until then, they'll have to make do without big soft hotel beds.

So they intend to make the most of the rest of their time here.

With another unhappy little grunt, Yoongi shifts so Taehyung slips out of him and he can roll to his side. Instead of getting rid of the condom, Taehyung moves his hand up to very carefully run his own fingertips over his neck, touching the fresh dark marks blooming there. “Ow,” he says, sounding more in disbelief than in pain. “What did you do?”

Yoongi shrugs, but can’t help but grin at him. “Gave your parents something to look at later.”

Taehyung huffs. “Okay, well, I hope your efforts won’t be in vain and these will actually stay until after the flight. Touchdown in Seoul is still, like, almost an entire day away. This would be easier if you just agreed to fuck on the plane.”

“Nope, no plane sex.” Yoongi rolls on his back, then on his other side, so he can slip off the bed lazily and stand around in their hotel room buck naked instead. “Don’t worry, Tae, you haven’t seen those monsters yet, but I’m very sure they’ll stay for at least a few days.”

He smiles, and Taehyung squints back at him. “Where are you going?”

“I’m taking a piss, is that okay with you?”

“Yeah, okay, permission granted.” Taehyung turns away again to pluck the condom off his dick, and shifts his gaze from it to the alarm clock on the nightstand, then back to Yoongi. “Another round when you’re back?”
Yoongi’s knees ache and he’s actually pretty sure they’re going to be bruised if he keeps doing this, there’s a gentle burn in his ass, dull ache in his shoulders and hips and he’s not even sure how long it’s gonna take him to get hard again this time, but he doesn’t actually bother seriously considering all this before he nods on his way to the bathroom. “Another round when I’m back.”

Of course, showering together wasn’t their most sensible idea after this. What started out with the excuse to save time turned into handjobs, and now they have significantly less time than they thought they would. Yoongi left the shower first because he was getting increasingly nervous that they would miss their time window to check out of the hotel and catch a cab to the airport -- or maybe because it was only fair to give Taehyung time to clean up the mess they made, and because Yoongi had to make sure he didn’t forget to pack anything. He didn’t say that to Taehyung, though. He’s not ready to disclose how many things he forgot lying around in hostels all over the country.

So after having gone through both the room and his backpack a total of three times, Yoongi sits down on the edge of the bed and pulls out his phone. Hoseok has already left him a bunch of messages about picking him up and what to make for dinner even though it’s still going to take practically an entire day until they’re actually there. Both Namjoon and Seokjin texted to wish him a safe journey, including Jin telling him to not jerk off his boyfriend on the plane. Yoongi smiles, but it only lasts until he throws the clock another look.

He’s on the verge of getting up to stick his head into the bathroom and tell Taehyung to hurry up, when he hears it. It’s faint at first, but already so distinct to Yoongi’s trained ears he doesn’t even manage to get up fully and just drops back on the mattress instead.

Taehyung is singing.

Yoongi sits with his head turned towards the bathroom door, and he feels his own lips part as, he supposes, Taehyung forgets what and who is around him once more and his voice grows steadier, more distinguishable against the bicker of the shower. He’s not perfect at holding his notes, but Yoongi is in no position to judge. It’s a song Yoongi doesn’t know but the melody is slow, and if he had ever thought about Taehyung’s acoustic color (which he definitely did not, no) he would have been prepared for it to be deep, sure. Maybe even a little husky. And it is, it is deep and husky, but then the melody goes up and Taehyung’s voice follows, and Yoongi feels goosebumps run down his arms.

He goes higher than Yoongi has ever heard him, higher than he’d ever even trust him to manage, and it still sounds good, it sounds beautiful. The husky edge is still there and it makes it so unique, so captivating, Yoongi can’t get the goosebumps to go away.

Taehyung’s voice breaks on a deeper note and then Yoongi can hear him laugh at himself. The water gets turned off, so Yoongi closes his mouth again and swallows so quickly he almost chokes on it, whipping his head back to his black phone screen. Muffled, Taehyung is humming on the other side of the door while he presumably dries himself off, and while Yoongi opens his notes app and carefully writes something down.

He closes out of it when the bathroom door opens and Taehyung shuffles in. “Are we still on time?” he asks, and he actually sounds out of breath, and Yoongi is thankful for the excuse to continue staring at his phone instead of at him.

“Yeah, we’re good,” he tells his screen. “Just hurry up and get dressed, then we’ll be fine.”

“Alright. Dude, I’m so tired. You really made sure I’m gonna spend half the flight asleep.”
Yoongi looks up just enough to watch Taehyung’s mostly naked legs while Taehyung wrestles on a shirt, and he can’t help but smirk just a tiny bit to himself. He really partly left those hickies on his neck to see the look on his parents’ faces (and maybe his friends’ faces), but he left all those dark pretty marks on Taehyung’s legs only for himself.

“Me too,” he says.

He ends up barely sleeping on the plane.

They made it to the airport on time, even had to spend some time waiting at their gate, and Taehyung regained some of his giddiness there. He just likes airports, Yoongi has learned that much. Really, Yoongi likes airports too, he just likes them more quietly. But he wasn’t opposed to Taehyung babbling and giggling next to him, talking about airplane food and flipping through the photos on his phone for the thousandth time, it helped keep Yoongi awake too.

Taehyung, on the other hand, seemed to remember his own sleepiness the second his butt touched his seat. A few seconds ago, the seatbelt signs went out, and Taehyung, too, is out cold. Yoongi watches him briefly, his head tilted back and his mouth opened with an undignified snore, then he shifts to pull his phone back out. He consults the notes he made in the hotel, revisits the melody he had in his head, then he plugs his headphones in and opens his audio file of Taehyung talking about immortal jellyfish -- no, jellies. Yoongi grabs a pen and a very old, very worn notebook from his bag and starts writing down what Taehyung said, so he can juggle some of those words around until they make some decent verses.

By the time Taehyung wakes up, Yoongi has his phone flat on the little table in front of him and is tapping on his drum machine app with both hands. He can tell he’s awake just by the way he shifts next to him and his breathing changes, he only has one earbud in for that exact reason, but he’s also blatantly ignoring that knowledge.

“You watching my phone or my fingers?” Yoongi asks when Taehyung stays still for a few seconds.


Instead of answering, Yoongi goes on for a few more beats and then presses pause. His notebook is still on the table but it’s closed, so Taehyung can’t see what exactly he’s been doing here, and he’s not about to tell him. Not until it’s done. If it ever gets done. He’s not so sure yet.

“Told you I’m not writing anything until you dust off your saxophone,” he says, while his phone screen goes black, and looks up at him.

Taehyung looks sleepy, with tousled hair and puffy eyes, but he also still has an army of hickies blooming over his shirt collar, so it’s a sight Yoongi can’t endure for long. “I thought I need to play it, too,” Taehyung says, trying and failing to imitate Yoongi’s voice.

“If you dust it off I’ll write, and if you play I’ll actually let you listen,”’ Yoongi offers, busying himself with waking his phone screen again and saving the file ridiculously deep down in his folders, as if anyone would ever go look for it. “D’you have a piece you wanna play in mind already?”

“Yeah,” Taehyung stretches with a perfect little groan, “I was thinking Careless Whisper.”

Yoongi looks up again for the sole purpose of rolling his eyes at him and sighing loudly.

Dinner comes soon after that, and the full stomach helps Taehyung doze off again pretty much immediately afterwards. This time, even Yoongi gets some sleep, even if it’s restless and
uncomfortable. He’s been trying not to think about it too much, but he is definitely nervous about returning to Seoul, again. His first day at work is only a few days away, and then he'll have to organize the move in between somehow -- he knows his friends are going to help him, sure, but it’s still scary. Having an apartment to himself again is still scary. Even after two weeks in New York.

But, he guesses, Taehyung’s plan still succeeded in a way. While it is still scary, it’s not as scary anymore. He knows he’ll manage, somehow. He knows he’s going to like the job, he’s going to love the apartment, it’ll be worth it in the end, it’s the wiser choice to just fight through the move and try to, well… to come home. To his support system all the way over in Seoul, consisting of friends and friends’ rich parents and a Soundcloud account, and four walls to call his own. Maybe, if he tries hard enough, it’s going to feel like home this time. He wants it to.

He stares out the window for a while until Taehyung wakes up again and subtly reminds him that there’s in-flight entertainment by reciting half a Friends episode by heart. They end up sharing a bag of peanuts while watching mediocre dramas on their screens (Yoongi thinks they’re mediocre; Taehyung would disagree) in mutual silence, and it makes the nervous flutter in Yoongi’s stomach settle for steady warmth.

Yoongi doesn’t know when exactly that happened. Maybe around the time they started sleeping next to each other without fucking, or went out every day to do tourist things like normal people. Maybe it’s not important when it happened, maybe the important thing is just that they can do that now. Sit next to each other in silence without it getting weird; Yoongi has never been that much of a talker, but he’s not stupid -- he always noticed when Taehyung was struggling to find conversation topics next to him, when he tried to keep the exchange alive because he felt bad otherwise. But they’ve found some sort of balance in between now. Taehyung has learned to accept Yoongi’s silence as a personality trait instead of a bad sign, and Yoongi has learned to in return do him the favor to actually respond when Taehyung quips about the actors’ facial expressions, the plot progression, or just random other thoughts that crossed his mind. And he has learned to politely ignore Taehyung’s excitement whenever it’s Yoongi to initiate the conversation.

They get through most of the flight like this, make it through three dramas until Taehyung falls asleep again and Yoongi returns to his notebook. He changes some lines around until tiredness catches up with him, too, and he dozes off with his book on his lap, and only wakes up when a stewardess nudges both of them carefully to tell them to put their seatbelts back on for their descent.

Taehyung is giddy as soon as they touch ground. He talks about Boop, asks Yoongi three times if Hoseok is picking him up (he is), if they’re sure they’re fine with taking the subway instead of letting his parents drive them (they are; Hoseok’s place isn’t even remotely on their route), he wonders aloud if Jungkook is going to be with his parents before remembering he has class, and then he misses his suitcase on the luggage carousel. Yoongi heaves it off for him with a pointed look and Taehyung is still giggling into the shoulder of Yoongi’s jacket when they walk through the doors to Arrivals.

It’s not quite the blurry mess that went down when Taehyung came back from Australia, nobody running and shoving other people aside to throw themselves at Taehyung. But Yoongi can make out Hoseok’s voice talking to his parents even before they spot them, and all three of them turn to beam at him and Taehyung. Reflexively, they both reach to the side and grab each other’s hands, which is something they haven’t done in a while, but Taehyung’s hand is big and warm and makes Yoongi feel steady and his parents smile, so it’s just fine.

They only let go of each other when Taehyung moves to hug both of his parents at once, and Hoseok throws an arm around Yoongi too. While Taehyung’s dad assures him that yes, Boop is just fine and will be so psyched to see him, Hoseok leans down a little more.
“You smell significantly less like sex than I thought you would after a long flight like that.”

Yoongi shoves him, but Hoseok still has an arm around his shoulders, so they both stagger to the side a bit. “Be quiet,” he hisses, admittedly a little exaggerated to hide his laugh. “You're so gross.”

“What? Taehyung looks like you tried to suck all life out of him.”

“I did.” Yoongi straightens himself up again, to watch Taehyung’s mother's gaze flicker down towards his neck now and then. “Just not on the plane. 's icky.”

“Icky,” Hoseok repeats. Then he laughs as quietly as he can manage. “You know, you sound like Daegu just spat you out. Are you sure you went to New York?”

Yoongi bristles a little at that. He hadn't even realized how two weeks with nobody but Taehyung to directly talk to would throw him back into his old dialect, but it's blatant now that he has Hoseok’s own carefully trained Seoul accent for comparison. “Shut up,” he mutters. Hoseok pats his back; he didn't mean to make him uncomfortable, of course, and Yoongi isn't even sure if uncomfortable is really the right word for whatever the hell is going on with him, but thankfully Taehyung's mother takes that exact moment to distract him.

“Boys, are you two sure you don't want us to drive you? We really don't mind.”

“It's fine, it's fine.” Hoseok waves his free hand around and uses his other arm to shove Yoongi in their direction. “Say hi to your in-laws, man, you're so impolite. What's wrong with you?”

“You were hogging me,” Yoongi still gets out before he's facing Taehyung's parents, both of them laughing softly, and he quickly exchanges his accusing expression for a nicer one. “Hi. Thank you for the offer, that's really kind.”

Most of that last syllable gets muffled by Taehyung's mother hugging him. His father's hand is somewhere on his back too and Yoongi just finds himself wondering again if he's uncomfortable or not, but at least they don't make it too weird and let go of him again quickly. “Your new apartment is done and ready when you are,” his mother announces. Yoongi is suddenly very thankful for Taehyung resurfacing after greeting Hoseok and his arm sneaking around his waist. “I know you might be stressed with the new job, too, so there's no rush. Just know that I'm ready to give you the key code whenever you want it.”

“I,” Yoongi says, and swallows. “Alright. Thank you so much, really, it's such a huge relief--”

“If you need help with the move itself, just say the word, Yoongi,” Taehyung's father cuts in. He's watching Yoongi with something so sincere in his eyes it makes Yoongi a little bit dizzy. “I guess I haven't assembled any furniture in a while, but I could probably still be of service somehow. At least I do have big company cars for transport you can use if you want.”

“Okay,” Yoongi can hear himself say. He figures he should have gotten used to this by now, but it still hits him hard sometimes. The mere fact that there are nice, helpful parents out there somewhere, that other people have them. He always froze up with Seokjin’s and Namjoon’s parents, too, but he hasn’t had to deal with those in a while. Hoseok’s parents like him, but that doesn’t actually mean they’ll go out of their way to help him like this, especially with how both he and Hoseok try their best to see them as rarely as possible. And he hates thinking this because he’s a damn grownup and should have learned some things by now, but it still confuses him. Other people’s parents being kind to him confuses him so much, he flat out forgets how to function. “Thank you,” he tries carefully. That’s probably the right thing to say. “Really, it, uh, it means a lot to me. I'll let you know if I need anything. I probably will, honestly. Thank you.”
“Good, you’re welcome.” Taehyung’s dad looks like he’s going to add something else, but Taehyung clears his throat and squeezes Yoongi’s side gently.

“Let him go home, dad. We’re both tired. I’ll keep you up to date, promise.”

“Right, right.” They’re both still beaming at him, but Yoongi thinks the dizziness is slowly starting to fade again. Taehyung’s father moves to shake his hand, then Hoseok’s. “Well, have a safe ride home, you two. I hope we’ll see you around soon.”

“Definitely,” Taehyung answers for them. He straightens up a little to look around and Yoongi automatically follows his gaze. Most people that are still in the arrival area are pretty busy with themselves, but they’re still kind of in the open. He almost assumes they’re going to go for a hug, but Taehyung’s lips already meet the very corner of his mouth for a quick peck. “Bye. Text me when you’re home.”

“You’ll probably be home first,” Yoongi says quietly, automatically finding Taehyung’s hand again and squeezing it as a goodbye. “You text me.”

“Okay. Take care.” Taehyung smiles at him and Yoongi really hopes his smile back doesn’t look as dazed as he feels. “Bye Hoseok!”

“See you, Taetae,” Hoseok says happily, and his arm is around Yoongi’s shoulders again while everybody says goodbye among each other, to finally guide him towards the subway station when they all part ways.

And then that’s it. For the first time in two weeks, Yoongi is without Taehyung.

“You okay?” Hoseok asks while they shuffle into a remotely packed train. “You almost looked like you were going to pass out there for a second. Was that hug from his parents too much?”

“I’m fine,” Yoongi mutters. Hoseok takes his heavy backpack without asking first but Yoongi can’t bring himself to scowl. “Just nervous about the whole apartment and job deal and stuff. But it’s not so bad. The place looks cool, I can show you the pictures Tae’s mom sent.”

Hoseok, of course, wants to see them, so they end up standing with their heads together in a corner of the cart, with Yoongi flipping through the pictures on his phone. He wonders if Hoseok is just being polite because he somehow always knows what’s going on with Yoongi and might be able to sense that he was just trying to change the topic. It doesn’t matter. Yoongi wants to talk about his phone camera roll and New York City, and about the pictures he has on his actual camera that Hoseok definitely needs to see too, and he’s just thankful that Hoseok listens instead of asking questions.

Most of all, he’s thankful that Hoseok came to pick him up even though Yoongi would have been very much able to find and take the subway on his own. Suddenly being without Taehyung is enough already. He wouldn’t want to be all alone right now.

The first night back in his own bed felt strange. Worse than when he came back from Australia, which makes it even stranger, because that was half a year, and this time he was only gone for two weeks. But Taehyung has gotten used to sleeping next to someone, waking up to either Yoongi being wide awake and taking pictures out the window, or Yoongi being curled up into the tiniest ball under his blanket with only some strands of hair peeking out. It’s a little like when Jungkook and Jimin first moved in together and Taehyung spent almost his entire summer break in their apartment.
It’s a little like that, yeah.

Boop slept next to him, so that was good. He fell asleep with her head on his stomach, woke up sometime in between with her full body weight on his feet, and then in the morning he woke up to her giving him very, very wet kisses to remind him that it’s his job to get her breakfast. He got up and made food for her and himself, then he took her out on her morning walk, while the neighborhood was still quiet and foggy and he could be alone with his thoughts.

He did text Yoongi when he got home yesterday. Yoongi texted back that he was, as predicted, still on the subway, and asked if Taehyung thought that the thing with his parents had gone well. Taehyung had said yes, and they had fallen silent for a while. Then later, while Taehyung was still loudly telling his parents about the museum of natural history, Yoongi texted him *good night tae* and Taehyung felt warm all over and texted good night back.

They haven’t talked since then. Taehyung hopes that Yoongi is still asleep; he needs his rest.

What’s been way more active is his chat with Jimin and Jungkook. Of course they’ve been asking about his flight, about the trip in general, as if Taehyung hadn’t already given them daily updates while he was still in New York, and of course they agreed that he was going to come by as soon as possible to tell them everything in person.

And of course Jungkook messaged him privately after that, to ask if they were going to tell Jimin then and there, to get it over with as quickly as they can. Taehyung didn’t even answer at first, trying frantically to come up with some sort of excuse to why they should wait, but he didn’t even know what exactly he was waiting for. It wasn’t going to get any better the longer they waited, and he knew Jungkook could be merciless once he wanted to get something done.

So they’re doing it today. Taehyung feels jet-lagged and tired and, admittedly, a little sex-sore, and they’re telling their best friend the truth about their families today.

Ironically, Taehyung did not tell his own parents about this. He was raised to be cautious with this information, of course, but when both he and Jungkook fell head over heels for perfectly innocent, regular person Park Jimin, they let him know he could tell him if he wanted to. One kid wasn’t going to make a difference, one person knowing about them was no threat for Taehyung’s father. Jimin was no threat. Taehyung knows he is allowed to do this. He just doesn’t want to tell them that it’s happening now.

Really, he wishes he could just crawl back into his bed, as empty as it felt last night, and pretend this isn’t about to go down. But it’s too late for that. He already kissed Boop goodbye like he was going into war, and got on a bus to Jimin’s and Jungkook’s apartment.

Taehyung shivers when Jimin buzzes him in. He doesn’t even necessarily feel cold, just unwell. Like he’s about to come down with a flu. He tries to distract himself in the elevator, which only ends in him thinking about who would have to clean up if he threw up in here. By the time the doors open again he’s just repeating Jungkook’s guess over and over in his head, that they’ll be fine, that Jimin might freak out at first but he’ll come around, they’ll still be friends, he won’t lose him. Taehyung doesn’t think he’s ever wanted to believe anything more.

It gets worse when Jimin hugs him happily, and then better for a while when they sit in the living room and Taehyung tells them about New York City. Some part of him is very much still scared of losing all this, but that doesn’t mean he won’t feel warm inside when both Jimin and Jungkook giggle about his stories and Jungkook groans about the MoMA part. And Taehyung makes sure to ask them about their past two weeks too, pries some information about how much time exactly Jimin has been spending in Hoseok’s bedroom (or occasionally on his kitchen counter, apparently) out of
them until he can’t take it anymore.

Jungkook looks some uncomfortable version of just about ready to burst, too, and he and Taehyung exchange glances before he nods and leans forward to look past Taehyung and at Jimin. “Jimin,” he says, and there’s a quiver in his voice already, and Taehyung wants to jump out the window and flee. “Tae and I have to tell you something.”

Jimin blinks at him, then at them both. “What,” he says, an unsure laugh vibrating in his throat. “Why are both of you looking like you killed my cat? I don’t even have a cat. Were you gonna get me a cat and then accidentally killed it?”

“It’s about our families,” Taehyung gets out. He swallows before and after, even though his mouth is completely dry. He doesn’t know how to say this. Sure, he tried to prepare his words beforehand, but he might have just forgotten everything he came up with.

Jimin gasps. “Are you brothers?” he says, and laughs again, though this time it stays on his face for barely two seconds before it falls. He stares back and forth between Jungkook and Taehyung and frowns, and his voice is suddenly quiet and serious when he tries again, “What? What is it?”

With a sigh, Jungkook starts picking at the fabric of his pants. “You know how I could never fully explain why my parents want me to study business so hard?” he says.

Jungkook does most of the work. He’s better at talking, anyway. Whenever Taehyung tries to explain something he starts one sentence, then starts another, never finishing the first one, and ends up not actually finishing the second one either, and Jungkook has to come to his rescue to make clear what he meant. Jungkook knows more about the business, too. He seems almost confident during some parts, when he explains what exactly the clan is and what they do, and what they don’t do.

Taehyung watches Jimin go from bewilderment to disbelief to shock. It’s all right there on his face, easy to read for someone who barely did anything without him for years. Jimin asked questions at first, but he fell very silent very soon and just let them talk. He’s sitting across from them by now, and staring at them, and Taehyung watches the anger creep on his features very slowly, watches that frown crease his forehead like it’s all happening in slow motion. Angry Jimin is not a pleasant person to be around, but they have brought this upon themselves.

“I…” Jungkook says slowly. “I don’t know what else to say. I think that’s it.”

“Do you have any questions?” Taehyung asks carefully, feeling stupid because that’s what you ask after a presentation in school, not after telling your best friend that you’ve been lying to him for years. “You probably have a lot of questions.”

Jimin looks down to his lap where his legs are crossed and he’s playing with one of his rings. He’s quiet for a bit, until he wets his lips and looks up again, his anger mingling with something else. “Am I in danger?”

“No,” Taehyung and Jungkook answer at the same time, hectically. Jungkook shakes his head. “No, you’re not in danger. We wouldn’t be doing this if it was dangerous for you. We’re not at war with anyone here, we haven’t gotten attacked in years, and even if something happened, they wouldn’t target people outside the clan. They usually don’t even target our generation, it’s mostly between the elders. You’re not in danger, we’re not in danger.”

Slowly, Jimin nods. He’s still fiddling with his fingers, biting his lip, but the frown is coming back
and Taehyung feels like his entire stomach is trying to escape through his throat. “Then why,” Jimin says, watching them both, “didn’t you tell me sooner?” When Taehyung and Jungkook just exchange a quiet, helpless look, he raises his brows at them. “What changed?”

“Nothing changed,” Taehyung says quietly. “It’s, I guess… It’s more like everything stayed the same. You two get along so well now, you’ve been living together for a year, you both helped me so much with Australia, it just… It felt wrong to keep lying to you. Jungkook didn’t want to, and he was right.”

It only feels fair to leave that credit to Jungkook, who is shrugging very carefully now. “Yeah, and before that, it’s not like it really made any difference, you know. Not for you, but even for me or Tae, it didn’t exactly have this major impact on our lives or anything, so it just didn’t seem that important.”

When Jimin squints at Jungkook, Taehyung knows he’s going to say something uncomfortable. When Jimin then turns to squint at him, he knows it’s going to make him want to cry.

“That scar on your side,” says Jimin.

Yeah, he wants to cry.

“The one you told me was from a farming accident? Was that also this shit not having an impact on your life? Was that you not being in danger?”

Taehyung thinks he can see the corners of his vision blur a little. Like he’s about to black out. He isn’t, but he sure feels like it. They haven’t brought up the scar so far, he hasn’t and Jungkook hasn’t, he didn’t want to. If they’re telling Jimin the whole truth, they could have told him about that too, but Taehyung thinks that might be taking it too far, too far out his comfort zone, and he is thankful for Jungkook’s hand on his back, because Jungkook knows.

“I think we should save that story for another time,” he says softly.

“The times were different,” Taehyung still croaks. He’s looking at Jimin like he’s pleading now, but he doesn’t care. “Jimin, everything was different, and it was over a decade ago, it’s not happening again. I’m not in danger, and I’m out. I’m not in the business. All I get from this is my parents’ money, that’s it.”

There’s a smile creeping on Jimin’s lips, knowing now and bitter, that’s making Taehyung want to get up and hug him and tell him how sorry he is over and over again, but at least he knows that that would be a horrible idea. Jimin might just literally punch him straight in the guts. So Taehyung stays put, and Jimin keeps that smile on his lips as he looks down again. “So, no farming accident, then,” he says.

Taehyung’s tongue feels like sandpaper in his mouth. “I’m sorry.”

“Look, Jimin,” Jungkook says, and Taehyung can tell he’s trying to sound gentle, Jimin can probably tell he’s trying to sound gentle, but he sounds like his voice is about to crack. “We get that it’s a lot. To take in, I mean. We get that you’re pissed at us for only telling you now, and for making shit up in the past. And we get that you’re shocked, okay? But we’re telling you now, because we wanted to come clean. We wanted you to know, we wanted to stop lying. I know things aren’t just going to be normal again in a minute, but, just… Tell us what you need, alright? Tell us if there’s anything we can do.”

Jimin doesn’t look up at first. He’s picking at his fingernails now, shoulders slumped. Taehyung can
see his tongue dart out to wet his lips once, twice. He only looks up when he does it a third time. “I need you to shut up and let me go to my room so I can grab a bag and go to Hoseok’s for a bit.”

Taehyung hears Jungkook swallow before he does it himself. The for a bit part sounds vaguely promising, everything else still kind of sounds like they ruined the best friendship they’ve ever had.

“You can’t tell anyone,” Jungkook reminds him, and Taehyung wants to slap him for that. He doesn’t, because the look Jimin throws him as he gets up actually already feels like a slap to the face, for both of them.

“I know,” he says curtly.

“You’re the only one who knows,” Taehyung adds, his voice so soft he’s not sure if Jimin heard him at first. But Jimin stops on his way to his room and looks at him again, like he wants to ask, to make sure that that’s true, but they look into each other’s eyes and maybe that’s still enough. “We’ve never told anyone but you.”

Jimin takes a breath. He nods, but then he still turns around and disappears in his room. He didn’t slam the door, but Taehyung feels like he did. He slumps back against the couch with a quiet huff of air leaving his throat, then he raises his hands and presses both heels against his eyes, because he still feels like crying. Jungkook was right, of course, this was to be expected, but it doesn’t make it feel any better.

When he lowers his hands again, Jungkook’s shoulder bumps into his. Taehyung wants to come up with something to say to him, something nice, something hopeful, but Jungkook just leans his body against Taehyung’s and stares at the spot on the floor Jimin just vacated, and Taehyung doesn’t say anything. He leans back against him, and they sit in silence for the few terribly short minutes it takes Jimin to come back with a bulgy looking backpack on his shoulders.

“I’ll text you guys,” Jimin says, and at least now he, too, sounds clumsy and shaky, but he walks past them so quickly. Like he can’t wait to get out. Both Taehyung and Jungkook turn to look at him, and Jungkook opens his mouth to say something, but Taehyung chooses that moment to jump to his feet, almost knocking Jungkook to the floor with that, and quite literally throwing himself over the couch to sprint through the living room and chase after Jimin before he can reach the door.

“Jiminnie,” he says, barely catching himself from stumbling and bumping into him. Jimin is at the door, and Taehyung takes two more steps so he’s close enough for it to feel sincere, but not close enough for Jimin to punch him in the face if he wants to. Taehyung takes a deep breath and forces himself to look him in the eyes. “Are we okay?”

Jimin looks right back at him. Taehyung thinks he might have hit his knee on the couch and it’s really starting to hurt now, but it’s not as bad as the burn in his throat and the way his own pulse hammers between his temples. Jimin is quiet for so long, Taehyung tries to count the seconds, but he thinks he might have temporarily forgotten how to do that. Counting doesn’t seem all that important right now, Jimin does.

Eventually, Jimin’s gaze flickers to the side, where Taehyung assumes Jungkook is watching them, then back at Taehyung, then down to the floor. He’s smiling again, and it’s less bitter now but still sad, and Taehyung feels his entire body ache with the want to hug him.

“We will be,” Jimin says. He smiles at him, then at Jungkook, then he opens the apartment door. “I just need some time. But we will be okay.”

With that, he leaves. Taehyung stands still and stares at the door without knowing how much time
passes until Jungkook puts a hand on his shoulder and says they’re going to order takeout. They sit on the kitchen counter and eat jjajangmyeon in silence, until Jungkook can’t take it anymore and at least has his phone play some music. He comes with Taehyung when Taehyung goes back home, but it feels stupid being in his parents’ penthouse apartment right now.

So they take Boop and they go back, and Taehyung puts Boop’s favorite basket in Jungkook’s room but she still ends up sleeping in Jungkook’s bed with both of them. It’s messy and it’s hairy but it’s warm, and it’s much better than sleeping alone.

It still doesn’t feel right.

In the morning, Jungkook gets up for class. Taehyung rolls around in his bed trying to fall asleep again, but gives up eventually and just grabs his phone instead. It’s blinking, and his stomach does a flip when he realizes he has a message -- and then it does another, weirder flip when he realizes it’s not from Jimin, but from Yoongi.

[06:28] (ノ ◯ ◯)ノ*: i dont remember anything about yesterday except numerous naps

[06:28] (ノ ◯ ◯)ノ*: boop walk later?

Chapter End Notes

hi! don't feel obligated to read this, but here are 4 things:
1) bonus chapter! as of posting this, i will not be taking any more suggestions concerning that, because it's going to be the next chapter i'll write. and post. i'm hoping to have it up sometime in january. the infamous Real Life™ is slowing me down a little right now, but january should be good.
2) i'm not sure if anyone would have noticed, but due to recent events i've changed the two mentions of taehyung's grandma in this fic to his aunt. i'm just mentioning this to avoid confusion later.
3) you are very free to headcanon whatever you want, but during this chapter's shower scene i imagined that taehyung was singing "please don't go" by barcelona, not even for drama value (i swear) but just because i think it fits his voice range well and i've been listening to it a lot lately.
4) DUDE!!!!!!! MOST IMPORTANT POINT. do u like music?? do u like wthi? do u like DEATH and DYING?? buddy, i have just the thing for you. the fantastic mucha, my secret long lost twin, made a playlist for this fic!!! a playlist!!!!!! for my fic!!!!!!!!!!! as u can see i'm still lowkey yelling about it, i love it a lot. give it a listen if u want, let agata know how much u love it, it's amazing. thank u
Bonus: Glimpses

Chapter Summary

By popular demand: glimpses into Yoongi's past (nothing traumatic, as promised), glimpses into Taehyung's past, a POV switch for that very first Skype scene, and a little bit of Jihope.

Chapter Notes

whenever i try to be brief in my author's notes i fail, but i really just need to say thanks. thank you for 180 comment threads, for 300 bookmarks, 500 subscriptions (five hundred!), 1000 kudos (ONE THOUSAND!), for 10000 hits. thank you to the silent readers, and thank you to those who give feedback, be it here, on twitter, or on tumblr. thank you to the fic reccers; thank you to those that have been here from the very beginning, and thank you to the newcomers that see a wip longer than a harry potter book and decide to give it a chance.
i love all of you. enjoy your bonus chapter.

When Taehyung is four years old, Yoongi is six. Most kids at his school start taking lessons in some sort of musical instrument at this age. A lot of them will go for the recorder, which Yoongi will later (much later) call a horrifying primal urge in small children and their parents to torture everybody's ears and possibly prepare them all for a kind of apocalypse that he sure as fuck doesn't want to be around for. And a lot of them will drop these lessons again very soon. They'll lose interest, the way children's attention span can be short, their will to practice fleeting, the importance of other things often higher than letting grownups teach them about music once a week.

Yoongi doesn't know about any of this yet. Yoongi knows that he got signed up for piano lessons and that his teacher is a very pretty woman with soft long hair and the calmest voice he has ever heard in his short life. She smiles at him and Yoongi, very carefully, smiles back, as soon as they're alone in the small room with the gigantic brown piano.

(Later, Yoongi will come to the realization that the piano was just as big as any other piano, he just thought it was enormous for years because he himself was very small.)

She introduces herself as Miss Park and Yoongi is still so nervous he can barely speak, but she doesn't seem to mind. Gently, she guides him towards the stool and helps a little until Yoongi has climbed on it and it's close enough to the piano so he can actually reach the keys. Yoongi looks down, however, and notices that his feet don't reach the ground like this. He stretches them in vain; the stool can't go deep enough to let him reach both the keys and the pedals. Frowning, he looks up to Miss Park, who's seated on another chair to his right, and tries to voice this conundrum, but she's already smiling at him again, even brighter than before.

“Don't worry about reaching the pedals,” she says, and Yoongi wonders if she can read his mind. “You won't need them for now.”
Yoongi's frown deepens when he looks back down at his feet. “But,” he says, quietly, as always, “I wanna use them. Don't I need them to play? ’Cause I wanna play everything, not just the stuff without the, um, without the pedals.”

“You're very ambitious,” Miss Park laughs. Although her face softens immediately when she notices Yoongi's panicky glance. “That's a good thing. But at first, you don't need the pedals to play. All the sounds come from the keys up here, so you only need these. The pedals are for later, when you have more experience. By then you'll reach them, I promise.”

He looks down at his feet some more, considering this. Yoongi knows what ambitious means. He thinks he does, anyway. He's heard it before, he knows that much, and he thinks Miss Park is right saying that it's a good thing. He just didn't know that he himself is ambitious, but he guesses that might be true. And that is a good thing. Yoongi smiles when he looks up again. “Okay,” he says.

“Good,” says Miss Park. She puts her right hand on the keys and Yoongi automatically does the same with his own right hand, and that makes her smile, and that, in turn, makes him smile. “See the key my thumb is on? Try finding one that looks similar, alright?”

Yoongi concentrates hard, looking back and forth between Miss Park's hand and his own. He thinks he's got it, he thinks there's a key looking just the same only a little bit away from her hand, and that might be what she meant. Still, he feels dread rising inside him when Miss Park's free hand reaches over and gently touches his, thinking he might have done it wrong still, but Miss Park only pushes her index against his palm gently to make him curve his hand more.

“Keep your posture upright, like this. That'll make it easier to play. But you found your key, Yoongi, that's great! Well done. See if you can find the ones under my middle finger and my pinkie, too.”

Her hand, soft and warm, disappears from Yoongi's and he dares to lean towards Miss Park just a little bit to inspect the position of her hand some more. With every passing second, Yoongi is surer that he's doing this right, and there might even be a grin playing with the corners of his lips when Miss Park makes a pleased noise and nods.

“Great, that's it. And now you can play them. Just press all three of them down, and you've got yourself a chord.”

Yoongi does just that, almost immediately. And, also almost immediately, he feels something warm wash over him as the piano makes a sound, a sound he produced, and it sounds good and nice and warm and he wants to hear it again. Carefully, Yoongi lifts his hand and then presses his fingers down again, and that same chord plays once more while Yoongi still tries to process that it's him making this happen. He whips his head up to look at Miss Park with a wide smile on his face, even opens his mouth before he realizes he doesn't know what he was about to say, but he doesn't get embarrassed. Miss Park looks back at him just as happy as he feels, and Yoongi thinks he never wants his fingers to leave this piano again.

Soon, the other children will drop their music lessons, their parents will sell their recorders or keep them in their basements for no good reason. Sure enough, Yoongi will have his ups and downs with motivation and practice. Never with Miss Park, though. The way she always seems to be proud of him, even if he just played a simple chord, never fails to remind him how good music makes him feel. How good it's been making him feel since the very first moment.

And so Yoongi never quits.
When Yoongi is ten years old, Taehyung is eight. His parents keep telling him that Seoul is a very big, very beautiful city, but Taehyung has barely seen any of it so far. Every day, he is still busy exploring their new house. Or penthouse apartment. His mom says it's a penthouse apartment, not a house, but Taehyung doesn't really know what the difference is. He doesn't even know what a penthouse is supposed to be. He thought maybe all the tall skyscrapers here are penthouses so he tried calling them that, but his mom laughed, so he guesses that wasn't right. Either way, he doesn't really care. The new place is very different from the big house they had in Daegu and Taehyung is still confused by many things, but it's fun and exciting and he's happy to be here.

It's a lot better than the last few weeks they spent in Daegu, for sure. He misses the rest of his family already, but his dad says they'll visit whenever they can and Taehyung believes him, so he's really just glad everything else is over. The wound in his side is slowly turning into a scar, and his parents have stopped looking heartbroken whenever they examine it. They generally don't seem as nervous anymore, and they've stopped crying, too.

They only cried when they thought Taehyung wouldn't notice. But Taehyung noticed. Taehyung always notices when something is wrong with his family, and a lot of things were wrong in these past few weeks. That's why they came to Seoul, that's why a lot of things are changing now, why they have a penthouse apartment now with a shiny looking alarm system and that's why Taehyung is getting a dog.

He's not stupid. Taehyung is very smart, everyone says so. Everyone he knows. Even his dad's new friend, the one he's going to work with from now, the one with the little son called Jungkook who kept watching Taehyung from behind his father's leg with these giant shy eyes, even that one said he's a smart kid. And Taehyung knows he's smart. That's how he figured out that all of these things have to do with each other, the move, his dad's new friends, the dog. It's all because of what happened. But, right now, Taehyung also thinks that's not really super important.

The important part is just that he's getting a dog.

Taehyung has been wanting one ever since the very moment he fully grasped what exactly a dog is, has been whining at his parents about it for years, almost since he could talk properly, so he doesn't care why he's getting one now. He only cares about the clumsy little puppy walking towards him and then just plopping down at his feet when Taehyung does the same to sit on the floor.

They're in some guy's garage, Taehyung's dad is talking to him but Taehyung doesn't really listen, he's busy down here. The puppy is black and brown with a lighter patch over its chest that Taehyung thinks make it look like one of the superheroes in those Batman comics his dad reads. Its paws look too big for its body and the ears are all floppy and soft, and Taehyung can't stop staring.

“Shes a quick learner, that one,” says the guy, while the puppy crawls closer and nudges Taehyung's hand with her nose. It's soft but a little wet, and Taehyung giggles. “You can teach her whatever you want in no time. Guessin' she's gonna be a watchdog for the kid?”

Taehyung's dad says something he doesn't really understand but it sounds positive (Taehyung learned the word positive about a year back and it's still his favorite word in the whole world). The puppy blinks up at him with enormous brown eyes and Taehyung puts his hand on her head and she bumps her entire face into it, so Taehyung smiles as wide as he can and starts scratching her behind those big floppy ears. He's pretty sure that makes her extremely happy, because she keeps nudging into his hands, pawing at the floor to crawl closer with a body she obviously can't control that well just yet. Taehyung leaves her head alone to carefully take those paws into his hands, press his fingertips against the soft pads at the underside. She flinches, only a little bit, almost as if she's ticklish there.
“Any idea what you'll name her?” the guy asks. “A good name can scare people off just fine, too, you know.”

“We're still deciding,” says his dad. The puppy nudges Taehyung's hand with her nose again. This time, Taehyung just nudges her right back.

She blinks at him and Taehyung laughs, and he presses his fingers against her soft little nose.

“Boop!”

When Taehyung is thirteen years old, Yoongi is fifteen. By the time the semester ends, he'll be switching schools, like many of his classmates. But unlike many of them, Yoongi is going to move to Seoul for that.

His feelings on the whole deal are mixed. He's generally not overly fond of whatever decisions his parents make, so that was one reason why his reaction to his father accepting that job offer wasn't exactly positive. On top of that, though, he's also not sure how he's going to handle a city as big as Seoul. Yoongi isn't really the best at dealing with big masses of people. On bad days even just going to school is a tough task for him, but that's not nearly as cramped as he imagines subways in Seoul. It's not something he handles very well, and meeting entire classes of new people at the high school he's going to attend doesn't really sound like his dream, either.

But he would have switched schools either way and that, at least, doesn't sound so bad. Middle school wasn't exactly the best time of his life, and honestly, Yoongi can't wait to get away from there.

It's not like he hates his classmates. He's not unpopular, no problem student. He's kind of the opposite, really. People like him, his teachers like him, his grades are good, his reputation too. He's not like these pop star students that get invited to every awkward teenager party, no loud-mouthed hero with a cool grin permanently plastered on his face, no. But they like him. Min Yoongi is widely accepted as one of the most ambitious students, not always top of his class but usually close, he doesn't get into fights, he's nice, he helps others with their homework if they're stuck. It's alright.

But it's not enough.

He wants more. Yoongi writes, every day, almost as much as he still practices on the shitty keyboard at home. For his last birthday he got himself a guitar, and between these three, he barely does anything else when he's not busy with school work. And he wants to meet people like him, people who share his passions, for literature and for poetry and for music, and people who don't throw him pitying half-smiles when he says he's considering choosing those as a career path.

Some high school in Seoul won't exactly actively boost his creativity. Yoongi knows that. He's still hoping he might at least meet like-minded people there, one or two would be enough, it's not like he knows how to handle more than two friends at once. And also, something he makes sure to not tell his parents but only his piano teacher, he could start looking into music programs at Seoul universities. Miss Park thinks by the time he finishes high school, he should be good enough to get accepted by at least one, maybe more. If he keeps practicing. And Yoongi doesn't intend to stop.

He plays the big names now, long pieces by famous composers from all over the world, his legs long enough to reach the pedals. Barely a moment passes when Yoongi isn't thinking about music, even right now, when he and the rest of his class spend the night in their deserted school building. It's tradition, letting the kids about to finish middle school sleep here for a night, all huddled together in
sleeping bags, sharing stories about their years together before they'll all go their separate ways. Yoongi didn't want to go, at first, but it's better than staying at home. So he's here now, curled up in a sleeping bag wedged between the black piano in a corner of the classroom and one of his friends. He's lying still, watching the ceiling, waiting.

Waiting for that friend to slow his breathing, to fall asleep. The room lies perfectly still now, and Yoongi slowly, very slowly, raises one arm out of his sleeping bag. His fingers find the piano keys blindly but he still double checks to make sure he's in the right position. Yoongi barely fights the shit-eating grin on his face before he presses them down, effectively waking the entire room back up when he starts playing the creepy soundtrack from the *Halloween* movie as loud as he can.

Half the room groans in unison, a handful of people yell his name, someone throws a pillow. Yoongi lies back down with an unashamed snicker. Yeah, he's not going to miss this place much.

When Taehyung is fourteen years old, Yoongi is sixteen. Moving to Seoul was, simply put, hell on earth, so his first week in high school seemed like a walk on the beach in comparison. All of Yoongi's boxes are unpacked now and he made sure to make his own room as cozy as possible, but their apartment is shitty and his parents are constantly in a very bad mood, so being away from there isn't half bad. He hasn't exactly made any meaningful contact with his fellow students yet, but he's only been here for a few days, and Yoongi does like his peace and quiet, so it's alright. Most of them are new here anyway, so they're all just a bunch of awkward teenagers who don't know each other.

Some are exceptions, though. The high school Yoongi attends shares its entire building and grounds with a middle school, so some pupils basically just stay in the same place when switching from one to the other. It means big crowds of people, big crowds of loud children – a nightmare, but Yoongi hasn't practiced his resting bitch face for nothing. Most of them leave him alone.

Not this one, though.

He's at the cafeteria for suspicious looking school lunch, poking it skeptically as the guy next to him leans in a little too close for Yoongi's liking and gravely shakes his head.

"Here's a pro tip: don't eat that."

Yoongi stills his movements, but takes a second to actually turn his head and look the boy up and down once. He could very well be his own age, but Yoongi hasn't seen him in any classes yet. There's a very worn looking lunchbox on the table in front of him, and he pulls out half a sandwich, one of those triangular ones that somehow always taste better than the rectangular ones, and holds it out towards Yoongi.

"I honestly don't know what's in those meatballs, but I'm at least eighty percent sure it ain't meat. Not to be gross, but last time we had those for lunch, we all left the bathroom stalls here in a state that was just plain fuckin' sad."

"That is kinda gross," Yoongi says.

"Yeah," says the boy. "I don't know why I said that." He frowns a bit and waves his sandwich around. "Here, you can have this. I take pity on the newbies."

"Uh," Yoongi says, because he's good at being social and all that. "Thanks."

Gingerly, he takes the sandwich in both hands, and the boy smiles at him brightly. "You're welcome. You're one of the new high schoolers, right? Yeah," he nods when Yoongi nods, and then gestures
towards another corner of the cafeteria, “they usually sit over there, actually. But it's cool. It's not like
a set rule or anything, you can sit where you want. Us middle schoolers don't mind when the older
ones sit with us, makes us look cooler.”

He laughs, and Yoongi raises a brow at him while nibbling on the sandwich. It tastes a lot better than
those meatballs look, and he almost says thanks again, but doesn't. He keeps thinking that he should
say something else instead, introduce himself at least, but it's hard. He's not good at talking to people,
and it's way easier to just eat this thing in silence. The boy doesn't seem to mind at least, devouring
his half of the sandwich and throwing Yoongi another blinding smile before getting up and leaving
for class. Yoongi looks after him and wants to kick himself for being like this.

It's almost dark outside when Yoongi gets a longer break between classes, and he's looking for a
darker, more secluded area somewhere in the back of the school grounds for a smoke. He knows he
shouldn't, okay – he started when he was fourteen and stressed, and as it turns out, he hasn't been
any less stressed ever since, so he can't really bring himself to quit. It sucks, knowing he's going to
get into big trouble if someone catches him here, but this corner looks quiet enough to smoke
unsupervised. Especially because someone else is here already, doing the same thing.

Yoongi actually lets out a dry snort when he gets close enough to recognize the face in the dark. It's
sandwich boy, blinking at him with a half-smoked cigarette between his fingers.

“Well, shit,” sandwich boy says, lips quirking into a grin. “I won't tell if you won't.”

“Sure thing.” Yoongi wasn't planning on snitching anyway. He leans against the cold wall behind
him to fish out his cigarettes and a lighter, watching the boy from the corner of his eye. It's easier
here, where it's just the two of them and a secret in the half darkness between classes. “Yoongi,” he
says.

The boy blinks at him. “What?”

“I didn't introduce myself earlier,” Yoongi says, muffled with a cigarette between his teeth and
shielding his lighter with his free hand. “I'm Min Yoongi.”

“Ohh. Jung Hoseok.” Jung Hoseok grins at him between two drags. “Pleased to meet ya. You're not
from here, are you?”

Yoongi shakes his head. “Daegu. You?” He has no trouble understanding the Seoul dialect here, but
some of the stuff Hoseok says still sounds weird, so he figures it might not be from here either.

“Kwangju. Came here a year ago.” There's a brief silence between them in which Hoseok reaches to
his side to pick up a lose earbud dangling from a cable ending somewhere in his ear, which Yoongi
didn't even see in the dark. Like the sandwich earlier, he shakes it in Yoongi's direction with a smile.
“Want one?”

Yoongi takes it, inching closer to put it in his ear, and is instantly relieved to learn that this guy likes
at least one song Yoongi likes, too. He always finds it easier to get along with people who share at
least parts of his music taste. His gaze drops a bit, to an extremely battered MP3 player in Hoseok's
free hand, and when Hoseok notices and laughs, it doesn't sound quite as honest as his earlier smiles.

“Yeah, I know,” he says quietly. “s a shitty little thing. I'm trying to save up for one of those iPods.
Heard they're good.”

“Eh.” Yoongi shrugs, taking a drag and letting the smoke out while he talks. “Apple products're
tricky. Not always worth the money. I got an old MP3 player, too – if you wanna get better sound
out of yours, you could just get some newer headphones.”

“Yeah?” Hoseok looks at him from the side, and Yoongi keeps his eyes trained on the tiny, splintered screen of the little thing in Hoseok’s hand. “You know anything about tech like that?”

Oh. Yoongi smiles around his cigarette and throws a glance towards the school building, figuring they still have a good bit of time before they both have to go back inside. “Uh huh,” he says. He proceeds to spend his break time talking to Jung Hoseok way more than he's talked the entire past week.

When Yoongi is nineteen years old, Taehyung is seventeen. His two best friends finally get along, even now that he's dating one of them. Jungkook and Jimin had just warmed up to each other when Taehyung confessed that he's pretty sure he's in love with Jimin, and it made things weird again for a bit, but it's all good now. Jungkook felt like he had to do the whole act of being Taehyung's watchdog (since Boop is starting to get old, he said) and telling Jimin to better be careful with him and all that, but Taehyung just laughed at him for that, so Jungkook piped down pretty quickly. And eventually, he was there for him. For them both. They had a bunch of things to sort out, Taehyung and Jimin, and Jungkook was there to help, and it's been a confusing time, but Taehyung thinks they're finally alright.

“You've gotta be honest with me,” Jimin calls through the closed bathroom door. His parents aren't home, so he invited Taehyung and Jungkook over for this very important mission. They're both waiting for him in the hallway, ready to be good friends, ready to be the best.

“We're always honest with you, Chimchim,” Taehyung says calmly. Jungkook nods, even though Jimin can't see that.

“You'll tell me if it looks stupid?” Jimin sounds tense. Like he's close to tears, too, and Taehyung just wants to barge in there and hold him, but he won't. “Or if it's just too weird, or something. I can still send it back and order another size or something. You just need to tell me, okay?”

“We will,” Jungkook calls to him. “Don't worry. Just come out, we won't laugh, you know us. If it looks weird, we'll just help you adjust. Or I guess Tae can help you adjust. I mean, I'd help too, I'm just not sure if you'd want my hands down your pants with your boyfriend right next to us--”

The bathroom door flies open. Maybe Jungkook's talk helped Jimin gather up the guts, maybe he just didn't want to hear him go on about his hands down his pants. Jimin barely steps out of the bathroom though before he kicks the door shut, both of his hands covering his face, a low, scratchy whine coming out of his throat. “Be honest,” he repeats. “Just tell me. It's weird, right? It looks weird?”

“It looks normal,” Taehyung says.

“Yeah, dude,” says Jungkook and shrugs. “Looks like a dick to me.”

“It does?” Slowly, Jimin lowers his hands, and looks down at his own crotch. There's a bulge there, visible thanks to those tight pants he likes, but it looks like a regular bulge, not like a boner bulge, Taehyung thinks. Jimin reaches down to poke at it with two fingers. “You sure?”

“Yes, come on, we know a penis when we see one,” says Taehyung. He inches closer until he can put an arm around Jimin's shoulders, then he leans in and presses a kiss to his cheek, still looking down between his boyfriend's legs. “Did you tuck it up like I showed you?”

Jimin nods, seemingly struggling to tear his own hand away from the bulge the soft packer is creating
underneath the fabric of his pants. “Uh huh. Feels weird. Like, heavy. But I guess I'll get used to that?”

“Personally I'll never get used to how heavy and enormous my dick is,” Jungkook says casually. Jimin groans while Taehyung is already dissolving into laughter at his side, but he eventually joins in with his squeaky giggles.

“You're so gross!” he gets out somewhere in between.

“Just telling it how it is, man. Either way congrats on your new penis, I'll stop staring at it now.”

“Yeah, it's all mine now,” Taehyung says and reaches down with one hand to squeeze the bulge a little too hard. Obviously, Jimin doesn't actually feel it, but he still fakes a scandalized gasp before going right back to giggling into the side of Taehyung's neck.

“Alright, gross, goodbye,” Jungkook says loudly and turns on his heel to flee off towards Jimin's room.

When Yoongi is twenty-two years old, Taehyung is twenty. When Yoongi is back in Seoul, staring into the webcam in Jungkook's and Jimin's apartment, Taehyung is in Australia, staring into his own.

He was talking to a very hungover Jimin until just now. It's a little too early for a guy who spent last night partying and looking for potential fake boyfriends for Taehyung, so Jimin looks like someone ran him over with a truck a couple of times, but Taehyung himself is wide awake. Right now, the temperature in his room isn't too bad either, so there's no heat making him sleepy, only curiosity about this guy who's supposedly his type keeping him on the edge of his seat.

Before Jungkook banged his fist on Jimin's door, Taehyung was still discussing the matter of his pants with him. They're short. They're very short shorts, and then there's also his shirt with the giant arm holes, something Taehyung never would have worn back in Seoul, but spending half his time on a beach kind of changed him, he guesses. But he still stopped to asked Jimin if he should change into something that doesn't show off about eighty percent of his skin.

Jimin said no. Jimin said if he wants to leave an impression, this is the exact one he should go for. Taehyung didn't question that.

“Ready?” Jimin asks now. Taehyung can tell the laptop is on the couch table, but he can only see him, nobody else. He hears Jungkook mutter something to the side but isn't sure what exactly it is – he's nervous. Taehyung doesn't really have a problem with meeting other people, actually he's exceptionally good at it, but this is different. This is a video call with his two best friends watching, and it's about pretending to date someone because Taehyung is too stubborn to stop lying to his parents about having a boyfriend. Plus it's going to be with someone cute. Jimin kept stressing that. Cute and his type and willing to potentially fake date him. Of course he's nervous.

“Bring it on,” Taehyung says, and Jimin turns his laptop.

Shit.

That is not cute. That's not cute. Jimin is cute, and Boop is cute, and Jungkook's big brown eyes are cute, but this guy isn't cute.

Well, he is, really, but not in the way Jimin and Boop and Jungkook are cute. Not in the way that makes Taehyung go Awww, but in the way that makes him almost choke on his breath and dig his
fingers into his bed sheet like he just saw a ghost, when all he sees is this Yoongi person. Wrapped up in what Taehyung is pretty sure must be a total of two hoodies and a jacket, a beanie and a gigantic scarf, so he can't even see that much of him, but it's enough. Holy hell, it's enough. He's loosened the scarf a little so Taehyung can see his face, and he sees wild strands of thick black hair falling into his eyes, sharp and dark and **staring** at him. He sees lips that look like someone painted them, and he sees **hands** that are just too good to be true, and – and, yeah, his friends pulled through with finding someone with a cute nose. He sees that, too.

So it's some sort of ungodly mixture, something Hell must have spat out. Too beautiful to be down there, but still menacing enough to be up here and torment Taehyung.

“Hi,” Taehyung says. He needs to talk. He needs to talk to this guy and focus, they're here for a mission after all. “I'm Kim Taehyung. Yoongi, right?”

“Yeah,” says Yoongi, slow and deep and Taehyung swallows. Fuck, he wants to bone him.

He can't, of course. He can't do that. He knows. That would be a horrible idea for everyone involved, so he can't and he won't, but god he wants to.

“Min Yoongi. Hi.”

Right. Focus. Taehyung almost forgot what they were here for again, and now he doesn't know how to word it. It's quiet for a good few seconds, the much too obvious presence of Jungkook and Jimin making the silence between them even more awkward than it would normally be, but Taehyung can deal with awkward. How to deal with Min Yoongi and his agonizing hands he's not so sure yet, but he can deal with awkward.

He laughs and shakes his head. “Wow, okay, uh – thanks for, you know, considering this. How d'you know Hoseok?”

“School,” says Yoongi. Talk is good. Yoongi's hands disappear in the pocket of his hoodie, which is probably for the better too. Taehyung watches his face now, tries not to get distracted by those horrifyingly perfect lips, because he really actually wants to know how Jimin's current crush knows Yoongi. “He's my ex, by the way. Guess that's fair to mention. We're friends now, that's it.”

“Oh, that's cool,” Taehyung says and nods, maybe a little too quickly. He just wants him to know that he doesn't mind. To be fair though, he's pretty sure that right now, Min Yoongi could tell him just about anything and he wouldn't mind. “Same with Jiminnie.”

“Okay,” Yoongi says after shooting Jimin a quick look Taehyung couldn't quite read – and after that, they talk. About Australia first, then briefly about Yoongi, and then about their mission.

Honestly, Taehyung would have thought it would be harder. Harder to put it into words, harder to tell someone he doesn't even really know, harder to convince him. But it's all easy. Jungkook gets fed up halfway in and leaves, but Taehyung doesn't mind, it's still easy for him. And Jimin keeps watching, but that's alright too, because Taehyung still mostly focuses on Yoongi. Yoongi doesn't talk much, but when he does, Taehyung kind of already wishes it could go on forever. His accent sounds like home, he can tell that much without a doubt, but also his voice is deep and even and calm and while Taehyung feels giddy and excited and still a little bit embarrassed by this entire deal, Yoongi just seems to shrug it all off. He seems perfectly cool about everything, nonchalant and like nothing can shake him, like he's seen and done weirder things, and Taehyung can't wait to get to know him better.

He can still see him through the webcam when Yoongi gets up, a promise to exchange IDs between
them, and leaves the apartment. He can still stare after him. He can still sit on his bed, definitely sweating now, and try to process what the hell just happened.

As Jimin turns the laptop again to look at him, Taehyung very slowly reaches to his side and grabs a pillow to press it to his chest with both arms. Jimin says something but Taehyung barely reacts, his mind wandering back to those hands, those fingers playing with each other, long and slender but knobbly in that stupidly adorable way. He wonders if they're cold or warm. He wonders why nobody warned him what he was going to have to deal with today.

When Yoongi is twenty-two years old, Taehyung is twenty, and he is royally fucked.

Something is going on between Jimin and his friends. It's not hard to tell, and Jimin doesn't seem like he's trying to keep it secret. What he didn't tell Hoseok is what exactly is going on between them, but Hoseok isn't going to ask. Jimin will tell him in his own time, if he will tell him at all. He and Taehyung and Jungkook, they've got a pretty special bond, Hoseok has learned to accept that, so he's not going to try to interfere if he's not explicitly invited to do so. He's just going to let Jimin crash here (his apartment is starting to look like a refuge for small, troubled friends, but at least Yoongi is moving out soon), make out with him a lot, and sprawl over his naked body in the morning.

Jimin's cold hand is running up and down Hoseok's naked back while Hoseok is splayed out over Jimin's stomach, lying on his own stomach, supporting himself on the mattress on one elbow so he doesn't crush Jimin's intestines, and rummaging through their discarded clothes with his other hand. He's looking for cigarettes because they have to be in there somewhere, but his fingers brush the eerily soft, cool surface of Jimin's packer instead and he pulls it out to eye it.

“Did you ever try wrapping that jock strap around your head to wear it like a flaccid unicorn horn?” he says.

Jimin gives a lazy snort. “Kookie did that, back when I first got it,” he says. Hoseok throws him a quick look, scared that he might have made a mistake reminding Jimin of his friends, but Jimin is smiling. “Not me, though. I don't really want it in my face, you know. Only dick I want in my face is yours.”

“Oh, I'm flattered,” Hoseok says. He holds the packer up and puts it against his forehead, but grimaces immediately. Yeah, that feels weird. It's cold and wobbly and not something he wants on his forehead.

“Tae actually stuffed it down his own pants once,” Jimin says quietly while Hoseok drops it again to continue fishing for cigarettes. “He called it the maximum package. Scariest fucking thing I've ever seen.”

Hoseok muffles his laugh against Jimin's side, making him squirm. “Is that why you looked so horrified when I joked about wearing your strap-on?”

“Yeah. Double dicks are scary, Hoseok. I worked hard enough to get used to one.”

“Haha, hard. Ow,” Hoseok winces when Jimin pinches his side, but it also makes him shove his own pants aside on the floor and he finally sees his lighter and cigarette pack slide out of a pocket. “Oh, finally. There they are.”

He lights one while he's still draped weirdly over Jimin, only leaning back to his own side of the bed
when he's taken his first drag. His shoulder still touches Jimin's, and he looks up into his face carefully. "Is that okay?" he says, a little belatedly he guesses. "Joking about the packer and that stuff?"

"It's fine." Jimin shrugs with one shoulder so the other doesn't bump into Hoseok's chin. "I don't mind, most days. But I'd let you know if I was uncomfortable with it, don't worry." Jimin turns to his side so he can throw one arm over Hoseok's chest. "Usually it's cool as long as it's friends doing it."

Hoseok smiles, until Jimin reaches over and plucks the cigarette from his hand. He's known Jimin for a good year now, and he knows a lot of things about him, one of them being that he doesn't smoke. He doesn't usually smoke. He smokes occasionally at parties, but he smokes rarely enough to never actually have any cigarettes of his own. And he smokes when he's stressed. He takes Hoseok's packs and smokes when he's stressed.

"Hey," Hoseok says softly, "you alright?"

Jimin blows out the smoke, gives Hoseok his cigarette back, and rubs his whole face with one hand before it goes back to lying on Hoseok's chest. "Yeah," he says, unconvincingly. "I don't know. It's weird, being away from them," he laughs, "I mean, like this? I know I spend nights here with you all the time, but I just, I walked out on them, you know? And I still think I was right to do that, but it just... just feels weird. Tae and I have stupid little fights all the time, but never like this. I mean, I know we'll be alright in the end, but it's... I don't know how else to describe it. 's just weird."

"Yeah, I know," Hoseok says. He moves one arm to let Jimin rest his head on it, and cards fingers through his hair softly. Jimin sighs.

"You ever had something like that with your friends? Your closest friends?"

Quietly, cigarette between his teeth, Hoseok gives him a look, and Jimin looks back, until he remembers and his eyes widen. "Oh, fuck," he says and Hoseok snorts. "Oh, your breakup with Yoongi. Shit, sorry, I forgot."

"That's fine, I'm over it," Hoseok declares. Jimin raises his brows at him and Hoseok nods, because he is. He is over it. Hoseok takes another drag and can't fight a stupid little grin. "Yoongi did the epitome of walking out on me. I don't think it can get any more walking out than that. Walked right out of the city. But even we came around, see? I love him in that hilarious soft brotherly way Yoongi pretends he doesn't get, and I know you love the kids like that too, and you'll come around. So yeah, I know it's weird. It'll feel weird and slightly shitty for a bit. But you said it, baby. You'll be alright."

Jimin hums lowly into his chest, nodding. Hoseok watches him; he's eyeing his cigarette again for a good few seconds, but he doesn't move, so Hoseok guesses that's good. Hoseok leans down again and presses a little kiss to Jimin's head, right between all those messy strands of incredibly soft hair. He hopes it is.

After a while, Jimin says, "You ever think about how wild it is that both our ex-boyfriends-slash-still-best-friends are dating each other now?"

"You mean fake dating."

Jimin looks up at Hoseok and laughs. "Right," he says.

Hoseok looks back down at him and laughs, too.
Faking It

Chapter Summary

Boop is a star, Yoongi gets his apartment, Namjin make a fateful announcement. Also, Hoseok suffers.

Chapter Notes

i owed syubology a doctor who reference

KIDS........ as you might have noticed it doesn't say 17/? up there but 17/30. i did a rough outline of what i still have planned for this - which means the final chapter number might still vary, but i figured it's only fair to at least let you know that we're in the second half of this beast.

Boop’s paws are heavy on his chest, and Yoongi staggers a step back. He smiles watching her ears flop around when he pets her head with both hands, dog slobber drying coolly on one of them, but Taehyung pulls her away gently before she can lick the other one.

“Boop, come on.” Taehyung’s laugh sounds tired, but affectionate. “Stop jumping him, that’s bad for your hip, old lady.” Throwing Yoongi one last look, her mouth open and her tongue hanging out, Boop hops off towards the grass. Taehyung grins at him. “She missed you.”

“Looks like it,” Yoongi just says. Taehyung watches his dog sniff the ground, so Yoongi takes the opportunity to watch him in turn. He looks as tired as he sounded, if not more. Way more. Yoongi’s tired too, jet lagged, of course, but he has seen Taehyung’s sleepy sort of tiredness. The swollen eyes, the messy hair, lazy glances, slow hands. That’s sleepy-tired Taehyung. This one isn’t. This one has fidgety hands, nervous glances, too tidy hair, bloodshot eyes. It’s a different kind of tired, one that makes Yoongi feel heavy inside just watching him.

“You alright?” he finally asks.

“Yeah!” Taehyung answers, too quickly. With Boop’s leash wrapped around one of his wrists, he puts his hands in his pockets, watching his dog way more than necessary, as if looking at Yoongi could hurt him. “Everything’s great. You, too?”

Yoongi sighs. Fine, then. This might be the meaner approach, but he’s already tried nice. “Everything great, yeah? That why Jimin showed up at Hoseok’s yesterday with a backpack almost as full as mine, just one day after we came back here?”

Taehyung closes his mouth so quickly he can hear his teeth clacking. His jaws move and then he looks at the ground, and Yoongi is about to apologize and say he doesn’t need to tell him anything he doesn’t want, when Taehyung speaks up quietly. “Jungkook and I had a fight with Jimin. I... I guess. I don’t know. We fight all the time, I mean, we just always make up right afterwards, but this time, it’s... bigger, I suppose. Jimin says we’ll be okay, though,” he adds finally, obviously trying
hard for his usual optimistic tone.

Yoongi still watches him from the side. Weirdly enough, his first instinct is to take Taehyung’s hand, but they only do that when somebody’s watching to keep up the fake deal, and his hands are still in his pockets anyway, so. Yoongi resists the awkward urge to pat his back instead, and just makes sure he walks so closely to Taehyung their shoulders almost bump together. “What was the fight about?” he asks carefully. Trying to picture Taehyung and his friends fighting is a strange image, but Yoongi is well aware that he doesn’t know them like Taehyung does. He can’t imagine them actually staying apart very long, but he still can’t help but feel weird about the timing of this.

“It had nothing to do with coming back, or with you and me, in case you’re worried,” Taehyung says like he’s reading his mind. Yoongi battles the weird surge of— of something inside him at you and me and nods, keeping his gaze trained on Taehyung so he knows Yoongi will still listen even if it’s not about him. Taehyung shrugs, still watching his dog. “It’s just... something between the three of us. It’d take too long to explain.” Finally, Taehyung turns his head and he smiles at Yoongi, and it still looks weary and dimmed from its usual sun-like shine, but somehow he still manages to make it seem sincere. “We’ll all be okay, so you don’t have to worry. But it’s cute that you do.”

Yoongi just hums at that. He wants to say something, something helpful, but comes up blank. Some part of him wants to say that Taehyung can come to him if he needs someone, but that just sounds weird to him, and besides Taehyung has his parents and Jungkook, and Yoongi has a couch in Hoseok’s living room. He’s still chewing on his lower lip in thought when Boop runs towards them with a stick in her mouth, and drops it at Taehyung’s feet.

“Thanks, Boop,” he says, leans down, picks up the stick and puts it in the pocket of his jacket.

Boop wags her tail and scampers off again. Yoongi blinks. “Doesn’t she want you to throw it?”

“No,” Taehyung says and shakes his head, smiling. “Now that she’s getting old, she doesn’t really play fetch anymore. She just still brings me sticks because she thinks I like them.”

Yoongi huffs a bemused laugh and looks down, at the thin stick poking out of Taehyung’s pocket, the simplest present he could have gotten for sounding a little sad. He straightens his back.

“Hey,” Yoongi says, “are you still free after this? Wanna accompany me to the new place?”

Taehyung’s face lights up like a chandelier. His eyes go wide and he smiles with his mouth open, and Yoongi catches himself smiling right back. “Really?” Taehyung says, suddenly hopping more than walking now. “I’ll text my mom to get us the key code right now, if you want, then we can go. I can’t believe you’ve never seen the place before! I mean, neither have I, but it’s your apartment! And you’ll see it for the first time! We can start planning furniture, and what color you want to paint the walls!”

“Tae, I’m sure as fuck not gonna paint every damn wall,” Yoongi says and laughs.

Taehyung pulls his best pout on him. “But it looks pretty.”

“I don’t have the energy to paint an entire apartment. I’m starting work in three days, I’ll put some furniture in and that’s it.” It doesn’t exactly come as a surprise to Yoongi when Taehyung’s pout deepens into some sort of ridiculous grimace; he sighs and shrugs. “I’ve always wanted dark blue walls in my bedroom, though. So maybe we’ll see about that.”

“Nice!” Taehyung says loudly, punches the air, and then whips his phone out. “I’ll text mom, then we can go right after Boop is done pooping.” His thumbs already hovering over the touch screen,
Taehyung throws the dog a look, then Yoongi. “We could take her, too?”

“Sure, if she’s not too tired?”

For a second, Taehyung just looks at the empty space right next to Yoongi’s head, his tongue caught between his teeth. He clears his throat while Yoongi watches his phone screen go black again. “Well,” he says then, slowly, “I could drive us.”

Yoongi blinks. Sometimes, when it’s just him and Taehyung, he forgets how old he is. How old they both are, really. Especially with phrases like I’ll text my mom and done pooping, sometimes it’s hard to remind himself that they’re two grown adults. Yoongi has a degree. Taehyung is working on one and lived abroad all by himself for months. For some reason it never occurred to Yoongi that Taehyung knows how to drive a car. Or that Taehyung even owns one, or has permission from his parents to use theirs.

“Uh,” Yoongi says at first. He’s not quite sure when he last rode on the passenger seat of a car. He forced himself to take busses now and then. He also found out that he’s cool with driving himself. Not like he does it a lot, he doesn’t have a car and doesn’t think he needs one in a city like Seoul, but he’s calm if he’s the one driving. Letting someone else drive usually gets him nervous, his mother’s accident still playing over and over somewhere in the back of his head.

Taehyung watches him now, probably reading every tiny twitch his face is doing, trying to find out what’s going on and why he isn’t exactly answering. “We can take the subway,” he reminds him carefully.

“No,” Yoongi says quickly. He shakes his head; time to snap out of it. The accident was years ago. “It’s fine, why not. Let’s drive, let’s take Boop with us. Is she cool with car rides?”

“Oh, she loves them.” Taehyung grins, but only for a second, before it turns into a frown instead. “You don’t?”

God damn Kim Taehyung and his ability to read him like an open fucking book.

Briefly, Yoongi actually considers telling him. Taehyung knows that his mother is dead, but he doesn’t know how or when she died and what it did to Yoongi. After all he has already told him, Yoongi figures he’d probably be fine with revealing that part, too, but maybe now is not the time. He did only bring up the apartment because he wanted to cheer Taehyung up, so talking about his dead mother and her car accident might not be the wisest choice to keep the mood up. Yoongi shrugs, makes a dismissive noise and manages a small grin before he bumps his shoulder into Taehyung’s.

“Go on, text your mom. I bet your parents have a Ferrari.”

As it turns out, it’s a Bugatti.

Not like Yoongi knows much about car brands; he just read the little label. He has circled the thing twice now, hands in his pockets and Boop hopping around after him in the huge garage underneath the apartment complex Taehyung’s family lives in. He’s never been here before. Taehyung just told him that this isn’t the only car his parents own but Yoongi has no idea which of all those cars down here might be their other one, they all look equally expensive.

“This thing looks obnoxious,” he says finally.
Taehyung’s laugh echoes through the garage. “I know. When dad got it, I told him it looked like a suppository. Mom hasn’t called it anything else ever since.”

Yoongi snorts a little too loudly, then he leans down to squint through one of the darkened windows. “It looks … so flat. Does Boop even fit in there?”

“She does, believe me.” When Yoongi straightens himself up again, Taehyung winks at him. “It’s bigger on the inside.”

“Is it also a time machine?” Yoongi asks dryly and opens the passenger door. Boop immediately puts her front paws into the car and tries to wiggle her way on the backseat.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” says Taehyung. “Also, you can fold the seat, then Boop can climb in.”

Yoongi tries not to think about how this might be the most expensive thing he has ever touched while he wrestles with the seat. The car smells like leather and wax, but the closer he looks, the more it looks like Taehyung’s family, too. There are scratches in the backseats, and a very hairy blanket draped over them that Boop happily curls up on, the cupholders hold two empty McDonald’s cups, and Yoongi spots an open package of chocolate bars down in the legroom. It makes it significantly easier for him to slide onto the passenger seat and pull the door shut without feeling like he shouldn’t be here.

“Alright,” Taehyung quietly says next to him. He puts the address into his phone’s GPS and his seatbelt on, and that at least already calms Yoongi a little. He’s just going to force himself to not ask Taehyung about the last time he drove and how long it’s been since he got his license and how often he does this, and how well he knows the route. He’s going to be calm. Taehyung somehow managed to navigate them through a huge city in a foreign country, he’s going to be able to drive them around town a little.

Admittedly, it gets easier the longer he watches Taehyung. There’s just something about him leaning back comfortably in a fancy car, one arm outstretched to the steering wheel, the other hand lying loosely on the gearshift, long legs disappearing somewhere under the wheel. He looks good, ridiculously so. And Yoongi does still get nervous flutters in his guts whenever someone passes them too quickly, when someone honks or Taehyung has to hit the breaks because people here drive like they’re in a fucking action movie, but at least he can distract himself. With the way Taehyung looks when focusing on the road and the route on his phone, and with the way Boop ends up sticking her head between their seats and letting Yoongi pet it while she watches the road.

“We’re going to Yoongi’s new place, Boop,” Taehyung says with his baby voice while they wait at a red light. “So we can check what we need when we go furniture shopping.”

Yoongi glances at him from the side. That’s a lot of ‘we’s. “Jin, Namjoon and Hoseok already said they’ll take me shopping as soon as I have the key code,” he says carefully, but he continues before Taehyung’s face can even finish falling. “They’ll be happy to have you on board.”

They’re driving again. Taehyung grins broadly at the road and drums on the steering wheel with his fingertips. “You sure?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, “why wouldn’t they?”

He’s still thinking about how his friends actually asked him about Taehyung and how fond they are of him already, how there really is no reason why they wouldn’t want him there, when Taehyung glances at him with his teeth in his lip. “If JIn and Namjoon are there,” he says and clears his throat, “that means you and I…”
Yoongi nods before he can finish. As far as Namjoon and Jin are concerned, they’re boyfriends, so they’ll have to behave that way, too. But Yoongi isn’t worried; they’ll be busy with planning and furniture anyway, and the prospect of playing Taehyung’s partner is miles away from making him nervous by now. “You up for it?” he asks.

And Taehyung turns his head just far enough to wink at him. “Bring it.”

They pull into a parking lot soon afterwards, and Yoongi leans to the side to stare out the window. The building definitely looks prettier than the one he lived in before he left Seoul, but he’s relieved to see that Taehyung’s Bugatti still looks out of place here. The place doesn’t look overly fancy, it just doesn’t look overly run-down either, and that’s all the balance he’ll need, Yoongi hopes.

Boop pees into the bushes that frame the front door, and they let her. Yoongi suddenly worries that one of his new neighbors is going to walk by them and force him to make conversation, so he pretends to be very busy watching the dog as she shakes her fur out and strolls towards the elevators with them. Both those and the foyer are empty though, so Yoongi takes a calming breath. “Fifth floor, right?” he says, studying the elevator buttons and trying not to sound tense.

“Yep!” Taehyung answers, of course as chipper as ever. Boop sits on the elevator floor between them and wags her tail lazily, occasionally bumping it into Yoongi’s heel. Yoongi almost feels like she’s trying to remind him, to tell him that this is his now and he’s going to have to move forward and step out of this elevator and accept that apartment as his home, no way out. No escaping this time, not for another two weeks, not for a year. It’s happening, and Boop presses against his leg to ground him.

“This should be the one,” Taehyung says when they come to a halt in front of a door. He double checks his phone, and then he punches in the security code, and when the door clicks open he turns and grins at Yoongi like he just solved the biggest puzzle of the universe. Yoongi smiles weakly.

Empty apartments always look weird. Naked, and bigger than they’ll be in the end. It was empty in the pictures Taehyung’s mother sent him, but Yoongi somehow still didn’t expect it to be this big. He’s never had this much personal space to himself before, and a place like this in a city like Seoul is borderline utopian. Yoongi is well aware that it’s all thanks to Taehyung’s mom and her contacts, which is a weird feeling, but he might be starting to get used to it.

“Whoa,” Taehyung says loudly. Yoongi chuckles when it echoes off the walls in the living room they’re standing in now, and he turns towards him with a grin. “Don’t worry, it’ll stop sounding like that when you’ve got some furniture and stuff.”

Yoongi raises his brows. “I know,” he just says and he swears Taehyung’s neck grows a few shades darker.

“Right,” says Taehyung. “Audio professional.” When Yoongi just laughs at him again, Taehyung turns around a few times, poking his head into the kitchen where Boop is loudly sniffing the cupboards, then strolling back to where Yoongi is looking out one of the disturbingly clean windows. “So what color’s the living room gonna be?”

Immediately, something hard settles in Yoongi’s stomach. He doesn’t reply, watches the cars drag past outside, before he turns around and leans his back against the window instead. He needs so much furniture. He sold almost everything he had before he left Seoul, and his old apartment would have fit in here twice anyway. There is so much he needs to plan, so much he’s going to have to drive from one place to another, to carry up here, to assemble, to arrange… It makes a sick feeling worm its way through his guts, and Yoongi brings one hand up to drag it down his face.
“Tae,” he says wearily. “I really don’t know if…” Taehyung looks at him with big eyes, and Yoongi reminds himself that he doesn’t have to apologize for being tired. “I’m gonna have to buy a fuckton of furniture. I literally only have my audio equipment and a wardrobe, in Jin’s basement. I need to fill up this whole thing, and start work. I’m not sure I’ll have the energy for painting, too.” His laugh comes out as a dry huff of air. “Honest to god, I’m just glad I’m not homeless anymore.”

Taehyung’s gaze was already sympathetic before, but it mingle with a kind of realization now that makes Yoongi feel uncomfortably hot. Maybe Taehyung had forgotten about his living situation; Yoongi knows that he and Hoseok still manage to seem like regular roommates, and it felt like that to him too most of the time, but the fact is still that he sleeps on a couch and doesn’t have his own room. He’s not Hoseok’s roommate, he’s crashing at a friend’s place because he had nowhere else to go when he came back here.

But he catches himself quickly, throws Yoongi a smile and shrugs. “That’s fine,” he says. “White walls are classy. What do you say I get mom to send us the apartment layout, then you can start planning where to put your stuff?”

“Yeah, that sounds good,” Yoongi says, trying to ignore how much lighter he feels immediately. Taehyung’s mother replies to him quickly, and they stay in the apartment a little longer. While Boop sniffs every possible corner of the place, Yoongi does notice how carefully Taehyung tries to find a middle between motivating him to find pretty furniture he’ll be happy with and not overwhelming him. It works, mostly, because Yoongi lets it, and he’s thankful for him. Taehyung, of course, has tons of ideas what he could do with the place, and Yoongi ends up thinking that he’s glad Taehyung is going to tag along for the actual shopping. Yoongi’s eye for visual composition isn’t exactly the best, and especially now when it’s going to be a stressful and tiring couple of weeks for him, he can use someone who will bounce around next to him and make as many suggestions as Yoongi needs to finally have a satisfying picture in his head.

That evening, Yoongi has dinner with Hoseok and Jimin, who pointedly talks about anything but Taehyung. When they’re in bed, Yoongi lies on Hoseok’s couch and stares at the ceiling, feeling exhausted and once more finding himself unable to fall asleep. He thinks about the days to come and grabs one of the cushions to his right to press it to his face, actually tempted to just yell into it for a while, but he doesn’t. He just breathes against the stuffy fabric for a bit until he’s sufficiently convinced that that was a shitty idea and turns to his side to find a tissue and blow his nose.

His backpack sits there, next to the coffee table. Yoongi stays on his side and watches it, unmoving. Yeah, he’s getting cold feet again, but no, he’s not about to bail. He reaches over and digs through the backpack until his arm is in almost to his shoulder, until his hand is almost at the bottom, until he feels the soft surface of his Kumamon plushie, and pulls it out. He’s been content knowing it in his backpack there to his side, hasn’t actually slept with it in his arms for months now, too anxious about Hoseok (or, in New York, Taehyung) waking up the next day and finding him like that, but Yoongi knows he’s going to be up and about before Hoseok anyway. He is perfectly aware of what Hoseok and Jimin do when they wake up next to each other every morning, thank you very much. It’s safe to sleep holding Kumamon to his chest.

It’s safe.

As predicted, he wakes up first, gently pushes Kumamon back into his backpack, and waits for the noises next door to start. When they do, he grabs his phone and earbuds and turns up his music,
waiting, checking the time now and then. A very happy Jung Hoseok strolls out of his bedroom exactly forty-two minutes later, which is seven minutes more than Yoongi would have had predicted. His new boyfriend must be doing him good.

Yoongi waits until Jimin has gone to class to tell Hoseok that Taehyung is going to come shopping with them. Hoseok looks positively delighted about it, which Yoongi pretends not to notice over his breakfast cereal.

“Oh, that’s gonna be so good!” Hoseok prattles on, waving his own spoon around and getting milk on the table. “That way we’ll be sure to get you some nice furniture and keep you from buying the ugliest, mismatched shit just because it’s cheap.”

“It can’t be expensive either, you know that.”

“Pretty doesn’t always mean expensive! We can do it. Isn’t his mom an interior designer, too? It’s in his blood!”

“She’s a realtor, Seok. That’s how I got the apartment in the first place, remember?”

“Eh, same thing.”

Yoongi finally looks up from his bowl at that, staring at Hoseok with a tired sort of disbelief. “No,” he says slowly. “It’s not. Has Jimin been fucking your brains out or something?”

The second Hoseok starts giving him that smile he usually only gets when he’s high as a kite, Yoongi knows that was a stupid fucking thing to say. “God, yeah,” he replies. Yoongi looks back down at his cereal and finds it having turned unappetizing for some reason.

It’s today. The shopping thing. They’re doing it today. Yoongi only came back to Seoul three days ago, got his key code yesterday, starts his job the day after tomorrow, and they’re doing the furniture shopping thing today. Yoongi honestly wants to stay here and hole up in Hoseok’s apartment instead, he’d spend the entire day locked up in the bathroom with all of his breakup duckies if that would save him from furniture store hell, but he knows Hoseok, and Hoseok knows him, and that means Hoseok would drag him outside by his hair if he had to. It’s happening and Yoongi just needs to get through today, and then get through the day after tomorrow, and after that everything will somehow, magically, be fine. He just has to keep telling himself that.

“Finish your cereal,” Hoseok says, fucked-out tone completely gone from his voice to make room for the guy who Yoongi just now pictured dragging him outside. Fine. Great. He’ll eat and then he’ll dress properly and then he’ll meet up with the rest of his friends to buy enough furniture to fill his entire stupid apartment. Fucking fantastic.

It turns out fine. In hindsight Yoongi isn’t sure what kind of biblical catastrophes he was expecting to go down, but either way none of them happen. He and Hoseok, Jin, and Namjoon meet up with Taehyung, whose dad is lending them a van, and Taehyung looks thankful that Jin volunteers to drive it the rest of the way, since big cars like that still seem to scare him a little. Yoongi doesn’t tell anyone that he’s used to driving tiny sleek little Bugattis. Taehyung still sits in the passenger seat and spends the entire drive chatting loudly with Jin while both Hoseok and Namjoon stay as close to Yoongi as they possibly can without basically sitting on his lap, so that alone already helps alleviate the stress a little.

Then Yoongi supposes he might have been scared that he’s not going to find any furniture, which he realizes later was a little stupid since they were going into an enormous (unnamed and possibly Scandinavian) department store that has nothing but furniture, so of course he was going to find
something. His fear of not being able to afford anything also settles a little when they find an outrageously soft-looking couch barely five minutes in that costs about half as much as Yoongi would have guessed.

He kind of eases into it from there. All four of his friends keep sticking close to him so Yoongi won’t feel lost in the masses of other visitors here, Taehyung eventually starts clinging to his arm and Namjoon occasionally throws an arm around Yoongi’s shoulders, and everyone keeps making suggestions that turn more and more ridiculous until they finally make him laugh. Yoongi finds a plush football he throws at Namjoon’s head when Namjoon suggests getting children’s furniture for Yoongi’s tiny ass, or a stool so he can actually see himself in the bathroom mirror, and Taehyung ends up taking the football in his free arm because he wants to buy it for his dog, which makes everybody coo at him. They force Yoongi to buy a dining table that’s big enough for at least four guests, and Hoseok makes sure that all his seat cushions are in different colors, which everybody swears will look amazing.

Yoongi feels less like he’s buying furniture and more like they’re at some sort of amusement park by the time they reach beds and mattresses and everybody starts talking over each other about how this is the most important part of Min Yoongi’s apartment.

“Knowing Yoongi,” Namjoon declares, “he’s gonna need a bed that allows tying someone to the headboard in some way.”

Taehyung’s giggle gets lost in the way Hoseok clears his throat. “That was once, Joon, and I told you that in private.”

Over everyone’s laughter, Yoongi watches Hoseok, contemplating whether he should add something to this or leave his ex some dignity, but it’s Hoseok, so he already looks more amused than embarrassed. “It was twice,” he corrects him calmly.

“No,” Hoseok sputters, “we agreed that first time didn’t count.”

Yoongi shrugs. “Hey, it’s nothing to be ashamed of, man, I’m sure it’s happened to all of us. At least we had our one and a half minutes of fun.”

Seokjin’s laugh grows so loud he has to clap both of his hands over his mouth and lean into Namjoon’s shoulder, wheezing as Namjoon in turn pulls a heartbroken looking Hoseok into a soothing embrace. Yoongi pats his back as he strolls past with Taehyung still clinging to his arm to look at some more bedframes.

“Hey, Yoongi,” Taehyung murmurs to his side. “What if we--”

“No,” says Yoongi. Taehyung turns his gaze away from the beds to stare at him.

“You don’t even know what I was gonna say!”

“You were gonna say, what if we fucked in the mattress department,” Yoongi says, fighting back a grin, which just gets harder when Taehyung answers.

“Fine,” he huffs. “Mister Smartypants.”

Yoongi tries not to say anything to that, since he’s pretty busy with his grin fighting business and with not at all acknowledging the one or two feelings he might have about how invested Taehyung has been getting in his semi-public kink thing. He’s not even surprised at himself anymore when he still ends up taking a breath to reply. “To be honest, I was thinking more along the lines of what if we fucked in the kitchen department, but I guess the audience here would be too big even for us.”
From the corner of his eye, he can see Taehyung smirk at him, and while Yoongi pretends to inspect a price tag on a bed he finds absolutely hideous, Taehyung’s voice is almost unbearably close to his ear. “You do have a nice new shiny kitchen in your apartment,” he says. Yoongi hums. “We might just find out how thick those walls are. Or how nice your neighbors are.”

He giggles, and Yoongi finally turns his head to smile at him. “Speaking of,” he cants, “you know that one room that I’m going to turn into a studio? I’m gonna soundproof that as soon as I can afford it. So, good news for you and your noisy ass.”

Taehyung’s giggle turns into a very low rendition of his sex laugh, and Yoongi swears the shiver he can feel going through Taehyung’s body on his side is only half exaggerated. He’s almost thankful when Jin materializes behind them to put one hand on each of their backs; popping a boner while furniture shopping wasn’t exactly today’s goal.

“What’re you two whispering about?” Jin asks cheerfully.

“I have a feeling we don’t wanna know,” Hoseok replies, strolling past looking positively ruffled from what Yoongi assumes was a slightly excessive group hug.

“It had something to do with soundproof rooms,” Taehyung declares, his arm still linked with Yoongi’s when they continue moving to Jin’s wolf whistling.

Namjoon predicts that they’re going to get kicked out of this place if they continue like this, but by then Yoongi has already spotted and fallen in love with a bed so enormous it’s probably going to take up almost all the space in his bedroom, which is just what he was looking for.

In the end, Taehyung sits on the cart as they race through the warehouse to pile long, flat cartons on it that Yoongi swears won’t all fit into the transporter (he guesses some part of him is still hellbent on finding something that’s going to go wrong today). Namjoon pushes the cart and almost crashes Taehyung into a wall which results in them switching positions, and Hoseok points out that they really are getting side-eyed by other customers and staff by now. The real drama, however, only happens when they’re just a few feet away from the register and Namjoon makes Taehyung stop the cart and gets up to suddenly close in on Yoongi with Hoseok and Jin.

“We’re all gonna chip in and pay for half of this,” he says, looking Yoongi in the eyes with an expression that suggests he might beat him up if he says no.

“No,” says Yoongi. Namjoon narrows his eyes while Hoseok puts a hand on one of his stiffened shoulders, and Yoongi only begrudgingly fights the urge to shrug it off as violently as he can.

“You didn’t let any of us get you something for your birthday,” he points out. Yoongi knew that was a damn mistake.

“And we love you, man,” Jin adds, in the middle of the damn warehouse with people watching and everything, and Yoongi can feel his ears heat up. “We can all afford it right now, so let us do this for you.”

“I can chip in, too!” Taehyung says from somewhere behind them, but Jin doesn’t even turn to look at him this time.

“No, you bought him tickets to New York, you can get in line,” he says sharply, which makes Taehyung quiet down immediately and Yoongi grit his teeth. Seokjin smiles at him. “Come on. We’ll never talk about it again, I promise. You just buy us all pizza later and we’ll be good. Deal?”

“It’s not like you have a choice,” Namjoon says helpfully.
So Yoongi caves and lets them pay half, even if it makes him want to cry -- with gratitude, mostly, but it’s not like he’s ready to admit that. He stares once they’ve managed to put everything in the van, continues staring when Jin pulls him into a hug but eventually hugs him back, and by the time they’ve reached his apartment, he feels at least ten pounds lighter. He stays upstairs with Jin to start unwrapping and put everything in the right rooms already, while the other three work together carrying everything up, and then Hoseok plays music from his phone and they all sit on the floor and assemble Yoongi’s furniture.

He and Hoseok sing along horribly. Taehyung and Seokjin are talking constantly, discussing another anime every time Yoongi listens in. Namjoon somehow manages to cut both of his hands on a table, but still finishes it, albeit covered in the pink band-aids Jin carries around. At some point Yoongi glances up from wrestling with hinges on a drawer for his new TV stand, takes a look around his living room and realizes that this is the most normal he has felt in years.

They eat pizza on the floor between cardboard and construction manuals, then Yoongi and Jin take Taehyung’s dad’s van to drive to Jin’s and get Yoongi’s stuff out of his basement while the other three stay in his apartment to get rid of all their trash and put everything in the right place. Yoongi, at this point, feels ready to pass out standing up, and Jin knows him well enough to not attempt too much conversation with him, but he has his hand in the small of Yoongi’s back a lot and does most of the work, and Yoongi kind of wants to buy him another pizza, or maybe ten.

When they get back, Yoongi’s apartment actually looks like an apartment. He doesn’t have a TV yet and his studio room is still half empty too, but that’s something he’s going to tackle in the course of the next months. All the more important parts are here now, and everything went well, without a single hitch actually, against everything that Yoongi’s nervous mind anticipated this morning. Only his backpack is still at Hoseok’s, so they decide that he’s going to spend one last night on that couch. Outside, both Namjoon and Seokjin pull him into long hugs with a promise to meet up again tomorrow, then Taehyung kisses him in front of all his friends for a solid ten seconds before pulling away with a grin and hopping into the van he brought.

“You two are getting pretty good at this,” Hoseok says, standing in the crowded subway next to him on their way back. Yoongi pointedly ignores his grin. “Almost had me fooled.”

His eyes closed, Yoongi rests his head on Hoseok’s shoulder. “Fuck you,” he says. And Hoseok puts his arm around him.

The invitation comes before noon the next day. Seokjin wants them to come over to his place and have dinner with him and Namjoon, and Yoongi and Hoseok have known him long enough to know that you don’t turn down a dinner invitation from Kim Seokjin. They actually make a point to have as little breakfast as they can without having it ruin their mood, so they’ll have enough room later for whatever delicacy Jin is going to cook up this time.

Before he leaves for class, Jimin gingerly pulls Yoongi into a hug and thanks him for not complaining when he started crashing here, too, and that he hopes he’s happy with his new place and he’s going to stop by sometime to check it out. Yoongi actually sputters a bit, he has no idea what to reply to that, but Jimin makes it easy for both of them and just leaves with a smile and a pat on Yoongi’s shoulder. Hoseok looks after him with that dopey grin again, and something bitter crawls up Yoongi’s throat, but he chooses to ignore it and swallows it back down.

He and Hoseok stop by Yoongi’s new apartment to drop off his backpack, meaning he’s going to
sleep here tonight, and Yoongi feels odd. He’s been living in Hoseok’s living room for two full months now, and he’s glad that it’s over in a way, but it’s also weird and new and he’s thankful that they’re going to Jin’s together afterwards so they don’t have to pull some sort of clumsy goodbye hug shit.

Namjoon opens the door to Seokjin’s apartment, letting them in while Jin only pokes his head out of the kitchen for a greeting.

“I’m almost done,” he says quickly. Yoongi is pretty sure he has rice flour in his hair. “You guys sit down, give me five minutes.”

Grinning to themselves, Yoongi and Hoseok make their way over to an already set table in Jin’s living room, but both of their expressions change when they see Namjoon sit down. He lowers himself onto the chair carefully, slowly, like he’d rather have a donut cushion for his ass, and Yoongi can feel his eyebrows shoot up until he’s half sure they’re blending into his hairline.

“Damn,” Hoseok says slowly. He’s sitting next to Yoongi and they’re both still staring at Namjoon, but Yoongi can effortlessly hear the grin in his voice. “Someone got dicked last night.” Namjoon clears his throat and pointlessly rearranges his chopsticks; he looks like he’s about to say something, but Hoseok is already gasping loudly. “Wait, you said you slept here.”

Yoongi lets out a cackle that only grows louder when Namjoon starts grinning at them. “Our Seokjinnie’s a beast, ain’t he,” he says. Namjoon shrugs, seemingly still unmotivated to contribute to this conversation, but that’s alright. Yoongi and Hoseok are ready to keep it alive by themselves.

“Who would have thought,” Hoseok says, shaking his head gravely, but Yoongi laughs.

“Me, actually,” he says and turns to Hoseok, ignoring Namjoon’s suspicious look. “As Jin’s former roommate: I’ve seen some shit. I know what size condoms he wears and let me tell you, Kim Namjoon is a national hero.”

“Yoongi,” Namjoon says now, even though he fails spectacularly at keeping the pride out of his voice.

“What? That kind of self-sacrifice deserves praise and I, for one, am proud of you.” At that, Namjoon puts a hand over his chest, acting touched, and Yoongi gives him the softest smile he can currently muster, which is probably not very soft, but he did try. Hoseok, meanwhile, looks like he’s trying to think of anything other than his friend’s genitals, so Yoongi of course leans in close and says, “King size.”

While Hoseok still shrieks into his hands, covering his face and sliding down in his chair until he’s half covered by the table, Jin walks into the living room with one steaming pot in each hand. Yoongi watches him with pure delight, especially now that he’s noticed how Jin doesn’t just have rice flour in his hair, he also has two hickies on his neck and one peeking over the collar of his shirt. “What?” he says, squinting at Hoseok while he carefully puts his pots down on the table. “What did you guys do to Hoseok?”

Hoseok wails something against his palms that sounds a lot like What did you do, but Namjoon quickly talks over him. “They know,” he says.

Jin sighs. “Did you tell them?”

“No! They, uh…”

“We found out,” Yoongi says, already helping himself to food. “We’re smart like that. You got a
little something on your neck, Jin, by the way.”

Automatically, Seokjin reaches up to wipe his neck before he seems to realize what Yoongi was getting at and rolls his eyes. He sits down next to Namjoon looking defeated, but eventually he just shrugs. “Well, this is what we were going to tell you over dinner, but I guess we can just eat now.”

Hoseok sits up so suddenly even Yoongi flinches, and slams his hands on the table. “You invited us here just to tell us you fucked?”

“What?” Jin stares at him, scandalized like he’s about to tell him off for using that word at his dinner table, even though Yoongi has heard him say much worse with a mouthful of food. “No, we invited you here to tell you we… Well, to tell you we can’t say no anymore when you guys call us boyfriends.”

While Yoongi busies himself shoveling food onto Hoseok’s plate, too, Hoseok’s entire posture softens. “Awww,” he says. “That’s so sweet of you guys. I mean, we’ve known for, like, years, but it’s the thought that counts.”

“Yeah, we knew before you knew,” Yoongi says dryly, shooting Namjoon a look but not complaining when he, too, holds out his empty plate to him. “Hoseok’s been calling you NamJin for weeks.”

“Imagine if you and I dated,” Hoseok says and gestures between himself and Jin with his chopsticks. “We’d just be SeokJin.”

“Everybody should always aspire to be Seokjin,” says Seokjin. When Yoongi finally reaches him in his round of keeping everyone fed, he leans back and smiles. “I can’t believe we’re all dating someone now. That hasn’t happened since, what, second year of college? When you two were still a thing and Joon was with his roomie?”

Yoongi squints. “Wait, who were you dating again?”

“Jaehwan.” Seokjin looks at him, slowly raising his brows when Yoongi’s only answer is a blank stare. “The loud one?”

“Oh,” says Yoongi. “Oh, that one. Boy, am I glad you’re making me revisit that memory. Good thing you’re with Nams now.” He narrows his eyes a little when both of them smile brightly at him and grab each other’s hands right there on the table. “Just go easier on his ass next time. Poor guy can barely sit.”

Yeah, that does the trick. Jin lets go of his hand to facepalm instead. “Oh my god, is that how you found out?”

“Uh huh,” Hoseok says with his mouth full. “I now know more about your penis than I ever wanted, so thanks for that. Also, this tastes amazing.”

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“It’s always so nice to have you two over,” Seokjin says. He actually sounds sincere, so both Yoongi and Hoseok give him their most innocent smiles.

It’s a nice evening. Yoongi’s first day at work starts tomorrow afternoon so they talk about that for some time, find exactly the right mixture between making jokes and actually giving him hope that he’s not going to fuck everything up immediately. They talk about Hoseok and Jimin and make fun of how in love Hoseok is, they talk about Yoongi and Taehyung and New York again and Yoongi tells them about the Bugatti until they call him a gold digger and Hoseok side-eyes him heavily, and then of course they talk about Namjoon and Seokjin. About their clumsy confessions just a few days
ago, the part where they realized that nothing is actually going to change much between them except that they can finally kiss now (“Gay,” Hoseok says loudly), and of course about how Yoongi and Hoseok saw it coming miles away. It's nice. It makes Yoongi feel good, like he belongs here, like everything is going to turn out alright and they can all find their own paths of happiness. It's soothing.

Right until he's alone and on his way to his apartment. Until there’s no reason to pretend anymore; not all of them are dating someone. He’s not dating anyone.

Not really.

Something about it rubs him the wrong way. Not the part where he’s lying to his friends; no, that’s still way too much fun to quit and he wants to see how far he can take it. That part is alright. It’s something else that doesn’t sit right with him, something he has trouble putting his finger on. Something about Hoseok, back in New York City, texting him to not be like Namjoon and Seokjin. Something about Namjoon and Seokjin dancing around each other while being so obviously smitten, something about them making it, getting their act together and just taking the leap while Yoongi still… What? What is it that he’s doing, exactly? He surely started with fake-dating some dude for financial perks two months ago.

Now he’s fake-dating his friend with benefits, walking his dog, flying away with him, letting his parents help him with every aspect of his life, calling him nicknames and sharing his past with him, while Namjoon and Seokjin are out there dating each other. Really dating each other.

And it’s fucking with him.

Kumamon sits on the shelf next to his bed and stares him down when Yoongi throws himself into the pillows. He’s tired. That’s probably it. He hasn’t even been back in Seoul for a full week, he might still be jet lagged, he’s been so fucking busy the past few days, he’s stressed because of that new job he hasn’t even started yet. He’s just overthinking things, that’s him, he always does that.

It’s not like he wants what Namjoon and Seokjin have. Or what Hoseok and Jimin have. The hand-holding on the dining table, the dopey smiles on tired mornings, the obvious mutual adoration. Nah. He’s happy for Hoseok that he can do this kind of stuff again, but Yoongi doesn’t feel ready, not after the stunt he pulled with his last relationship. This is his first night in his own bed after being homeless for more than a year, for fuck’s sake. He’s not about to date anyone who isn’t completely and one hundred percent faking it, like Taehyung. It’s good the way it is.

Maybe he just needs to get laid.

Frowning at the dark ceiling, Yoongi realizes he hasn’t had sex since the morning of their departure from New York. They’ve had a busy week, Yoongi has had a busy week. Taehyung was kind of preoccupied because of that mysterious thing with him and Jimin and Jungkook, and Yoongi was on the road a lot.

That’s … weird. Not sleeping with Taehyung for almost an entire week, that’s fucking weird.

Yoongi reaches into his pants pocket to fish for his phone, half set on texting Taehyung to call him out on this blatant misdemeanor, but he stills with his thumb hovering over the chat icon. Taehyung has morning classes tomorrow. Ones he likes, too, so he won’t want to skip if he can help it. Yoongi should leave him be. That’s just basic human decency, really.

Plus, he’s still pretty exhausted himself. Maybe what he really needs is just sleep, on an actual bed, one he has to himself, finally, just him and the silence of an apartment he doesn’t share with other
hostel visitors, his ex boyfriend and his current boyfriend, or his fake boyfriend. Sleep will help. Sleep usually helps.

And if he still wants sex tomorrow, Yoongi thinks, shimmying out of his jeans and just dropping them on the floor in front of his bed, he can always just go and get laid by someone else. He doesn’t need Taehyung for that. They’ve never established any rules concerning this, all Yoongi needs to do is keep up the fake-dating facade, and if he wants to fuck someone else just once, he can always just do that as inconspicuously as possible. He’s had enough inconspicuous fucks in his life, he’s not bad at it.

He pushes off his socks too and slips underneath his blanket. Kumamon still stares at him.

He did promise himself, a while ago, to only have sex when he’s sure it’s going to be beneficial to him. Using sex to cope in his situation is a slippery slope and Yoongi made sure to set up some ground rules as soon as he realized what he was doing, and that was and still is number one. No sex if it’s just going to make him feel bad. No sex during those phases when he finds it gross, no sex that’s more about aggression than eroticism, no sex with people he doesn’t actually want to sleep with. He abides by those rules, he’s on a good path and he’s not going to go astray now.

Slowly, Yoongi narrows his eyes at the big black plush on his shelf. Why is he automatically assuming that he’d be sleeping with someone he doesn’t like if said person isn’t Taehyung? That’s dumb. Yoongi has found plenty of people he never regretted sleeping with, it’s not always easy, sure, but he’s developed an eye for it and he hasn’t lost that in the two months he’s been messing around with Taehyung. He could do it. Why doesn’t he believe himself that he could do it?

With an exasperated huff, Yoongi turns to his side, away from Kumamon and towards the bedside table, where his laptop and his portable speakers are carefully stacked on top of each other for the time being. He’s going to sleep. He’s going to sleep this thing off and it’ll all be better in the morning. He’s going to hook his phone to his speakers and play the soft, quiet playlist he made to calm himself down because he’s not in the mood to watch one of Taehyung’s fish cams, and he’s going to fucking sleep.

He’s not completely idiotic. Or plain blind. He can put two and two together, which in this case is the fact that apparently he doesn’t want to sleep with other people anymore, and the fact that he gets uneasy thinking about how in love all his stupid other friends are. He can put those together and get a result he’s absolutely not going to think about, a thought he is so not ready to finish in his head. Not between new apartments and new jobs and fake relationship deals. It’s just going to have to wait, at least for tonight. He can deal with it tomorrow.

Or never.

Never sounds good.
Chapter Summary

Shinichi and the breakup duckies make a comeback, Taegi desecrate the radio station, and Yoongi struggles with the truth.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Yoongi is not in love.

He has slept on it, he is making a point not looking Kumamon in the eyes, and he has made a decision. He isn’t. That would be stupid and inconvenient and he has better things to do.

It’s April 15, which means (exactly two months ago today he saw Taehyung for the first time in Skype on Jimin’s laptop) Yoongi starts his job today. He’s nervous, but at least his whole body isn’t telling him to run away anymore. Radio is something he’s been wanting to do since his early college days, so a good part of that nervousness is actually excitement. By the time he leaves his apartment in the afternoon he feels just about ready to throw up the meager meal he was able to swallow down earlier, but he’s not bailing. He’s going to make this work.

Yoongi gets two days of training with colleagues he already got to know during his job interview. After that, he gets to write some of the pieces himself and takes care of his own sound management, which means he’s going to work mostly alone very soon. This, in turn, doesn’t exactly scare him. The mixing console is nothing he’s never seen before -- if anything, it looks and feels so familiar, it actually helps him calm down while his new colleague tells him about his workflow.

He’s incredibly thankful for this job, for how nice and well people take him in here, and especially for how quickly Taehyung’s father got it for him. So it’s only natural that Yoongi keeps thinking about Taehyung when he should be focusing on what his co-workers are trying to teach him, right?

Right.

It’s that, and some sort of aftershock thanks the fresh bullshit his brain cooked up last night. It doesn’t mean anything.

He also still definitely needs to get laid. That’s another factor, Yoongi figures. If he is thinking about Taehyung, it’s mostly because he’s been stressed and busy and needs to bone, preferably him. And if he stares at the selfie he gets while sitting around in the break room after nightfall, it’s because Taehyung’s hands look good and the shape of his mouth is hot and Yoongi misses having that on him, and that’s all, and those are very valid things to be thinking about when Taehyung sends him pictures of himself and his dog and wishing him a fun time at work.

That night, he goes home to his enormous bed and stares at the ceiling for an hour. He puts his calm playlist on again and waits for that to help, but it doesn’t. Taehyung is still there, lurking between his temples, smiling and talking and playing with his dog when Yoongi just wants to sleep after an
exhausting day. He thinks about how it’s been Saturday for a few hours now, how Taehyung doesn’t have classes today and wonders what he’s going to do. Maybe he’ll spend some more time with Jungkook; they need each other right now, while Jimin is still on the fence about them for whatever reason. Yoongi really hopes they’re going to be alright.

He gets up again and goes to his still mostly empty kitchen, finds the tea Namjoon brought him when he moved in, and warms his hands on the cup. Ditching his bed, he decides to curl up on the couch in the living room instead, staring at his phone before he gingerly opens an app.

Yoongi texts Hoseok to tell him that his first day at work was good and he’s going to drop by sometime before noon. That feels safer to him than the other thing he had in mind.

Later, he falls asleep on his side on the couch, face still turned towards his laptop, where sharks and rays are very quietly making their way across his screen.

Yoongi knows he’s not in love.

He’s been in love a bunch of times, and it was never like this. He was in love with a girl in high school and it didn’t feel like this. He was head over heels for someone he dated in his first year of college and it didn’t feel like this.

And then, there was Hoseok.

Yoongi was in love with Hoseok, he was very much in love with Hoseok. And it’s been over just long enough now for him to go back and think about how that felt, and how it wasn’t like this at all. He and Hoseok had a bond, still have, they know each other inside and out, they went through shit together, hand in hand, and that was, Yoongi thinks, what love feels like. Hoseok was his best friend and they had braved storm after storm together, and back then, Yoongi had been in love.

So right now, he’s not.

It’s not that Yoongi doubts Taehyung as a friend. In fact, Taehyung seems like someone that would brave entire hurricanes with him, that would accompany him through hell and back if Yoongi needed him to. Taehyung is his friend, sure, but that alone is not enough.

Because Yoongi knows himself, and these things take time for him. He doesn’t fall for people in a span of two months; nobody should, if you ask him. Yoongi falls in love with people he’s known for a while, people he knows, people he trusts. And it doesn’t matter that he already had the revelation in a hotel room in New York City, that he already realized he trusts Taehyung only a few weeks back, it doesn’t matter. It’s still too fast. He’s not in love, he knows he isn’t. He can’t be.

“You look tired,” Hoseok says. Yoongi is sitting in his kitchen, picking through yesterday’s leftovers with his chopsticks and not responding to anything he says. He shrugs.

“Yeah. Slept on the couch.”

To his weary smile, Hoseok shakes his head. “You know you have a bed now, right? I distinctly remember buying that with you.”

“Yeah, I know,” Yoongi mutters into his food. He squints towards his phone, lying next to his arm on the table. “I’ll get used to it sooner or later.”
“Mhm, hang on,” Hoseok hums, and then he gets up from his chair and disappears from the room. Yoongi barely looks after him, he prefers using this time to continue the staredown with his phone.

It’s not doing anything. He’s been hoping for some sort of life sign from Taehyung, the thing about him not having classes and probably still feeling bad about Jimin still somewhere on his mind. It’s barely even noon, so part of Yoongi hopes he’s just sleeping in today, but some other part wonders if his parents ever do Boop’s morning walks or if that’s Taehyung’s thing, if he’s supposed to be up and if the lack of selfies sent Yoongi’s way means something bad.

He gets shoved back into reality when something flies towards him. Thankfully, Yoongi’s instincts kick in fast enough to look up and catch the rubber duck Hoseok launched at him in mid air, sending it a confused glance before settling for a glare in Hoseok’s direction.

“The hell, man. You could have knocked me out.”

Hoseok rolls his eyes. “You’re so dramatic. Nobody gets knocked out by a rubber duck. Besides, I know I can always count on your basketball prodigy reflexes.”

Yoongi just grunts; he doesn’t know what to say to that, so he goes back to staring at the duck in his hand. “What do I do with this?”

“You take it home. Namjoon got you that tea, right? And I know Jin wanted to come by soon and leave you something too. I dunno, I guess I just don’t want you to feel alone over there, that’s all.”

Suddenly, Yoongi is very glad he has a breakup duckie to stare at, since looking at Hoseok suddenly sounds like the worst idea in the world. His neck feels warm and he has to take a deep breath before he can speak up, which probably pretty much negates what he’s about to say, but whatever. “Bullshit, I’m glad to be rid of your sappy ass,” he says as deadpan as he can. Hoseok’s snort tells him he still knows better than to believe him. Yoongi waits until they’re both seated at the kitchen table again before he looks up cautiously and asks, “How’s Jimin doing?”

Hoseok grimaces around his chopsticks and wiggles his hand in a vague gesture. “He’s okay,” he says, mouth still half full. “I still don’t know what’s going on with them, I just know he’s torn. He really misses them. Guess Tae hasn’t told you anything either?”

“Haven’t really asked him about it,” Yoongi mutters, and frowns at Hoseok’s almost immediate reproachful stare. “What? I asked him once, the day after. He just said it’s something between them, so I left it at that.”

“Maybe you should ask him how he’s been doing, too,” Hoseok says softly. Yoongi looks down at his phone again, still lying completely silent and motionless.

Maybe he should.

If they’re still nothing but friends because Yoongi doesn’t develop feelings for people that early, there would be no harm in just making sure he’s alright, and offering himself to talk.

He should be able to make that work.

He goes back to his second day in training that afternoon, still checking his phone whenever he can, to no new messages, still unable to stop his mind going around in circles that are usually all about Taehyung, Taehyung, Taehyung. When he’s on break, Yoongi finally texts him, even if it takes him almost half an hour to word the text right just to tell him that he’s been having a good time at work and if he’s been doing okay and if he’s up for Boop walks anytime soon. He goes back to work after that, and they finally let him do his thing alone for now, so Yoongi thinks he should be fine now.
He should be thinking about his job. He texted Taehyung, that’s all he could do, so now he just has to wait and to fucking function, and he does, he does function, but only with half of his brain constantly reminding him that Taehyung is somewhere out there, and he hasn’t responded to his text yet.

Oh, but he knows he’s not in love. Yoongi goes home that night and falls face-forward onto his mattress, deliberately avoiding the look towards the cupboard next to it, where both Kumamon and a stray rubber duck are now staring him down. He ditches the calm playlist tonight and goes straight for the loud one, the more aggressive one, something that’s going to fill up his ears and his head and hopefully make him stop thinking about-- about anything. He just wants to sleep. For one night, he just wants to sleep.

Around ten the next day, he wakes up on his couch. Yoongi almost falls off of it when he sees his phone display flashing something on the coffee table and tries to grab it with all his limbs still tangled up in his blanket.

Taehyung says he’s doing okay. He says he’s having a busy weekend but he can drop by tomorrow. Yoongi closes his eyes and rolls on his back and wonders if he can pretend that the flutter in his stomach is a viral infection.

Yoongi doesn’t want to be in love.

Sunday passes slowly. He should be excited, his first complete night of working alone. He wrote two parts of the show himself and he put a lot of effort and devotion into his music choices. He wants people to remember him, he wants everyone who has to be up at these ungodly hours to know that his show will welcome them, even in the dead of night. This is what he’s been wanting to do, he should be beside himself.

But his mind still wanders, and Yoongi doesn’t want it to. It makes him feel like he’s just sabotaging himself again, like now that he has a job and a home and is back in his massively supportive circle of friends, now that his father is dead and he should have no worries left, he finds something else to brood over. He’s imagining things just to make life harder for himself. Because he’s a fucking idiot.

At least that night, Yoongi is tired enough from those previous days that he manages to fall asleep in his bed.

By the time Taehyung rings his doorbell the next day, Yoongi still looks and feels exhausted, but he tries not to care. He cares way more about how Taehyung, too, has dark shadows under his eyes, and not just there; his jaw sports a rough shadow Yoongi has never seen on him before, but he figures he hasn’t shaved in a bit. Yoongi stares at it for just a little too long -- it’s weirdly hot, in a way, but it worries him too much to really finish that thought.

“Come in,” he says, stepping aside as Taehyung shuffles into the apartment, and watching him warily. “How you holdin’ up?”

“I’m okay,” Taehyung says. Yoongi tries to detect a lie in his smile, but it still seems mostly sincere. Tired, too, but sincere. Only his chuckle sounds more helpless than amused. “By now even my parents noticed something’s up, so they cleared their whole day yesterday to spend it with me.” He shrugs, fingers thumbing at the bulging messenger bag slung around his shoulder (Yoongi figures he came here after class), and looks around the living room. His smile broadens at the view, and he
sighs. “Place looks good. How’ve your first few days here been?”

_Confusing_, Yoongi thinks, but he doesn’t say that. “Not bad,” is what he says, motioning for Taehyung to follow when he plops down on his couch. “Haven’t been sleeping much, to be honest, but I’m probably still just getting used to things. Not just the place, but the job, too.”

“Right,” Taehyung says, and grins. He puts his bag on the coffee table carefully, and pulls one of his legs on the couch so he can turn and look at Yoongi. “How’s that going? Still good? I tried to tune in last night but I passed out. Is it fun?”

“It’s great,” Yoongi says automatically. He’s suddenly fighting with his facial expression, forcing it to stay neutral even though there’s something cold and vague like dread settling in his stomach at the thought of Taehyung listening to his radio show. It’s accompanied by something else, too, something warmer, but he doesn’t have the time to explore this. “Don’t worry about listening in. I’ll hopefully have the job for a little while longer, so you’ll get your chance.”

Taehyung laughs. “I hope so!” he says. “I’ve actually been considering just dropping in sometime and watching you work right on site.”

Yoongi blinks at him. The warm thing in his stomach does a backflip, somehow mingling with the cold thing in the same place, making him feel slightly disoriented. “Uh,” he says, “I guess that would work, yeah? It’s not like there’s anything special to see, but I don’t think anyone would notice if you just watched for a bit.”

“It's still interesting.” Taehyung grins, and winks at him. “Don’t forget your bosses are friends with my dad. They won't mind if I waltz in there.” While Yoongi is still trying to process what he just heard, Taehyung is already leaning to the side and starts rummaging around in his bag. “Hey, by the way, I brought you something. I want you to take this.”

Obviously Yoongi wasn't overwhelmed enough before, since now he's left to sit on his own couch and gape at Taehyung putting a dead octopus in a jar on his couch table. “You,” he says slowly, “You want me to take Shinichi?”

“Yeah! I want you to have him here.” Taehyung turns back towards him and smiles, though it's briefly interrupted by a frown. “You didn't find him creepy, right?”

“No,” Yoongi says quickly, then he squints at him. “Did Hoseok put you up to this?”

“What?” Taehyung seems genuinely confused, which, Yoongi guesses, makes two of them. “No, it’s... When Jimin and Jungkook moved, I gave them one of my cacti. They take turns keeping her in their rooms. But when we went to the museum, I kinda got the vibe that you didn’t care about the plants much, but you liked all the animals, and I thought you found Shinichi kind of funny, so... I mean, I can take him back with me if you don’t-”

“No, I’ll take him,” Yoongi says, leaning forward to put a hand on Shinichi’s lid just to make sure Taehyung won’t squeeze him back into his bag. He musters a small, apologetic grin. “I just didn’t think you’d want to give him away.”

“Oh, it’s fine,” Taehyung says and waves his hand around. “We’ve had our time together, and I need space on the shelf anyway. I ordered a shark baby online.”

“Please tell me it’s dead and in a jar, too, and you didn’t order a live shark baby.”

Taehyung rolls his eyes. “Of course not! I wouldn’t have the means to raise the poor thing. It’s gonna be a jar baby. I’m still deciding on a name.”
“Well, let me know if you need help with that,” Yoongi says, trying not to choke on his snort.

Yoongi feels better the entire time Taehyung sits on his couch, even when they settle for letting him visit Yoongi during work tonight and he has to somehow let it sink in that that's gonna happen. Something else is sinking in too, slowly but unstoppable, but Yoongi still isn't ready to acknowledge it. He doesn't want all this to mean what he already knows it does.

He doesn’t want it to feel like the sun is rising instead of setting when Taehyung walks into his studio at work during a commercial break, he doesn’t want his chest to feel like he’s having a heart attack just because they smile at each other. Yoongi wants to go back to how this was at the start, he wants to stare at Taehyung’s fingers and get horny thinking about his legs, he wants them to be blunt and physical and stupid, because that’s the absolute most he can manage right now. He can deal with friends with benefits, he can deal with fake boyfriends with benefits, that was fine, that was great. That wasn’t half as scary as what’s going on with him right now.

Taehyung sits on the guest stool and watches him in silence after a while. He asked questions at first, always making sure to only speak up when the mic was off, pointing at various controls and asking what they do, and Yoongi explained everything diligently, but he’s quieting down now. During one live bit, Yoongi can feel his eyes on him, and he thinks he can see him smile from the corner of his eye, but he’s focusing on his text and his voice as good as he can, knowing it’d punch him right in the guts if he had to look at Taehyung’s smile now.

Just when Yoongi announces more music and plans on asking Taehyung if he brought something to read because this might be getting boring soon, Taehyung scoots closer and leans in. Yoongi is hyper aware of his breath fanning over his ear once, twice, waiting until he’s definitely started playing the music and turned off the microphone, which doesn’t make dealing with the tone of voice that follows any easier.

“So how much time do we have until you have to speak again?”

“Twenty minutes.” Yoongi clears his throat and cants, “Why?”

Taehyung looks around briefly. “You don’t have cameras in here, do you?”

“I do have one, but it’s in a desk drawer and switched off,” Yoongi says and pushes his chair away from the mixing console to face Taehyung with his best smirk. “Why, you think those friends of your father would mind if you banged your boyfriend in here?”

The word burns on his tongue, and Yoongi instantly wishes he hadn’t said it. Hadn’t fucking put it like that. And he wishes he wasn’t like this, he wishes this wasn’t a problem he apparently has now. He wishes this was still a wholeheartedly platonic fake relationship deal, one that doesn’t make his mouth hurt when he speaks, and one that doesn’t make him think dramatic shit like that when he might be about to get laid.

Taehyung giggles. “I think they might be a little perturbed,” he says slowly. He smirks right back at him, and he bites his lip and looks at him coyly from beneath his lashes, and there’s heat running down Yoongi’s spine just from that. “You up for it?”

Yoongi huffs out a breath and throws his console a look. “Am I risking my shiny new job?”

“There won’t be any proof,” Taehyung sing-songs. His hand is feather light on Yoongi’s knee. “And it’d just be a little quickie. We only have nineteen minutes. Eighteen if you don’t make a decision right about now.”
Yoongi knows his answer. Yoongi doesn’t have to think. Yoongi wants stupid, risky sex in an office chair at his new job. Yoongi wants them to be driven by nothing but suicidal thirst for adventure, and he doesn’t want to feel anything but the thrill and the satisfaction. He wants Taehyung’s hand to go further up his thigh because he hasn’t felt it in so fucking long, and he wants to make the most of those twenty minutes of continuous music he gives his unsuspecting listeners.

“Hurry up and get your pants off, then,” he says.

“Fuck yes,” Taehyung says, getting up from his stool with zero hesitation to unbutton his jeans.

Yoongi can’t help but snort softly while he opens his own pants and raises his ass off the chair just enough to push them down. “Have you always been this much into sex in unusual places?” he asks airily.

“Nope,” Taehyung says, shamelessly. When Yoongi looks up, both of them are still in their boxers, but there’s a pair of naked tan thighs coming towards him. Before he even has time to look at Taehyung’s face, the chair shifts, creaking under Taehyung’s weight, but Yoongi can’t exactly worry about it when he has Taehyung’s warm legs pressing up against his own. “I can’t believe we haven’t fucked since New York,” Taehyung says quietly, and Yoongi wants to laugh at himself for feeling so instantly relieved that Taehyung has been thinking about it, too.

“I know,” he groans instead, fingers slipping underneath Taehyung’s shirt while Taehyung’s arms rest heavily on his shoulders. “We’ve got a lot to catch up on.”

While Taehyung hums in affirmation, he’s already ducking his head to run his teeth along the underside of Yoongi’s jaw. Yoongi feels a strange pang of both disappointment and relief that he didn’t go for a kiss, but he pushes it away to the back of his head. Instead, he takes a breath to tell Taehyung to better not leave any visible marks when he’s already climbing him in his workspace, but he can already tell that Taehyung’s teeth only scrape his skin ever so slightly and are usually followed by the soft touch of his lips or tongue, so he figures Taehyung already thought of that himself.

Yoongi is left to run his fingertips up Taehyung’s spine, his head leaning back against the leather of his chair, sensitive thighs twitching already from the mere friction of Taehyung’s bare skin rubbing against them. Taehyung shifts closer still, the chair swaying precariously for a second, and Yoongi can feel him grind his hips down, but they don’t exactly meet his pelvis. Taehyung ends up rubbing himself against Yoongi’s legs, which is just fine too, but Taehyung huffs a frustrated sounding laugh against Yoongi’s collarbone and continues pushing his own knees further up the chair, so he guesses this wasn’t exactly what he was hoping to do.

“How do,” Taehyung starts saying, pausing to giggle into Yoongi’s shirt collar when his legs start poking out underneath the arm rests (Yoongi sees those arm rests dig into thigh flesh and has to swallow dryly), “How do people do this?”

The snort Yoongi offers sounds a little too hoarse for someone whose crotch isn’t even getting touched. “By not having legs for days,” he says, nails scratching gently along Taehyung’s shoulder blades under his shirt, “I assume.”

Taehyung makes an unhappy noise and crawls backwards just enough to free his knees from their arm rest prison. It's not really erotic at all, and Yoongi wishes he didn't still get that happy flutter in his stomach just from watching him. Taehyung pouts when he looks at him again. “Dammit,” he says. “We could always switch places?”

Yoongi squints up at him, nails stilling between his shoulders, a threat. “Are you saying I have short
“I’m not saying anything,” Taehyung says immediately, a little too loud to not sound caught in the act, but he grins at Yoongi, boxy and sheepish, so he refrains from tearing his skin open.

“God, let’s just,” Yoongi begins, and stops himself when his gaze drops, when he makes the mistake of looking down at his own thighs caught between Taehyung’s, all toned (Yoongi honestly doesn’t know where the hell he even gets it from) and spread open with the fabric of Taehyung’s baby blue boxers stretched taught over a bulge that wasn’t there yet a minute ago. He swallows loudly once more, gaze flickering to his side to check his console, mentally calculate through the queue of his songs, then he pulls his hands out from underneath Taehyung’s shirt and gently pushes against his chest instead. “Let’s just fuck on the floor.”

Taehyung lets out one of those horrible deep giggles he does when he’s horny as he scrambles off the chair. He almost topples over once and stretches one arm out to his side, but Yoongi darts forward to push it away from the controls, which ends in Taehyung staggering to the side and laughing even more. “Shit, sorry,” he gets out, eventually just sitting down on the floor. “I didn’t do anything, did I?”

“You almost played the weather jingle,” Yoongi says, joining in this time when Taehyung cackles, even if it doesn’t last long. Which is mostly because now he’s moving to straddle Taehyung on the floor, a carpet underneath his naked knees a welcome sensation he hasn’t felt in a while, and pushing him down further with his hands on his shoulders. Taehyung lets him, grinning up at him as he lies back, his own large hands running up Yoongi’s sides underneath his shirt. Briefly, Yoongi gets thrown off by how confident Taehyung looks, and cocks his head. “You didn’t plan this through far enough to actually bring lube to my work place, did you?”

Taehyung’s complacent smirk alone should be enough to answer that question, but he reaches up and grabs Yoongi by the collar, legs entangling with his, and flips them both around until Yoongi rolls on his back and claws at the front of Taehyung’s shirt for leverage. Wordlessly, Taehyung reaches behind himself with one hand, and Yoongi watches him pat around on the floor blindly for a second until he finds his pants and pulls two foil packages out of a pocket, one of them definitely not a condom.

“Jesus, Tae,” Yoongi breathes. Luckily, he doesn’t have to come up with anything else to say to that, because Taehyung chooses that moment to dive down and finally kiss him.

It’s a quickie, from there. After all, it’s not like the two of them aren’t used to the feeling of this, to making sure they’re quick and quiet while still keeping it as intense as they can, and a little more than eight days without sex (yeah, Yoongi has done the math) can’t thwart that kind of experience.

So it’s a quickie, but a quickie à la Yoongi And Taehyung. It’s Taehyung still straddling Yoongi’s thighs while reaching around to prepare himself with entirely too much hip movement. It’s Yoongi using the time to stroke himself to full hardness just watching Taehyung’s body roll down against those fingers behind his back. It’s Taehyung taking barely any time to adjust after sinking down on him, building a rhythm that’s overwhelming for both of them, that’s making Yoongi’s toes curl against the floor and Taehyung’s fingernails scratch over his chest. It’s Yoongi thrusting up until he can hear his spine protesting against the hard floor and subsequently flipping them both around again, holding Taehyung by the hips and thrusting into him at that angle that makes him press both of his hands against his mouth and whimper. It’s Yoongi reveling in the feeling of carpet burn ruining his knees and Taehyung snapping his own hips down against him until they both moan against each other’s skin to somehow stifle the bliss washing over them.

Getting up on wobbly knees, Yoongi checks his console. They still have the better part of his last
song left. Which is why Yoongi plucks off his condom, ties it shut, and flicks it right onto Taehyung's naked stomach.

“Ew!” Taehyung shrieks, but he pauses at Yoongi's challenging stare.

“You said there won't be any proof,” he says. “I can't afford to have the cleaning staff find this in the new guy's studio trash.”

Taehyung heaves a deep sigh and starts picking at the condom with his fingers. “Why does sex with you always end in me feeling bad for cleaning staff?” he mutters, but Yoongi can see a grin tugging at the corners of his lips. “I can't believe I'm gonna walk out of here with a used condom in my pocket, oh my god. And it's not even my own spunk.”

“I'm giving you the power to clone me,” Yoongi says while wrestling his pants back on. “Use it well.”

“Sorry, we don't start cloning people until fifth semester,” Taehyung says. “I'm gonna have to keep this in a freezer until then.”

Yoongi laughs, and tries not to care when Taehyung approaches to look over his shoulder and check the queue. Of course, he has caught on quickly and knows exactly where to look, but he still stays close to Yoongi for a solid few seconds, his naked chest still burning heat against Yoongi's dressed back.

“Put your shirt back on,” Yoongi mutters. “You can stay longer if you want to, but I dunno how long you wanna keep that condom in your pocket.”

“You're horrible,” Taehyung giggles while picking his shirt back up from the floor. “I'll go while you're still off air.”

Yoongi is fine with that. It makes this quick, makes Taehyung hurry outside without a weird, long winded goodbye, makes it easier. Probably. Yoongi still feels a weird burn in his stomach when Taehyung grins and waves through the window in the door as he starts to greet his listeners after the music break.

He can focus better, this time. For the rest of his shift, Yoongi feels almost normal, in a way. He tries to tell himself that's because he finally got laid again, even if he knows better. Even if he knows it's because he got to see Taehyung laugh.

His sleep is restless and chunky that night. Whenever he wakes up, Shinichi and the breakup duck stare down at him, like they're judging him for pulling Kumamon out of the shelf and holding it to his chest, but Yoongi doesn’t know what else to do. He doesn’t want to watch a fish cam and be reminded of Taehyung, and he’s sick of his quiet playlist, and he just wants comfort, and rest. And he doesn’t want to feel like this, but it’s getting harder and harder to deny. What he feels for Taehyung has moved past his initial indifference, and it has moved past that phase of pure fascination, too. It’s more than carnal hunger and a drive to find someone like-minded in bathroom stalls now, and Yoongi was fine with that, Yoongi was fine with it not being superficial anymore, he was fine with it being friendship.

He’s not fine with what it is now. He doesn’t want the stomach flutters and the chest aches whenever Taehyung smiles, he doesn’t want the urge to just be with him, because he’s not ready. He can’t, not yet, and he’s not good at it and has never really been, and he has enough other stuff to worry about, it’s all too much and he can’t, he doesn’t want to.
He doesn’t want to be in love.

Tuesday night is someone else’s show, so Yoongi gets to stay home. Seokjin comes by and brings a gift basket filled with bath bombs, and a cake. They sit on Yoongi’s kitchen counter and drink beer and eat cake and tell stories and laugh about them. Jin talks about Namjoon with a glimmer in his eyes that makes Yoongi feel warm with how happy he is for the both of them, but still makes something cold run down his back, because this is their fault. He only started thinking about this whole horrible mess when everyone started getting into real, actual relationships, and he could still be callous and relaxed about Taehyung if all their obvious adoration hadn’t opened his stupid eyes.

“How are things with Tae?” Jin asks eventually, of course. “He used to text me more, has he been busy?”

“Yeah, he’s been busy,” Yoongi says and looks down at his knees. There are red marks on them, visible through the holes in his jeans. Yoongi takes another gulp of beer.

“It’s fake, is what he wants to say. We’ve been lying to you, I’ve been lying. We’re not together, not really. We’re just making his parents happy, and yeah, we fuck, but we’re just friends. He doesn’t like me like that. Why would he? We’ve gotten so close that he knows pretty much everything about me, more than you, more than Hoseok, so why would he like me like that? Why do I do this to myself, Jin? What’s my damage, hm?”

He smiles when he looks back up. “But he came over to the radio station last night and we fucked.”

Jin’s scandalized gasp is loud and exaggerated enough to make Yoongi laugh, genuinely, so he guesses this is just fine. “At the station?”

“Yeah, on the floor in my booth. See my knees? The carpet in there is hell.”

“I don’t wanna see that, Yoongi.”

“You know what, I had to look at Namjoon sitting down at your table like he still had a horse dildo up his ass, you can look at my carpet burn, fuck you.”

Jin ends up checking out his carpet burn and congratulating him on it. He leaves in the afternoon to meet up with Jungkook, so Yoongi eats three more pieces of cake and throws himself on the couch. He orders pizza and lets his ancient laptop take fifteen minutes to load Netflix, because he’s going to enjoy his day off. Or, well, the rest of it. Maybe all the food helps, because he only gets distracted once or twice, fingers always opening certain apps and files on his phone that still contain an unfinished song about jellies and Kim Taehyung’s take on immortality, but mainly, he’s fine. He’s doing okay. He finishes two movies and most of his pizza and maybe he’ll fall asleep on his couch again, but maybe this time, it’s alright. This might just help him prove to himself that he can still be fine, he can spend the day with his friend and the evening doing things he enjoys and not thinking about him, and he can pass out on the couch after Netflix and pizza like every normal guy his age does, and he’s fine. He’s great.

When he wakes up around midnight, a little disoriented, very much exhausted, but not sleepy at all, Yoongi figures he might as well try again in his bed. He puts his leftover pizza in the fridge, powers down his laptop and leaves his jeans on the coffee table, because it’s his damn apartment so why the fuck not, and he crawls in his bed and tries to believe in himself.

Two hours later, he’s sitting upright in his bed and looking out the window. It’s that time of the night
when the clubs are still open, but the subways have closed down and the busses aren’t active yet, so Yoongi sees mostly cabs dragging past on the street below. There’s a small café across the street that’s open around the clock, and Yoongi has been watching the barista make some sort of drink and then drink it all herself now. He’s seen a group of older men in suits stagger down the street, one of them sobbing into someone’s shoulder so hard Yoongi could make it out from all the way up here.

He does like the city atmosphere; maybe he’s even missed it in a way, while he was gone. There’s still a weird sort of pride inside him for not being from here originally, something Yoongi is pretty sure manifested from that never forget where you came from attitude in music, or art in general, but Seoul has given him more than his hometown ever could. He likes watching it, likes the nightlife that pulses through it no matter what day of the week it is, the way it’s always changing and evolving and making room for more.

Right now, he’d just rather sleep.

Sighing, Yoongi lets himself fall on his back. It’s not that he feels alone. He lived alone before he left the city and he loved it, and he still does. He needs the space to himself, and he needs his calm and quiet. Having Jin over was nice, but he needs a lot of alone time, too, just to feel at peace.

It’s just the sleeping part that sucks. Yoongi thinks that he’s had sleeping troubles for so long now, he should be used to it, but he also feels like something changed. Because he slept okay in New York. Not perfect, no, absolutely not, but okay. Better. He had his sleepless nights, his groggy mornings and wide-eyed evenings with Taehyung snoring peacefully next to him, but they weren’t as frequent, and they still were… better. That’s just it. Yoongi knows that hotel beds and the presence of someone he-- he likes isn’t going to cure insomnia. But it made things better at least, and wasn’t that a start?

When he checks his phone display, it’s almost half past two. Yoongi grimaces. He flicks through his apps, scrolls through chat rooms, but he doubts anyone else is awake. Eventually, he still takes a picture of Shinichi standing on his shelf next to a rubber duck, and sends it to Taehyung, because he knows Taehyung puts his phone on silent when he sleeps. Yoongi locks his phone and drops it next to his head, which results in him flinching like it bit him when it vibrates barely a minute later.

02:28  : he looks happy!!!

Yoongi blinks at his screen. He double checks the time, then slowly rolls on his stomach before he answers.

02:29 you: why are you up

02:29 you: dont you have bio at like 9 am

02:29  : yeahhh hahaha

02:29  : i dont know. why are YOU up??

02:30 you: cant sleep

02:30  : me neither

Yoongi’s heart beats in his throat. Taehyung is stressed from the tense situation with his best friend, he tells himself. Or he stayed up watching documentaries and got too excited to sleep. Or his sleep schedule is still fucked from visiting Yoongi at work last night. It doesn’t mean anything. It doesn’t mean anything.
But he can still make an offer.

[02:31] you: hey you wanna come here?

He starts typing something else, *i still have two slices of pizza and a can of c*, but he doesn’t get further than that before Taehyung answers.

[02:31] : yes!!

[02:31] : is it ok if i bring boop?

[02:31] : i think shes restless because of me :( and she misses you

The smile on Yoongi’s lips feels better than anything else he’s done today. Taehyung could bring an entire zoo for all he cares.

[02:31] you: sure i dont mind

[02:32] you: you know public transports still closed though right

[02:32] : duh!!!!

[02:32] : been living here longer than you, country boy :P

[02:32] : im taking the bugatti

[02:32] you: flashy

[02:33] you: drive safe

[02:33] : ok!! see u soon!!

Briefly, Yoongi considers scrambling out of bed and putting his jeans back on. But it’s the middle of the night and he’s actually half sure that Taehyung has seen him without pants more often than with, so he just sends him the code to his apartment door instead and stays in bed. It’s a sort of peace that confuses part of him, at first. With all the ridiculous shit that’s been going on with him this entire past week, he supposes he would have thought he’d get all giddy at the prospect of this, but he doesn’t. He’s calm now, content. Like it’s all going to turn out alright.

Taehyung wants to drive through town with his dog to see him instead of staying home and trying to sleep in his own bed, and maybe, just for tonight, that was all Yoongi needed to know.

When he hears the soft beeping of his keypad a little later, and a door opening and closing, he at least has the decency to sit up. “I’m in the bedroom,” he calls over, and listens to Taehyung kicking his shoes off.

“Of course he is,” he can hear him mumble, in that soft purr he only uses on his dog. “Go look for him, baby.”

Boop’s claws tap over the floor, and Yoongi can hear her sniff just outside the bedroom door. She pushes it open with her face, only her nose poking in for a few seconds until Taehyung opens it the rest of the way and she starts wagging her tail so much it’s bumping into the doorframe.

“Hi,” Yoongi coos, and pats the free space on his bed next to him. When he looks up, he realizes Taehyung is actually carrying one of the soft dog beds he’s seen around his parents’ penthouse, but he’s not taking the invitation back now. When he was younger, he used to sleep with his face
pressed up close against the back of his mother’s poodle. He doesn’t mind. “Come here.”

Taehyung puts the dog bed down on the floor in front of his bed, then he pushes the pair of wide sweatpants he came here in down his legs and climbs on the mattress, unceremoniously crawling over his happily panting dog in the process. “We’re having a slumber party,” he declares.

“Sure,” Yoongi says. “I actually even have some cake in the fridge. And pizza, but just two slices.”

“Perfect! One for you, one for me. Boop gets the crust. Boop loves pizza crust. Unless it’s cheesy, it’s not cheesy, is it?”

“No, it’s not,” Yoongi answers quietly, smiling to himself while scratching Boop behind one floppy ear. “She can have the crust.”

“Great,” Taehyung says, stretching his feet from where he’s sitting, so his legs end up sprawled over Yoongi’s lap. “And I get all the cake. Because I’m a hero for having class in six hours and still partying.”

“You’re not a hero, you’re a fucking tragedy.”

“Tragedy is what makes people into heroes! Man, you need to read more comics.” Taehyung shakes his head disapprovingly, then snaps it back up to stare at Yoongi with a spark in his eye that can only mean certain doom. “You know what you should do? You should come to class with me! That way it’s fair!”

“How,” Yoongi sputters. “How is that fair? I’m the one working night shifts! And I can’t just show up in your bio class like some weirdo.”

“Dude, it’s a huge lecture, there’s, like, two hundred people sitting there, nobody will care. And you’ll get to see what my classes are like! Bio lectures are always fun, I bet you’ll love it.”

“Not at nine in the morning I fucking won’t,” Yoongi groans, but next to Boop Taehyung almost looks like a puppy himself, both of them staring at him with delight on their faces, Boop’s tail hitting the blanket every time she wags it, and Yoongi doesn’t even realize he’s smiling at them until it’s too late. He heaves an overdramatic sigh and shrugs his shoulders. “Fine. Fine, I’ll come with you.”

Taehyung squeaks, honest to god squeaks, and throws himself on his back to raise his arms in the air and do wiggly motions with them which Yoongi guesses symbolize victory, or something. He supposes it is just fair. Taehyung saw him work, so now Yoongi gets to do the same. They did end up fucking at work, but hey, maybe he’ll get a good throwback out of this and make out with Taehyung in a college bathroom stall.

It’s April 20, a Wednesday, at 9:47 in the morning, when Yoongi admits to himself that he is in love.

He’s sitting in the vague middle of an enormous lecture hall, surrounded by biology students. Yoongi doubts that they’re really two hundred people, but definitely way over one hundred. People really don’t care about one strange face in the masses.

His body aches from tiredness, head to toe, but it’s nothing new, after all. He and Taehyung did end up getting about two hours of sleep, once Boop had climbed off the bed and curled up in her own space. They both slipped under Yoongi’s blanket and Yoongi pressed his cold feet to Taehyung’s calves and got kicked for that. Taehyung tried to make a joke about how they should fuck, but by the end of the sentence he was muttering into the pillow so much Yoongi couldn’t actually understand
him anymore. So Taehyung fell asleep first, but around twenty minutes later, after he had sleep-
chatted about Boop for a bit, Yoongi finally felt his eyes fall shut, too.

And now he’s here. He has his elbow on the little table in front of him and his head supported on his
hand, and he’s not even pretending to watch the lecturer anymore. He’s watching Taehyung, and he
can, because Taehyung doesn’t even notice.

With his mouth hanging open, Taehyung keeps scribbling down notes in his notebook. Yoongi can’t
read half of them, and he’s mostly given up trying. There’s drawings, too, different colors that he’s
not completely convinced actually mean something. Sometimes Taehyung will look up and stare at
the PowerPoint presentation projected on the wall, nod to himself, and write something down again.

Yoongi doesn’t understand a word the lecturer is saying. It’s way past his very basic understanding
of biology, and he suspects that even if they were talking about sound studies, he’d still be too tired
to really grasp anything.

He’s doing this for Taehyung.

He got up after two hours of sleep and put on real clothes and climbed into the passenger seat of a
car to let Taehyung drive Boop home and pick up his books. He let Taehyung buy him coffee and
then stood around on a packed subway train that brought him to a university, more than a year after
finishing his own degree. He’s sitting in a lecture he doesn’t understand when he could be catching
up on sleep in his bed, because Taehyung wanted him to. Because Taehyung got excited at the idea
of him being here, and because Yoongi, despite all the tiredness and the ache in his bones, feels
excited himself just to see him focused and concentrated and so fucking passionate about something,
and that makes it all worth it.

It’s 9:47 and he has to admit to himself that he can no longer deny it. And he has to admit to himself
that he doesn’t know what to do.

It’s 9:47 and Yoongi is in love with Taehyung.

Chapter End Notes

i know, i know. i let you wait for so long, and come back with this?? yikes
if you like soft french music, i listened through cœur de pirate's entire spotify page twice
while writing most of this.

anyway, i hope you've all been doing fine. my dog really likes pizza crust. he gets super
excited whenever he realizes that the evil intruder in our home was actually the pizza
delivery guy
Dead On Arrival

Chapter Summary

*Your love life's DOA ♪*

Yoongi tries to figure out how to live with his recent realization.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

May only begins hesitantly.

Yoongi feels like he and everything around him has been moving very slowly. Spring comes like his life is a video game with a fat lag, inching closer for what feels like eternity and then suddenly hitting him in the face with its presence. It’s warm now, and Yoongi is thankful that his radio booth is always kept cool, thankful that the air conditioning in his new apartment works flawlessly, thankful for every day that he doesn’t have to look at Taehyung in shorts and wide thin tops.

Boop loves the weather, so when he joins Taehyung on walks, they take up twice as much time than they used to. Things between Taehyung, Jungkook and Jimin have slowly been getting better again, Yoongi keeps hearing so both from Taehyung and Hoseok, which is relieving, but they’re still not back to how things used to be. So he still tries to be there for Taehyung even more than he normally would, skips sleep sometimes and even lets Taehyung pay for his dinner now and then when they go out to eat, just to spend time with him. At least half of this time is spent naked, either using one of their artificially cooled apartments or letting the warm, stuffy air of public bathrooms remind them of how filthy they actually like it. It seems to do Taehyung good, distracts him and makes him laugh, and Yoongi guesses that’s great, then. It definitely doesn’t clash with the uncomfortable, quiet problem he’s been harboring for a couple of weeks now.

The tiny, miniscule issue of him fucking being in love with Taehyung.

He’s been fluctuating. Yoongi guesses that’s a good word for it. Sure, there’s the whole thing about the butterflies in his stomach, the way his chest flutters when Taehyung smiles, how he wants to write stupid songs about love just from watching Taehyung sit at a table and look at his phone with his round glasses perched on his nose and his slightly sun-bleached hair falling into his eyes, focused but still soft somehow. On some days the world seems much brighter than ever, almost too much to handle for Yoongi’s tired eyes. On some days he smiles at people on the sidewalk and puts an extra corny edge to his voice at work, on some days all colors seem stronger than normally and Yoongi feels good, feels satisfied with his chest seemingly trying to burst out of its seams because he likes Taehyung so fucking much and it’s such a soothing thought to have.

But then he fluctuates back and remembers that he’s a goddamn fuckup and Taehyung’s fake boyfriend who agreed to this deal for financial reasons and who, if he really thinks about it, can’t give Taehyung anything. Rich Taehyung who studies to become a scientist, who likes going out and meeting people and being loud, who’s friends with half of Seoul and probably half of the rest of the country too, and Australia, who is open and happy and so obviously unburdened -- he is everything that Yoongi isn’t, and there’s no way he would ever want anything serious from him.
Somewhere, of course, in the fucking grownup part of his stupid skull, Yoongi knows that this is an idiotic way of thinking. He’s not a teenager anymore and he should be past his insecurity about his qualities as a boyfriend (a real one), but it’s not like he has a great track record. His last relationship ended in him skipping town for a year and his ex boyfriend thinking he hated him, and maybe that’s not fair on Yoongi or Hoseok, maybe the circumstances were different, but can he really be sure? Has he really come far enough, is he really over his past enough to date someone? Really really date someone?

Maybe not.

Probably not.

Yoongi guesses he isn’t, since he’s been spending the past weeks in a sort of hot, feverish daze, ping-ponging off the walls of his own mind, always torn between feeling great and feeling fucking abysmal, not talking about it to anyone. He’s actually more grateful than ever for his new job to keep him grounded and chained to this city, because otherwise he might have just bailed again, the thought of being in love, of real, raw feelings for another person, so scary to him that it made him want to run away. He has spent a fair share of his nights sitting in his bed and staring out the window, watching cars drag by, potential bus routes open on his phone, knowing perfectly well how he could leave this town. He watched the café across the street shut down and turn into a kimbap shop, but he didn’t leave. He’s staying, this time.

He did not leave. He’s kind of proud of himself for that, and nobody else is proud, because he’s not talking to anyone. Not about this.

Who would he tell, anyway? Yoongi only has four friends, and one of them is Taehyung. He’s sure as shit not gonna fucking tell Taehyung. He can’t tell Jin or Namjoon, because they’re not in on the fake part of their dating deal. They’d just be a little bemused and very happy for Yoongi because he’s in love with his boyfriend, and that’d probably just make Yoongi want to jump out a window. Sure, he could finally tell them what’s been going on, but he doesn’t have the energy for that, and he also kind of doesn’t want to. He kind of wants them to keep thinking that he and Taehyung have an actual, functional romantic relationship, and he doesn’t want to think about if that’s good or horribly, stupidly bad for him.

So that leaves Hoseok. Yoongi supposes he could tell Hoseok, actually, but it’s been hard to catch Hoseok alone. When Yoongi is home, Hoseok is in class, and when Hoseok is home, Yoongi is at work, and when they both have time off, Jimin is still hanging out at Hoseok’s place. And Yoongi likes Jimin, he guesses, even if he’s starting to feel a little sour himself now about how much their weird thing has been stressing Taehyung out, but he’s a good dude and everything. Still, Yoongi doesn’t want to tell Hoseok that he’s in love with Jimin’s best friend while Jimin is in the apartment. He’s trying to take baby steps here, and baby steps do not include that.

But Hoseok is skipping class today because he worked in the club in Itaewon through all of last night, and Jimin is being a diligent student and left while Hoseok was still asleep, so now Yoongi is over at Hoseok’s place so both of them can have very late, very tired breakfast together. Yoongi is perched on the kitchen counter, watching Hoseok’s back as Hoseok fries eggs with rice in sweatpants and what Yoongi is pretty sure is one of Jimin’s shirts, and he’s been trying to convince himself to talk for at least twenty minutes now.

He can think of a whole bunch of ways to word this, but none of them really sound right. Or none of them sound like something he wouldn’t want to knock himself out for right afterwards. Yoongi can’t imagine telling Hoseok that he’s in love without wanting to bang his head against one of the kitchen cupboards until he passes out, so that’s making things a little hard. Hoseok himself still seems so tired.
that he hasn’t been striking up conversation either, focused on not burning their breakfast, so Yoongi can’t even try to smoothly change the topic towards Taehyung, because there is no topic.

But he has to get this over with before they actually eat, Yoongi realizes, because then they’ll be sitting across from each other at the table and he’ll have to look at Hoseok’s face as he talks, and he doesn’t want that.

“Seok,” he says softly, startled by his own voice and the realization that okay, apparently he’s doing this now, eyes fixed on Hoseok’s back. Hoseok doesn’t say anything, but nods at his pan. Yoongi takes a steadying breath that turns out very unsteady.

“I think,” he continues, slowly -- his voice isn’t shaking, but something in his ribcage is, “I think I have feelings for Taehyung.”

Nothing happens. The skies don’t darken and rain hell upon him, the cutlery drawer doesn’t magically open and stab him with Hoseok’s sushi knife even though Yoongi kind of wishes it would, and he doesn’t knock himself out against one of the kitchen cabinets. Hoseok reaches down to switch off the stove, moves the pan away from the heat and then lets go of the handle, turns around with a sigh, and gives Yoongi what he can only describe as a very impatient look.

“You think?”

Yoongi stares at him. He feels his mouth open and close again -- for some reason this isn’t the reaction he was expecting, but then again he doesn’t really know what he was expecting instead. He didn’t exactly think this through; Yoongi has no idea where to go from here, what to make of this conversation now that he’s taken the first hurdle, so all he says is, “What?”

“Of course you have feelings for Tae,” Hoseok says with such an aggressive roll of his eyes that Yoongi almost wants to kick him in the stomach from where he’s sitting.

He sputters instead. “What,” he says again, “are you saying you knew?”

“Please,” Hoseok says. “I’ve known for weeks. Actually, now that I think about it, over a month.”

Yoongi holds onto the kitchen counter with both of his hands like it’s keeping him secured in this plane of reality. Sure, he realizes that Hoseok knows him very well and generally reads him like an open book, but this is still scary. This means that Yoongi isn’t imagining things, this isn’t some sort of stupid hallucination his brain came up to make him feel bad, it’s real. Hoseok saw it, too. If Hoseok saw it, it’s there.

“When?” Yoongi says.

“Before you went to New York,” Hoseok says, to Yoongi’s horror. “There was this one day, where… Yeah, I think that was right before your job interview. I thought you’d be so nervous I’d have to scrape you off the bathroom floor, but you went out for a Boop walk with him. And then you came back here, and you did the dishes. That’s when I knew.”

At this point, Yoongi is kind of sick of saying What? over and over again, so he just sits and stares at Hoseok. Hoseok shrugs.

“You never do the dishes. The only times I remember you doing the dishes was when you got top grades on your last college exam, and back when I first agreed to try your semi-public sex shenanigans. But that day in, what, late March? Nothing special had actually happened, so I figured it was just because you were with Tae. ‘Cause you were developing feelings for him. And what do you know? I was right.”
He looks satisfied with himself, but Yoongi just glares now, because that’s bullshit, and Hoseok is an asshole. “I can’t believe you knew,” he hisses. “And you didn’t even tell me.”

“You need me to inform you of your own feelings?” Hoseok laughs, but Yoongi just narrows his eyes even more.

“You let me go to New York with him.”

“You were excited! It was cute. I thought you might finally confess your undying love for each other in your fancy hotel room, but I guess you’re both too dense for that.”

Something inside Yoongi’s stomach does a somersault. Grimacing, he slides off the counter to grab a bowl and push past Hoseok and help himself to breakfast. Maybe food will make his stomach shut up, maybe it’s that easy for once.

“He doesn’t like me that way,” Yoongi says quietly, almost proud at how sober the words come out.

“Oh, come on,” Hoseok says immediately, tilting the pan by now to help him scoop the rice. “Have you seen how he looks at you?”

Yoongi gives his full bowl a pained smile before he reaches over and tilts the pan himself now, so Hoseok can get his own portion of breakfast. Yeah, he has. There’s just one problem. “He looks at everyone like that,” he says.

Hoseok throws him a glance full of doubt, but he seems to postpone the argument for now, emptying the pan in his bowl and yawning widely as they move over to the table, and Yoongi does have to look at his face now.

“I’m serious,” Yoongi reiterates. “Like, do you think I haven’t thought about it? I noticed the way he looks at me, yeah, and I know where you come from thinking it’s all love and passion or whatever, but I need you to really think about it. I need you to think about how he looks at Jimin or Jungkook, or even his biology textbooks. His dog. His fucking animals in jars, Seok. He looks at everything like that.” Yoongi rams his spoon into his bowl like he’s trying to stab it. “He’s a passionate guy, is all. He looks at me like he looks at all his friends, and I mean, that’s great too, it’s just not what you meant. But it’s all I get.”

Hoseok’s spoon is hovering in the air halfway to his mouth. There’s a different kind of doubt on his face now, because he’s doubting himself suddenly, and it sends a piercing sort of pain through Yoongi’s chest, like he’s having a heart attack. Some part of him had probably still hoped that Hoseok had evidence for the opposite, that he was going to argue against him until he could convince Yoongi that he has a chance, but he can’t. It’s obvious that he can’t.

“You’re just talking yourself out of this,” Hoseok says slowly. Yoongi swallows a mouthful of rice.

“Listen. You of all people know best that Taehyung and Jimin have zero romantic interest in each other at this point, right? Now look me in the eye and tell me that Taehyung’s looks in my direction are even one percent more romantic than the ones he saves for Jimin.”

And Hoseok tries. Yoongi can see it on his face. He really tries to do what Yoongi just challenged him to do, but in the end, he looks down and puts his spoon back in his bowl with a heavy sigh. “Shit,” Hoseok says, and Yoongi nods. “Shit, that sucks. I’m sorry, Yoongs.”

Yoongi acknowledges this with a vague grunt, and they eat in silence for a bit. Yoongi is at least halfway through his rice, trying to concentrate on the food instead of the sting in his chest, when Hoseok speaks up again.
“So what are you gonna do now? What’s the battle plan?”

Slowly, Yoongi looks up. For a second, he’s so confused that he wonders if they’ve been talking this whole time and he just didn’t realize. He has no idea what Hoseok is talking about, and he figures he might have missed something, especially with Hoseok’s eyebrows shooting upwards expectantly.

“Well, aren’t you gonna try to win him over somehow?” Hoseok says. “You go on dates all the time, it shouldn’t be that hard.”

“Exactly, we’ve been going on dates for two months,” Yoongi says slowly, “and nothing has happened. What makes you think I’d have any sort of chance now?”

“You have a mission this time!” Hoseok says, gesturing so enthusiastically with his spoon he sends a piece of egg flying onto the table. With a quiet Oops, he reaches over to scoop it up and put it in his mouth. “You were a big boy and admitted your feelings to yourself, and everything. Get him to do the same.”

“I can’t get him to admit feelings he doesn’t have.”

At that, Hoseok rolls his eyes so dramatically Yoongi thinks they might tumble backwards into his skull any second, but he doesn’t say anything. He seems to remember what Yoongi explained to him just minutes ago and sober up a little, regarding him with something else then, something so close to worry it feels a little sickening to Yoongi.

“What are you gonna do?” Hoseok asks.

Yoongi presses his lips together and looks back down at his bowl. That’s a good question, one that has been haunting him almost constantly for the past weeks. There’s a black dog hair sticking out from the sleeve of his sweater. Yoongi shrugs.

“I don’t know.”

He can’t break it off. He doesn’t want to, but he also can’t. He’s in this for Taehyung, they’re doing this to prove a point to his parents and Yoongi still very much stands behind that, and he wants to go on for at least a few more months. It’s unspoken, but in his mind he’d always thought they should let his parents think that they stayed together for at least a year. And according to their fake story, they should already be around the ten months mark, so Yoongi is going to keep it up just a little longer.

But other than that, he doesn’t know what he’s going to do. In movies and books and stories, people always seem to think that you need to confess your feelings no matter what, and Yoongi is very glad that Hoseok didn’t press him on this. He’s never understood the point behind it. What good would it actually do to tell Taehyung about his feelings for him? Yoongi’s guess is that Taehyung would start feeling bad and their fake-dating arrangement would start to get awkward, and then he supposes they’d just start drifting apart somehow, and that’s the last thing he wants right now.

Maybe he’ll just sit this one out, he thinks. He’s lying facedown on his couch the next Tuesday, waiting for his oven to ding and let him eat, and he thinks waiting for all this to blow over might be a good idea. It’s his night off, and it’s been almost three weeks since he forced himself through a biology lecture at Taehyung’s college and realized some stuff, so Yoongi figures if he got through those last three weeks without fucking dying, he can go on. Somehow. He’ll deal.

When someone knocks on his door, Yoongi frowns silently at the pillow he’s face planting into,
instead of moving. How did whoever this is get past the big door downstairs? Maybe someone left it open. Still, why aren’t they ringing his doorbell? The knocking sounded almost hesitant, like they didn’t actually want to be there, and now Yoongi isn’t even sure if he really heard it. Maybe he’s imagining things. He’s pretty hungry.

Nope. Now the person outside actually does ring his doorbell, and Yoongi flinches with a groan before sitting up. Fine. Briefly, he looks down to check if he’s wearing pants, but apparently he put himself into sweats earlier, so that’s nice. Good thinking, past Yoongi.

He shoves himself off the couch and scuffs through the hall, wondering if one of his packages got here early (he still has so much to buy after selling pretty much everything he owned last year) or one of his neighbors is looking to borrow something, but when he opens the door, Jungkook is staring down at him.

Yoongi stares back up tiredly. This is weird, but not entirely weird enough to throw him off. Taehyung did this to me, he thinks vaguely.

Jungkook’s arms are crossed in front of his chest, but he uncrosses them once their gazes meet and shoves them in his pants pockets instead. He looks like he’s trying to be intimidating, but unsure how to go about it. Yoongi patiently stays in his doorway and lets him frown and lick his lips and clear his throat, watching Jungkook with mild interest until he finally shuffles his feet and straightens his back.

“We need to talk about Taehyung,” he says.

Of course they do, Yoongi thinks, feeling more tired than ever, but then he’s suddenly not sure what that means anymore. “Why?” he says quickly, frowning up at him and holding onto the door a little harder now. “Did something happen?”

Now Jungkook blinks at him, deflating a little bit, so Yoongi guesses that no, nothing happened to Taehyung. “No, I meant,” Jungkook says, and Yoongi is hit with the sudden realization that whatever he’s about to say, it’s not actually going to make anything better at all, “We need to talk about you and Taehyung.”

Yeah. That sounds about right.

“What, are you here to tell me you’ll beat me up if I hurt him?” Yoongi says dryly, watching Jungkook fucking flush right up to his ears.

“No,” Jungkook says, “that would be ridiculous.”

“Yeah,” says Yoongi. He watches Jungkook stand around there just a few seconds longer, lets him stew in the realization that that would, indeed, be ridiculous, then he sighs and steps to the side. “Come on in.”

“What?” Jungkook says. Yoongi rolls his eyes.

“Whatever it is, we’re not gonna talk about it in the hallway. Come in, take a seat, let’s talk about me and Taehyung. Do you want something to drink?”

Jungkook nods hesitantly to this, like he’s not sure yet if Yoongi might poison his drink, and Yoongi watches him kick his shoes off and pad carefully into the apartment. He seems almost clumsy now, his whole posture screaming that this isn’t how he expected this to go. And Yoongi knows, sure, he knows that he and Jungkook were off to an awkward start, back when Taehyung returned from Australia. Yoongi felt like Jungkook was out to sabotage their deal just to keep Taehyung away from any fake boyfriends, and maybe he was, for a little bit, but Yoongi supposes they both know better.
now. Yoongi knows Jungkook is just trying to look out for his best friend, and up until just now, he thought Jungkook also knows that Yoongi isn’t trying to break Taehyung’s heart somewhere along the way.

And Yoongi used to get annoyed with the kid quickly when this whole thing started, but he’s learned to be lenient with him now, he guesses. He has spent enough time with him thanks to Taehyung, and he has heard Taehyung talk about him with that adoring glimmer in his eyes often enough (he looks at everyone like that, Seok), he knows that Jungkook is still just a teenager trying his best. From what Yoongi knows, he’s frustrated in college, frustrated with his parents, he now has one best friend who doesn’t speak to him or Taehyung, and apparently he also has something he needs to talk about with Yoongi. So, no, Yoongi is not going to jump him and declare war.

He’s going to let him sit on the couch and get him a glass of water.

Yoongi throws his oven a glance while he’s in the kitchen, but the timer is still ticking, and what the hell, if Jungkook stays long enough, he’ll share with him. He can go full big brother on the kid and confuse him as much as possible, maybe that’ll ease some of that uncomfortable feeling in the pit of his stomach. Yoongi pours himself a glass, too, then he sits on the other end of the couch, pulls one of his legs up on the cushions and watches Jungkook take a cautious sip. “So what’s up?”

“Well,” Jungkook says quietly. He puts his glass down on Yoongi’s couch table very gently, then he mirrors Yoongi’s position to face him and takes a deep breath. “I mean, I’m not here to beat you or anyone up, that’s stupid. I’m not trying to be, like, intimidating. But this is still about making sure that Tae doesn’t get hurt.”

“I know you don’t want to,” Jungkook says quickly. “There’s just something you need to know about Tae.” He puts his hands in his lap, and he sighs, and then he says, “He falls in love so quickly. That’s why I wasn’t the biggest fan of the fake boyfriend idea at first, because Tae falls in love with everyone he sees, and then he usually gets his heart broken, and I’m sick of watching that. I thought it might happen with you guys, too.”

Blood is rushing through Yoongi’s ears. He’s suddenly sure that the glass in his hands is going to burst with how he’s holding onto it, and the thing in his chest is sinking back slowly, making room for something more hopeful because maybe, maybe he does get to hear what he needs, maybe this is good, maybe things do sometimes come to him like this.

Yoongi says softly. The acidic feeling in his stomach is climbing up his chest now, where his heart is beating a little too hard. There’s some part of him that hopes Jungkook is going to say exactly what he wants to hear, exactly what he needs, but Yoongi can’t quite believe it. Things don’t come to him that easily.

“I know you don’t want to,” Jungkook says quickly. “There’s just something you need to know about Tae.” He puts his hands in his lap, and he sighs, and then he says, “He falls in love so quickly. That’s why I wasn’t the biggest fan of the fake boyfriend idea at first, because Tae falls in love with everyone he sees, and then he usually gets his heart broken, and I’m sick of watching that. I thought it might happen with you guys, too.”

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And then, Jungkook says, “But it hasn’t so far. You know, he really likes you, but that’s it, and I think that’s really good for everyone. He and I had this little fight going on when you two started out, because he said he wasn’t gonna crush on you and I didn’t believe him, but he’s been doing really well, and I’m kinda proud of him for that. I think finally finding someone else he can just be friends with, without throwing himself into another romance mess is really doing him good.”

While Yoongi tries to refocus his entire world, Jungkook tries to catch his gaze.

“So I guess I just wanted to make sure that we’re on the same page,” he says. “I know you’re a good guy and all and you wouldn’t actively try to lead him on, or anything like that, but I just… I just kind of wanted you to know. Tae’s like my brother, and I really need you to be careful with him.”

Like it’s switching to autopilot, Yoongi’s body nods for him. “Sure,” he hears himself say. “No, I
totally get it. You’re right.”

Jungkook takes a relieved breath and smiles at him and Yoongi kind of wants to punch himself in the face -- he wishes he could still be mad at Jungkook and just blame him for this bullshit, but that’s not how this works, and Jungkook suddenly looks happy to have come here. “I’m sorry if I came off, like, abrasive towards you at first,” he says, still smiling, and Yoongi thinks he’s even smiling back at him. “I guess that was kinda childish, but I just really want to look out for him. For both of them.”

“It’s no big deal,” Yoongi says, looking down at the glass in his hand and wondering if he could drown himself in it. “I’d probably be the same if it was about my friends.”

There’s an appreciative hum from Jungkook, and, when Yoongi looks up, a guilty grin on his lips. “How, uh, how are they, by the way?” he says, sounding clumsy again. No, Yoongi can’t be mad at him. “How’s Jin? He’s not angry with me, is he?”

Yoongi focuses enough to raise his brows at him. He can’t remember a single instant in time where Jin would have talked badly about Jungkook. “No. Why, what’d you do?”

“I might have skipped the last three of his tutoring sessions,” Jungkook says quietly, another blush dusting over his cheeks. Yoongi snorts. “The semester has barely even started.”

“Hey, I was asking if Jin is angry with me, not you.”

“I’m not angry with you.” Yoongi laughs, and he thinks it might actually be sincere, because laughing about this is way easier than thinking about that other thing right now. “And I don’t think Jin is. He probably gets it; he was never that into business, either. He only got his bachelor’s to make his folks shut up, he’s a lot happier eating on YouTube now.” To that, Jungkook nods with a big, heavy sigh, and Yoongi remembers something. He quirks a brow. “Tae told me he thinks you’re actively trying to fail your classes.”

“Oh,” Jungkook says loudly, fingers now wildly playing with Yoongi’s couch cushions. “Well, some of them. Others I’m failing because I’m just plain bad at them. But I did deliberately fail, like… half. I’m hoping if I’m bad enough my parents will get embarrassed and let me switch to music. I’m better at music.”

“That’s a bold plan,” Yoongi comments, but there’s still a laugh to his voice. Oh, he’s not about to discourage Jungkook. If he’s going this far to get into music classes, he might just belong there.

“Tae said,” Jungkook starts and clears his throat, trying and failing to subtly look around Yoongi’s apartment. “Uh, Tae said you’re making, like, a home studio kind of thing here.”

The smile on Yoongi’s lips widens to a grin. “Well, I haven’t gotten super far yet,” he says. “I’m still lacking some equipment and I definitely want to soundproof it, but I’m waiting for my first paycheck before I get on that. Namjoon gave me his old Mac though, so I finally got my MIDI controller and audio interface hooked up. You wanna see?”

Jungkook’s eyes grow as big as saucers. “Yeah!” he says, and he gets up from the couch so quick that Yoongi has trouble even registering the movement. He pushes himself up into a vertical position much slower, but he leads Jungkook towards his work room with a nod of his head. Something is still bubbling and hurting inside his chest, his stomach, maybe even his legs and arms now, and between his temples, something that’s going to make him fall asleep with his face pressed flat against Kumamon later around two in the morning, but he’s ignoring it for now. He has to.
He forces himself to function and to be kind, he shows Jungkook the room and explains what else he wants to do with it, he talks about his job and his degree and which field Jungkook might want to specialize in later, and when the oven finally dings, he does share his dinner with Jungkook. When he leaves, the kid seems happy and relieved and content, and he hugs Yoongi so hard it makes the breath stutter in his chest, but Yoongi hugs him back.

He closes the door behind him, and he takes their dishes to the kitchen and leaves them in the sink and thinks, *See you never.* Hoseok was right, wasn’t he? Yoongi only does the dishes when he’s happy. Maybe he should forget about soundproofing his work room and invest in a dishwasher instead. He has a feeling he might need it in the near future.

Yoongi gets an entire bag of chocolate bars from his emergency stash over the fridge, switches on Netflix and sits on the floor in his living room. He tells himself to kick back and eat as much as he can and forget about the rest, because he has to wait for this to blow over and there’s nothing else he can do, and it’s going to be alright sooner or later. Maybe later rather than sooner, but it’s going to be alright. Yoongi sits on his living room floor and tells himself that it’s probably going to be okay at some point, and then he cries.

Yoongi hasn’t been lovesick in years. There was a brief period in college where he thought he might have no chance with Hoseok, but that faded quickly after Hoseok got high as a kite and cried into his shirt about how much he wanted to be his boyfriend already. (*Last time Taehyung got shitfaced with you, he basically asked you to marry him,* Yoongi thinks, but that was different. Right? That was different.) Other than that, he’s barely used to feeling like this, and not sure how to deal with it.

He has learned how to deal with feeling bad. That was a thing he made sure of during his absence from Seoul; he talked to people, he practiced things, he found out which coping methods work for him and which don’t, but that was an entirely different kind of feeling bad, back then. In the past one, or maybe two years, Yoongi has braved such a huge storm that was all about survival, abuse and ruined childhoods, and now he has absolutely no idea what to do with a broken heart.

At least he has the basics down, though. He might be feeling bad for different reasons now than he did a while ago, but he still knows how to take care of himself. Yoongi makes sure he eats three times a day, even if it’s just toast sometimes. He forces himself to get up and go to work because he knows it’ll do him good, and he rewards himself with long baths or those store-bought cakes that are just five different kinds of chocolate thrown together, or a night playing games on the couch. He meets Hoseok for breakfast and Jin for dinner and sometimes he spends the night at Namjoon’s because they like to stay up and talk about whatever comes to their minds first.

He balances himself out. It doesn’t make anything *better* -- it still hurts when he’s alone and trying to sleep, hearing Jungkook say *I wanted to make sure we’re on the same page* over and over again in his head. But it at least also doesn’t get worse.

Taehyung hasn’t been meeting up with him as often as they used to. Sometimes Yoongi says he’s too tired from work or he has actual plans with his other friends, and Taehyung himself seems to be starting to patch things up with Jimin in between going to class and having a suspicious amount of family time that Yoongi chooses not to question because he doesn’t understand functional families anyway. So that’s fine, he guesses, in some way, because when he does meet Taehyung for brief café dates or dog walks, he always feels like throwing up, but then when he doesn’t see him for more than two days, he also feels like throwing up, just in a different way.

It all sucks, basically.
At least Taehyung texts him. Yoongi thinks that’s a good middle course between meeting and not meeting him, even if it ends up in weird situations sometimes.

[12:32] : so

[12:32] : kookie slipped up and told me he got to see your work room the other day
[12:32] : but then he wouldn't tell me what he was doing over there in the first place
[12:33] you: he was looking at my work room
[12:33] : dammit not you too
[12:33] : what's this????? what are you two up to???? my birthday isn't until december so it can't be that. who are you conspiring against!!!

Yoongi looks up from his phone and around his bedroom, considers for a minute, and then looks back down.

[12:34] you: jin
[12:34] : what why
[12:35] you: jungkooks been skipping their sessions so i let him hide here
[12:35] : ajsfkdfs he could have come here wtf
[12:35] you: no that'd be like the first place where jin would look for him come on
[12:35] you: nobody would suspect him here its the perfect crime

[12:35] : that is true
[12:36] : clearly kookie is a criminal mastermind
[12:36] : hey so thanks
[12:36] you: for
[12:36] : letting him stay!! and showing him your stuff and everything :D hes head over heels for your uhhh midi thing
[12:37] you: controller
[12:37] : yeah!! lmao
[12:37] : that was really sweet of you because i know you guys didn't hit it off that great at first because well, you're both dumb, essentially?? :x :D but i love that you're getting along!!!! don't tell him i said that but he thinks you're really cool, like super cool, like batman-level cool and that's just cute

(Yoongi, at this point, is lying on his bed in boxers and a tattered old shirt he’s pretty sure belonged to Namjoon once, feels less like Batman than ever before in his life, and wishes they could just stop talking about Jungkook.)

[12:37] : so thank you for that
He does. And he tells Taehyung as much, and gets briefly confused when Taehyung’s only answer to that is an okay and nothing else, no plan to meet up another time instead. But he’s too exhausted to care, and then work distracts him. It’s been good at doing that lately, and Yoongi appreciates it a whole lot. Even on his worst personal days it’s still fun, and it makes him forget everything else for a while, which is always appreciated lately.

So Yoongi goes to work and doesn’t think about their conversation that much anymore. Taehyung texts him a little more during the evening and stops at some point, so Yoongi assumes he went to sleep and goes on with his shift, and it’s not until he gets home that he understands why Taehyung asked.

Yoongi closes the apartment door behind himself and realizes multiple things at once. One, Taehyung’s shoes are in his hallway. Two, his key code hasn’t changed ever since he last sent it to Taehyung. Three, the unmistakable sound of the Friends opening is coming from his living room. And four, the entire place smells like paint.

(Five, Taehyung is here Taehyung is here and he will once more have to look at his face knowing that he doesn’t love him back.)

Taehyung presumably presses pause before whoever sings that damn song can hit Yoongi with Your love life’s DOA, having heard the door fall shut and Yoongi take off his jacket.

“Hi!” he calls over cheerily. “Don’t worry, I’m not a burglar!”

“You’d be a weird as fuck burglar taking your shoes off and watching shows in my living room,” Yoongi mutters. He kicks his shoes off next to Taehyung’s and walks over to where his voice came from, finding Taehyung stretched out on his couch with a giant laptop perched on his stomach, his head dangling over the armrest so he can look at Yoongi.

“Not everyone can be a criminal mastermind,” Taehyung says. “How was work?”

Yoongi feels his stomach flip at the sudden feeling of domesticity and shrugs as an answer, still looking around. His living room always looks a little weird because he still doesn’t have a TV, so there’s an empty spot in one of the corners, usually. But there isn’t, right now. Someone crammed a bunch of cupboards into that corner, and a cardboard box, and Yoongi only realizes after switching on the light that those are his cupboards. From the bedroom.

“What did…” he starts, throwing Taehyung a starkly confused look and then interrupting himself to scrunch his nose. “Why does it smell like paint in here?”

“Because!” Taehyung says like he was just waiting for Yoongi to ask, shoving his laptop off his stomach and onto the couch so he can scramble to his feet. “Because I painted!”

Again, Yoongi looks around. He’s tired and his living room still looks pretty much the same, except for that weird ass corner now. He is so fucking lost. “Painted what?”

And then Taehyung is right in front of him and Yoongi sees a dark smudge of paint on his cheek, and even more on his fingers, fiddling with each other now, his smile almost bashful. “When you moved,” he says carefully, “you said you’d always wanted dark blue bedroom walls, remember? You just didn’t have the energy for it, which I totally get! But I had time tonight and, you know, I usually have enough energy for five people, and I thought… Well, I figured I might just as well do
If it was any quieter, Yoongi thinks, they could hear the gears turning in his head. “You painted my bedroom?” he says dumbly. Taehyung nods so quickly it makes his hair fly around his head.

“I got your cupboards off the wall and put the more fragile stuff in that box first, and I tried to keep it all in the same order as it was on the shelves because I’m not sure if you have any system behind it, so I hope I didn’t ruin anything there! You have a lot of CDs, Yoongi.”

“Yeah, they’re better for your hearing,” Yoongi mutters automatically, staring at his bedroom door now.

“Really? CDs?” Taehyung says, immediately forgetting his explanation of tonight in favor of this new topic.

“Than MP3s,” Yoongi adds distractedly. He’s padding through his own apartment like he’s waiting for the place to fall apart, because this can’t be real. As he nears his bedroom door, he waves one hand around towards his ear vaguely. “When you convert analog music to digital media, it gets chopped up. The sound waves, I mean. Always happens, has to, so you can digitalize it, but MP3s chop it up way worse and your brain then has to fill the gaps while you’re listening to it. You can’t tell, normally, but if you listen to music for, like, a living, you’re better off with CDs, or just WAV files, ’cause they don’t tire out your hearing as quickly.” His hand is on the door handle now, and he turns back towards Taehyung with a frown. Why is he talking about CDs again? “You didn’t have to do this.”

“I wanted to, though!” Taehyung grins, still hopping after him. “And don’t worry, I put this huge protective plastic plane over your bed, so it’s completely unscathed! I felt a little like Dexter in there.”

Yoongi doesn’t know what to say to that, so he looks away again and opens the door. The smell of paint is worse in here, but it’s also louder and cooler because Taehyung has already opened his bedroom window. Carefully, Yoongi switches the light on, and there it is, his bed in the middle of the room covered completely in plastic, and the plastic itself sprinkled with blue paint. The walls and ceiling are a beautiful dark blue, not exactly but pretty close to how Yoongi imagined it, and before he even knows, he’s smiling at it.

“Thank you,” he says quietly.

“No problem!” Taehyung chirps, right over his shoulder. “I hope it turned out okay, we’ll have to see tomorrow in more natural light. Also, you might wanna sleep on the couch tonight, I don’t know how quick it’ll dry, and it is pretty smelly. Sorry about that.”

He grins apologetically, and Yoongi shakes his head at him. “Don’t be, I sleep on the couch all the time anyway. This… Tae, thank you. You sacrificed your whole night for this?”

Taehyung shrugs. “My parents have their super loud business friends over, so I didn’t want to be there anyway. And I wanted to do this! It’s fine.” And he smiles, and raises one hand to ruffle Yoongi’s hair, and Yoongi doesn’t even do anything against it. “You’re welcome.”

Yoongi almost says thank you again, but he’s standing in the doorway to his bedroom with the sting of paint smell in his nose and his mouth works on its own for now, because he opens it and says, “Do you wanna stay here? Couch’s convertible.”

“I know,” Taehyung says and winks at him. “I helped assemble it. I’d love to stay here. We can watch stuff together!”
“I wanna sleep,” Yoongi says flatly, because even if he just sentenced himself to at least a few hours of Taehyung’s body warmth right where it fucking hurts, he’s still beat, so maybe he’ll be lucky and spend most of those hours asleep.

“Oh, right. Well, we can do that, too.”

In the end, Yoongi finds himself curled up on his side next to Taehyung, who’s on his back on the stretched out couch with his laptop back on his stomach. Taehyung offered to use his headphones but Yoongi doesn’t mind, so he keeps watching that stupid show with the volume turned down a little while Yoongi pretends like he’s falling asleep.

Taehyung’s face looks soft in the sparse light from the living room window and his laptop screen. He laughs sometimes, making his mouth do The Thing and his eyes crinkle, and sometimes he just has a quiet smile on his lips. He seems tired, too, but not quite tired enough to sleep just yet, just spent and content with himself and the world. Yoongi stares at the mole on his lower lip and tries to feel as little as he can. *He came here in the middle of the night and painted your bedroom walls for you,* he thinks, *Doesn’t that mean something? Can’t this fucking mean something?*

But maybe it doesn’t. The longer Yoongi thinks about it, the surer he is that Taehyung would literally do this for anyone. Of course, this was an act of friendship, but Yoongi is actually convinced that if Hoseok said that he wanted a green kitchen and just never got around to painting it, Taehyung would love to show up there in the middle of the night and paint Hoseok’s kitchen green. It’s just who he is. It’s just what he does. He sees the simplest ways to make people happy, to make *anyone* happy, and then he does, and that’s all.

And it’s the worst thing for Yoongi to understand while lying next to him and staring at his face, because it’s equal parts heartbreaking and heartwarming, and he feels like his chest is getting ripped apart. Knowing that Taehyung is a person who likes to spontaneously put all his effort into making other people smile makes Yoongi feel warm and nice and happy because that’s *exactly* what got him so goddamn smitten in the first place, that’s exactly what’s so endearing about this boy that’s so different from Yoongi himself. But knowing that Taehyung might see Yoongi as a friend, a good friend even, but just not in the special kind of light which Yoongi sees *him* in, makes him feel like all his insides were turned to stone, and now he just has to see how the hell he’s going to survive like this.

After two more episodes, Taehyung powers down his laptop and carefully pushes it to the ground. Yoongi only falls asleep once Taehyung’s own breathing slows down to a very soft, steady snore, and he turns away from him.

Chapter End Notes

back once more! i took a little break on this to finish *if it bleeds* and, of course, *taegi bingo*, which you should absolutely check out if you haven’t yet!!

meanwhile, wthi’s birthday is on june 3rd, we’re at 750 subscriptions and 500 bookmarks, and, as always, i love you guys so much. ♥
Yoongi spends almost the entire chapter lying on his back. Taehyung gets good news, and then bad news.

party!! wthi turned one last week!! i can't believe this!!!
big thank you to everyone who's still here, and also check out this super cool thing my friend made for my baby's birthday. ♥♥♥ thank u, eli
heads up: in this chapter, a dick gets sucked, and one entire weed is smoked.

The smell of paint is the first thing Taehyung notices when he wakes up. He feels like he can actually taste it on his tongue, but that might just be because he got some of it on his lips last night. Taehyung has found out that he is kind of a messy painter, but luckily, most of it got on him and on his hair and his glasses and clothes, not on Yoongi’s furniture, so that’s all that matters.

He opens his eyes with a smile, remembering how baffled Yoongi was when he found out. That was good. Taehyung needed the reassurance.

Next to him, Yoongi breathes quietly against his pillow. He’s lying on his back, with his head turned to the side firmly, one hand resting right next to his face. Light is seeping in through the living room windows, making dust particles dance in the air and shadows dance over Yoongi’s face. He looks soft, and even younger than he is, all relaxed like this. Taehyung still feels like he didn’t get to see him asleep that often, like he spotted a cryptid just now, like he should take a quick, blurry picture and send it to news sites. But, no. No more creepy pictures of Yoongi sleeping; he’ll keep this one to himself. Like a good morning reminder from the world that things are still going to be okay, that not everything is going wrong right now. Taehyung can still make people happy if he tries, and the world can still be slow and peaceful if he just wakes up early enough.

Boy, he is glad he didn’t fall in love with Yoongi.

It’s the one uncomplicated thing he has in his life right now. Things with Jimin might be starting to look better, but that still leaves them with a weird situation where they’ll have to find back to each other, all with Jimin knowing about their families. And it’s their families, Taehyung’s and Jungkook’s stupid convoluted families, that are making things even harder right now.

Back when they told Jimin about everything, Taehyung kept wondering if he’s going to tell Yoongi at some point, too. And he still might. With the way things are going, he really still might, because it’s not fair to leave Yoongi in the dark about this and Taehyung hates keeping secrets. But right now, Yoongi doesn’t know anything at all, Yoongi has no idea who the loud business friends of his parents are that Taehyung has been avoiding, no idea why he’s been spending even more time with his family than normally. Yoongi doesn’t know anything about turf wars and enemy gangs. And
that’s nice and uncomplicated right now, so Taehyung is glad they’re still doing this.

He’s glad to still have one friend who lives a life outside of all this, and he’s glad that they’re still doing this relaxed friends with benefits thing because Taehyung really needs the no-strings-attached sex right now, he really needs the knowledge that for once, he didn’t ruin something good by stupidly falling in love, and for once, things are easy and simple with someone and he can lie next to Yoongi in the morning and feel good and light and like his sorrows are nothing but dust hovering in front of the window.

Yoongi sighs in his sleep and Taehyung smiles at him, then he shimmies off the couch as quietly as he can. He’s going to shower the paint out of his hair, and then he’ll do something to spoil Yoongi on this fine morning. He’s thinking either breakfast or surprise blowjob.

Thirty minutes later, when he’s back in his boxers and his hair is still dripping wet on his shoulders, Taehyung is leaning towards the latter. He doesn’t want to rummage through Yoongi’s kitchen and possibly set it on fire, plus he’s standing in the doorway to the living room now and Yoongi has pushed his blanket off and lies sprawled over the couch in a thin shirt and a pair of shorts, and Taehyung thinks he might be starting to understand Yoongi’s fascination with thighs. Also, he’s pretty sure he just saw him blink at the window and then close his eyes again, so he might at least be half awake.

“Yoongi,” he sing-songs softly, padding through the room until he can crawl back on the couch next to him. “Are you waking up? Do you want a blowjob?”

Yoongi groans, frowning and turning his head in Taehyung’s direction, but not opening his eyes. “From who?” he says.

Taehyung snorts. “From me. Duh. Who d’you think?”

This time, Yoongi squints his eyes open for only a few seconds, looking up at Taehyung’s face like he needs to check who he’s talking to, make sure this is the right person. Then he nods to himself and closes his eyes again. “Okay.”

“Wow, you are so excited,” Taehyung giggles. “I’ll get you to wake up.”

“Yeah, this better be good,” Yoongi mumbles, but he’s starting to sound clearer already. “Or I’m falling back asleep with my dick still down your throat.”

Yeah, he’s awake enough to talk like this at least. “Don’t worry, I’ll do my best,” Taehyung hums happily, right before he settles on his knees between Yoongi’s spread, heavy legs, and grabs the waistband of his boxers to pull them off. Yoongi makes no effort at all to help him, his feet plopping back on the mattress right afterwards, but Taehyung can tell from his breathing alone that he’s waking up, and when he looks up briefly there’s already the hint of a very content expression sinking into his features, so that’s all he needs.

A very tangible shiver runs through Yoongi when Taehyung runs his hands up his legs, all the way from his ankles up to his hips, and he groans very quietly when Taehyung takes him in his mouth, even if he’s still completely soft. Taehyung has all the time in the world. He sucks at him gently before pulling off again, tilting his head so he can kiss down the side of his shaft, then drag his tongue up again in a thick, wet stripe. Somewhere above him, Yoongi swallows audibly, fingers twitching against his stomach while Taehyung’s own hands are roaming his sensitive thighs, fingernails digging into the inner side of them only occasionally.

“So when are you gonna be awake enough to grab my hair?” Taehyung hums teasingly, his lips not
completely leaving the hot skin of Yoongi’s cock, and Yoongi hisses something that sounds a lot like 

*Little shit.*

“Don’t make me push you down,” Yoongi says, his voice raspy both from arousal and sleepiness, and the combination makes it so deep and gravelly that it goes straight to Taehyung’s dick. One of Yoongi’s hands already travelling down and tangling his fingers in Taehyung’s hair really doesn’t help, either.

“What if I want you to?” Taehyung says, pressing an unfittingly sweet kiss to the very tip. Yoongi groans, louder this time.

“I forgot you actually like getting your throat fucked,” he mutters, and Taehyung laughs against him, recalling Yoongi’s hesitant face and thrusts when Taehyung first let him know, with only a movement of his hands, in the restroom of a cinema, that he doesn’t have to hold back.

And Yoongi seems to consider it, fingers clenching and unclenching around strands of Taehyung’s hair like he’s testing his grip, but then he resorts to gently carding them through it again, which feels just fine on its own. “Where’s the point in morning blowjobs,” Yoongi drawls lazily, “if I have to do all the work myself?”

“Yeah, that’s fair,” Taehyung says airily, and that’s the last thing that comes out of his mouth before he wraps his lips around Yoongi’s cock again and swallows.

If he wasn’t at least half hard before, he is now. Taehyung can feel him harden under his fingers, one hand wrapped around his base to take care of what his mouth doesn’t reach yet, and it’s almost as satisfying as seeing Yoongi’s happy face over blue bedroom walls last night. He remembers to move his free hand, going up almost all the way to Yoongi’s ass and then firmly dragging his fingers back down, and Yoongi is already starting to dissolve into a mess of moans and shaky breaths above him when Taehyung bobs his head, too. He swears, and Taehyung hums in agreement around him, the vibration making Yoongi swear again, louder this time, and leaving Taehyung to feel his dick growing harder right there on his tongue.

He builds up a rhythm now, going deeper and deeper with his mouth until he doesn’t need the hand around Yoongi’s shaft anymore. It trails downwards instead, finding Yoongi’s balls which makes Yoongi’s thighs twitch and quiver right next to his head, so Taehyung grabs them harder with his other hand. He knows, he’s perfectly aware, that it’s this exact combination that makes Yoongi writhe against the mattress, makes him fist both hands in Taehyung’s hair now, which just helps to pull another groan from him that resonates against the dick in his mouth.

“Fuck,” Yoongi says again, and Taehyung can feel his hips twitch, almost like he’s trying to pull back from him, but Taehyung knows him well enough to know that he’s trying not to thrust upwards. He guesses someone is finally awake now. “Fuck, Tae, I think-- Can I--”

Easily, Taehyung hums his yes against Yoongi’s cock, and Yoongi groans so low in his throat it’s making Taehyung’s own dick twitch in his pants. “That’s so fucking hot,” Yoongi gets out in a rough whisper. “Ihatewhenyoudothat,” he adds, words jumbling together, and right after that, he jerks his hips upwards and slides his cock all the way up to the back of Taehyung’s throat, and moans in bliss.

Taehyung keeps still now, carefully relaxing his throat as his head stays where it is, between the iron grip of Yoongi’s hands and the pelvis coming up against him in quick, sloppy thrusts. Yoongi is getting close already, he can tell by the way he tenses, by the way his breath hitchès in his chest, and it’s not a surprise, this early in the morning, so Taehyung tries to prepare himself. “Just, like,” Yoongi says breathlessly, punctuating both words with a thrust, “slap me if, *hah,* you need me to
pull-- pull out, yeah?”

Taehyung actually rolls his eyes at that -- like he has ever asked Yoongi to pull out before. He’s had Yoongi’s cum down his throat more times than he cares to count, but he still nods, because he guesses sometimes Yoongi needs the reassurance. That’s fine. Maybe it’s just a side effect of him being sleepy, and Taehyung doesn’t mind as long as he keeps holding on to his hair like his life depends on it as his thrusts start getting erratic.

Yoongi shoves himself all the way in one last time, groaning loudly, his voice almost breaking on its own raspiness, then he pulls back with his hips quivering helplessly, leaving Taehyung to swallow as quick as he can.

Slowly, Yoongi relaxes his fingers, pulling them out of Taehyung’s hair carefully. Taehyung still licks his lips when Yoongi runs them through it once, twice, almost as if he’s trying to fix the mess on his head that is now a mixture of shower and sex hair, then his arms drop limply to the couch. “God,” he says quietly. Taehyung can hear the breath shaking in his windpipe. “People should not be able to do that.”

“Do what?” Taehyung says with a laugh that comes out very hoarse. Yeah, tickling his throat with a dick early in the morning was a great idea.

“Whatever the fuck you just did.” Yoongi pushes himself up on his elbows, squinting as Taehyung starts clambering off the couch. “Where you going? At least let me return the favor, I’m very much awake now.”

“Yeah, about that,” Taehyung says, grinning before he runs his tongue over his teeth, “do you have a spare toothbrush here? I really wanna brush my teeth first. You should eat more fruit.”

“Buy me fruit, then,” Yoongi says with a roll of his eyes and drops on his back. “There should be one or two in the drawer next to the sink.”

“Thanks,” Taehyung says, and disappears into the bathroom. He thinks about getting Yoongi an entire gift basket, since he really asked for it, just to rub it in, while he finds a fresh toothbrush and brushes his teeth, watching himself in the mirror. His hair really does look horrible now. Maybe he should wet it again to get it to calm down. Or maybe he doesn’t really care how it looks when he goes outside. That probably depends on whether his parents are home to see him or not, but he thinks they should probably be at work, so he doesn’t have to look acceptable.

Once he’s done, Taehyung stands around with the toothbrush in his hand for a second, unsure where to put it. “What are you doing in there?” Yoongi calls over, and he flinches and just kind of blindly puts it right next to Yoongi’s. “I need to pee. Also, your phone keeps buzzing and I don’t know where your pants are.”

“I’m coming,” Taehyung replies, shaking off the thought of how it almost felt like they’re sharing this place. It’s Yoongi’s apartment and he’s not going to hog the bathroom.

When he comes back into the living room, Yoongi has pulled his boxers back up and is sitting on the edge of his couch, running a hand through his hair and blinking around blearily. “It’s here somewhere,” he says. “Someone keeps messaging you; I bet it’s Jungkook. You guys are insane. If someone sent me fifty texts this early in the morning I’d fucking deck them.”

“Good luck decking Jungkook,” Taehyung just says, pulling his pants out from under the couch and digging through the pockets for his phone. He unlocks it, and then he almost drops it to the floor.
“Shit,” Taehyung says, out loud, staring at his phone screen. “Yoongi, I think we need to postpone the thing about returning the favor.”

Yoongi, who’s still sitting on the edge of the couch trying to motivate himself to go to the bathroom, blinks up at him as Taehyung looks back down. Taehyung is grinning widely by now, but Yoongi still frowns, like he’s not completely trusting this deal. “Why, what happened?”

“Jimin’s back,” Taehyung announces and starts wrestling his pants back on, watching with a warm rush of affection in his stomach how Yoongi’s face lights up too, now. “Jungkook says he’s moving back in, and I wanna come over to their place and, I don’t know, smother them all in hugs and stuff like that.”

“Dude, yeah,” Yoongi says, smiling at him while Taehyung scampers through the room picking up his clothes. “Sure, go for it. I’ll just blow you another time, it’s not like we don’t have enough opportunities.”

Taehyung laughs and nods, then he stops in the middle of the room and stares into the corner where he put all of Yoongi’s bedroom shelves. “Man,” he says slowly. “I was gonna stay and help you get these back into your bedroom. I’m sorry -- I can come back later and still help, if you want?”

“It’s fine, Tae,” Yoongi says calmly, finally pushing himself up from the couch now. He scratches his ass, watching Taehyung and jerking his head towards the door. “Go, celebrate. I’ll deal with the shelves, don’t worry.”

“You’re the best,” Taehyung says. Yoongi smiles and he giggles, blowing him a kiss across the room and then hopping over the couch table to grab his laptop and slip into his shoes while he can hear Yoongi shuffle into the bathroom. “See you, Yoongi!”

“Bye,” Yoongi calls, presumably from the toilet. “Text me how it went or something.”

“Okay!” Taehyung trills back, then he pulls the door shut. He hurries down the hallway with his phone in his hand, fingers flying over his screen trying to text back Jungkook and find the quickest subway route to their place all at the same time, making him almost tumble down the stairs, but he’s fine. God, he’s great. Jimin is coming back.

On his way, Jungkook texts him if he thinks they should tell Jimin about the turf war. Taehyung’s stomach flips but he replies anyway, because they decided to fill him in and they’re going to have to
go through with it now, so he says that they should leave it up to Jimin how many details he really wants about the thing. Taehyung doesn’t really enjoy thinking about it a whole lot, but he knows Jimin would probably want to know what’s going on with them. He takes solace in the fact that Jungkook usually does the talking when it’s about these things, so at least Taehyung won’t have to open his mouth, hopefully.

He rings the doorbell, gets buzzed in, and then all his worries disappear for a bit anyway because he barely makes it through half of the hallway when Jimin darts out of the apartment, nothing but a blur of dark hair and clothes, and throws himself at Taehyung with a kind of velocity that almost makes him fall over again.

“Hi, Tae,” Jimin says, somewhere very close to Taehyung’s neck, arms wrapped around him tightly, and Taehyung is vaguely surprised that Jimin didn’t also wrap his legs around him and go full koala, but he guesses they have both learned that he can’t pull this off with him. That only works on Jungkook and maybe Hoseok, Taehyung would just go down and kill them both.

“Hi,” Taehyung says back, watching Jungkook lean in the doorway with an almost dopey smile to watch them, swaying from side to side in the hallway. “Hi, Jiminnie.”

“I missed you so much,” Jimin mumbles. His hands are patting down Taehyung’s back and Taehyung knows it’s because he’s trying to make sure that Taehyung has been eating well even without his surveillance. “I’m sorry I took so long. God, I missed you.”

“Hey, don’t apologize,” Taehyung says. Something is burning in his throat, but burning happily, and he smiles as he carefully starts walking them both towards the apartment door. “I missed you too. I’m so happy you’re back.”

“Me too. And I’m staying, I promise. Kookie already brought me the cactus.”

“Good,” Taehyung says heartily, winking at Jungkook as they shuffle past him into the apartment, still clinging to each other. “I’m not sure how much longer she could have survived in his hands.”

“She’s a cactus, Tae,” Jungkook says and rolls his eyes, but he’s still grinning, too. “I can’t kill her that quickly.”

“Well, you’re a mafioso, so I don’t know about that,” Jimin says into Taehyung’s shoulder. Taehyung blinks, stares at him, opens his mouth, stares at Jungkook, and closes it again. Jungkook is grinning even wider now, and shrugs at Taehyung.

“He makes mafia jokes now,” Jungkook says simply.

“Okay,” says Taehyung.

“Kook got super flustered at first,” Jimin clears up, making Jungkook’s ears flush dark red when all three of them finally drop on the sofa, Jimin smugly in the middle. “Told me he doesn’t kill people and that’s not what it's about, you know.” He throws Taehyung a conspiratorial grin. “Like I don’t know that. As if he could kill anyone, especially with you around. Remember how mad you got when he almost vacuumed up a spider?”

“I was trying to vacuum it up because I couldn’t just smash it!” Jungkook defends himself, but Taehyung is already glaring at the memory.

“You shouldn’t vacuum them either! She had so much to live for!”

“Well, I didn’t vacuum her, because you just pulled the plug on me, remember?”
“Yeah, thank god!”

Between them, Jimin sighs happily and pats both of their thighs. “Man,” he says, “it’s good to be back home.”

They all giggle at that, and maybe that helps a little for when Jungkook clears his throat and tries to look serious again, because he doesn’t fully manage. “Hey, while we’re still on the topic, though,” he says and tries to catch Jimin’s gaze. “Tae and I were wondering, for, uh… Just for the future -- how much do you wanna know? Like when something happens with the clan, do you want us to tell you, or do you wanna stay out of it?”

Yeah, Taehyung is almost momentarily overwhelmed with how thankful he is that Jungkook can talk about this. And with how Jimin just makes a pensive noise and seems to consider the question very carefully, instead of flipping out.

“Well,” he says, “you said you’re not always very involved, right? So if it’s something that’s just business and doesn’t have much to do with you or Tae, I don’t really care about it, I guess. But if it’s going to affect one of you, whatever it is, then I wanna know, yeah.”

“Okay, that sounds reasonable,” Jungkook says slowly, throwing Taehyung a glance over Jimin’s head, so Taehyung nods. “Then, uh… Well, there’s something that might affect us. We’re not so sure yet.”

And there it is, the anxious pull of Jimin’s eyebrows, the way he presses his lips together and throws Taehyung a glance, too, now. “There is? You guys said you’re not in danger.”

“We usually aren’t,” Taehyung says quietly. Jungkook is watching him nervously and part of Taehyung still wants him to tell the whole story, but he feels like that wouldn’t be fair. The most important part of it was before they even knew each other. Jungkook wasn’t there when it first happened. “You remember how Kookie said that mostly it’s between the older generation, and they keep kids out of it, especially kids like me who aren’t part of the business?” Jimin nods, frowning, and Taehyung bites his lip because he doesn’t want the bitter smile to reach his face. “Well, there’s one clan… one single clan who didn’t care about that. They and dad’s clan had a turf war back in Daegu, and it got very ugly. Ugly enough for us to move to Seoul, even though we technically won.”

“But you moved to Seoul when you were eight,” Jimin says, very carefully, while Taehyung takes a break because there’s an uncomfortable pull in his side, right where the scar is. “And if you won, why is that important now?”

“Our spies think,” Jungkook says, “that they have a new generation of leaders and they might try to pull something. I’m just gonna say it, Jiminnie: I’m not extremely worried. On their best days, they’re maybe half as big as they used to be, and if they’re really stupid enough to come here, we can absolutely take them. Nobody’s doubting that. The only thing I’m honestly still doubting is that they haven’t learned from their last defeat and would still make any sort of attempt.”

“Basically, we’re only telling you because they’re the only clan that might care to come for me,” Taehyung says, watching the expression on Jimin’s face fluctuate between very open worry and a brave attempt to keep it together. “But even I’m not super worried. My parents’ mood is abysmal these days, but that’s mostly because the, uh, the memory of that last attack, in Daegu, is pretty shitty. We learned from it, though. I’m safe.”

“Yeah, Tae’s literally the boss’s kid, don’t forget that,” Jungkook says. Jimin keeps having to turn his head to look at them when they speak, but he seems to be trusting their words at least. “He’s
basically *covered* in safety precautions. If someone is safe, it’s him.”

Jimin keeps looking at Jungkook, silent for a few seconds, then he tilts his head and says, quietly, “Are you?”

Jungkook smiles. “Yeah, I’m fine. My dad always talks big about how far I’m supposed to make it in the business, but now that shit might actually hit the fan, he and mom don’t want me out on the field. Nothing’s gonna happen to me.”


“I’m glad some things stay the same,” Jimin says dryly. Then he leans back against the sofa, exhaling carefully while he does. He has one hand on Jungkook’s thigh and one on Taehyung’s, both of his thumbs running over the fabric of their pants. After a second or two, he nods to himself. “Man, you two are a trip.”

“Yeah,” Jungkook says quietly.

“Are you okay?” Taehyung says.

“I think so,” Jimin says slowly. “If you two swear that you’re not worried, then I’m not worried.”

They swear. Taehyung is a little worried for his parents’ sanity, but not for his own life. He tells Jimin that a bunch of frustrated criminals can’t be more dangerous than some of the stuff he did in Australia, and they all agree on that, and laugh it off. It feels sincere, as sincere as Yoongi’s astonishment about his bedroom walls last night, and when Jimin treats them all to huge ice cream cones, the whole world seems to get brighter once more.

Yoongi’s bedroom furniture is back where it belongs. Namjoon came over to help him, and to re-bleach their roots, and to admire his new bedroom color.

How it went from that to getting high on his bed, Yoongi isn’t completely sure.

Namjoon brought the weed. He knows that much. Because Yoongi doesn’t own any, but he remembers agreeing when Namjoon asked if he should bring some, even if he knows it makes him want to pick up smoking again. That’s only one of the three most prominent things weed does to him, though, and right now, he’s more worried about the other two.

“You know I’m gonna get horny sooner or later, right?” Yoongi says to the ceiling. He and Namjoon are on their backs next to each other, shoes and pants off, feeling it kick in. Namjoon has his hands crossed behind his head, Yoongi has his crossed on his stomach.

“I know,” Namjoon says and laughs, already slowed down a little. “It’s fine. I’m sure Jin and Tae’ll understand.”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says, trying not to think about how Namjoon doesn’t know that Taehyung isn’t his boyfriend and theoretically, they never said that they were exclusive. “Tae sucked me off this morning. You’d think I’d be good.”
“Congrats,” Namjoon says, sounding sincere. “Well, hey, knowing me if I get high enough I’ll suck you off again. You know, compared to Jin I probably wouldn’t even feel you in my throat.”

Yoongi’s laugh hits him so unexpectedly, it comes out as a loud, ugly snort. “I don’t know if I wanna pity you or tell you to fuck off.”

“I’m not calling your dick small. I’m just calling Jin’s what we all know it is.”

“Yeah. He could bludgeon people with that.”

“I hope he bludgeons me with it.”

Yoongi laughs again, and reaches over with one hand to shove Namjoon’s shoulder, making him laugh, too. “You’re gross.”

“What?” Namjoon giggles now. “I gotta make up for you, you know, you never tell me anything about Tae’s dick.”

“Oh, it’s big,” Yoongi says immediately, and they both dive into the next wave of slow, low-pitched giggles. “I mean, maybe he’s not Kim King Size Seokjin, but possibly, let’s say, Kim Crown Prince Taehyung.”

Namjoon snorts so violently he has to clap a hand in front of his face. “Fuck,” he mutters against it, still quaking with laughter. “We’re not really helping with the whole you getting horny thing, huh?”

“I think actually giggling about penises is making me less horny,” Yoongi says, his head turned to the side so he can watch Namjoon. For a second, he’s hit with a wild rush of affection towards all of his friends but especially him right now, then Namjoon nods solemnly.

“That’s very grownup of you, Yoongi.”

“Thanks,” Yoongi says, and they giggle some more.

So that’s one of his weed problems taken care of, he guesses. If he’s not getting horny he’ll probably start to get very cuddly very soon, but that’s fine, he knows that Namjoon will gladly put up with that. No, what he’s more worried about is that it usually makes him talkative, a lot more talkative than normal, and there are a whole bunch of things he’s really not ready to tell Namjoon, or anyone but Hoseok or a sleep-talking Taehyung. It’s too late to turn back already, of course, so Yoongi has left himself to just hope he won’t slip up about either his father or the fact that he’s been lying about his relationship. If he thinks about it like that, Yoongi isn’t even sure what he’d find worse right now, which is a complicated and unsettling thought he decides to shove away as quickly as possible.

Namjoon sitting up to light up another joint helps with that. He takes a drag, then drops back on Yoongi’s mattress, blindly holding it out towards Yoongi while staring at his ceiling again.

“That is a nice ass ceiling,” he says. “You should put some of these glow in the dark star stickers up there, they’d go nice with the blue.”

“I don’t want glow in the dark star stickers,” Yoongi mutters around the joint between his teeth.

“Yeah, maybe they’d look weird,” Namjoon admits, “you know, I guess, weirder than that fucking squid in a jar you sleep next to.”

“It’s an octopus.” Yoongi turns his head to blow smoke in Namjoon’s face, which leaves Namjoon unfazed. “His name is Shinichi and he’s Tae’s. Don’t disrespect him.”
“Aw,” Namjoon says. Clumsily, he shifts around on his mattress until he’s on his side, facing Yoongi but looking past him to inspect the shelf next to him. “‘Kay, I guess that’s kinda cute. Is that one of Seok’s breakup ducks next to him?”

“Yeah, they’re friends.”

Namjoon smiles. “Sure. And Kumamon to his other side. God, you are cute, Min Yoongi.”

“I know,” Yoongi says, and lazily takes another drag. “Don’t tell anyone, though, it’s classified government information.”

“Alright,” Namjoon laughs, then he finally lowers his gaze again to give Yoongi a smile, all happy and dimply. “It just looks like you really made yourself at home in here, and I love it.”

Yoongi feels himself grimace. Here’s a train of thought he’s been trying really hard to ignore. He quietly stares at the joint between his fingers, then holds it back out towards Namjoon so he can look at the ceiling again. “I don’t feel home,” he says.

From the corner of his eye, he can see Namjoon frown. “You don’t?”

“I don’t think I do,” Yoongi says, his voice suddenly so quiet he’s not sure Namjoon can even hear it with the busses rattling past his open window. “And I don’t remember the last time I did.” He pauses, face blank for a second, then it breaks into a smile so bitter it seems to hurt his mouth a little. “No, I do remember. I felt home when Seok and I were still together.”

Namjoon is silent for a moment or two. When he speaks up, Yoongi hears that very special worry in his voice, the one he saves up for when he thinks people might have relationship troubles. “You don’t feel at home with Taehyung?”

Fuck. Yoongi should have seen that coming — and maybe he did, maybe part of him saw that question coming as soon as he brought up his last relationship like that, but he didn’t see the answer coming.

Because he does.

He does feel at home with Taehyung. This place just feels like a random apartment Yoongi spends time in, but it feels like a home when Taehyung is here, and Seoul just feels like a random city to him, but it feels like a home when he walks Taehyung’s dog with him, or when they make out in bathroom stalls behind cafés, or when he just texts him from class. Even a hotel room in New York felt a little bit like a home for a few days, because Taehyung made it warm and soft and welcoming, and wherever they go and whatever they do, Taehyung makes him feel a little bit less lost, and that’s not a realization he wanted to have.

“No, I do,” Yoongi answers, reluctantly, and closes his eyes. “I do feel at home with him, I just… I don’t want to.”

Namjoon shifts next to him. Yoongi thinks he’s rolling on his stomach and propping himself up on his elbows to watch him, but he still doesn’t want to open his eyes. He can smell the joint somewhere close to his face. “You don’t want to?” Namjoon echoes. “Why not? Are you guys okay?”

Because it’s fake, Yoongi wants to say. It’s fake and we’re not okay, I’m not, I’m in over my head and it’s too much, Namjoon, it’s too much, and it’s fake.

“Yeah, we’re okay,” Yoongi says, and screws his eyes shut, and then he opens them again so he can grab the joint from between Namjoon’s fingers. “It’s just, I don’t want home to be a person, you
know?” He takes a drag so deep he almost chokes on it, and he realizes that at least, that’s the truth too. A different truth, maybe, but truth nonetheless. “Hoseok was home and then we broke up and it just, it fucked me. It fucked me over so bad I ended up literally homeless, and I don’t want to go through that anymore. It’s… Tae and I are good, but maybe one day we won’t anymore, and then what? Where’s home then?”

Namjoon stills on his arms and looks at him in silence, frowns, and then he rolls on his side again. “I get it,” he says softly, scooting closer until he can put his head on Yoongi’s chest and Yoongi automatically wraps an arm around his shoulders. “Yeah, I get it, I know what you mean.”

“I mean,” Yoongi says, while Namjoon is still muttering affirmation into his shirt. “I want to feel home somewhere. I really do. I… When I came back here after my trip, that was all that I wanted. I just want to, you know?, I wanna belong somewhere. But I don’t wanna belong with someone. I want home to be a place. Just for once, I want it to be that simple.”

“It never is,” Namjoon murmurs, one arm now lying heavily across Yoongi’s stomach. “I’m sorry, bro.”

Yoongi grunts and starts playing with his hair distractedly. “D’you feel at home with Jin?” he asks.

“Yeah,” Namjoon says. No hesitation. “But I feel at home with you, too. I even still feel at home at my parents’ place, but only when my dog is there. And I feel at home in the campus sound studios, and on Hoseok’s living room floor.” He shifts a bit, getting comfortable now, and Yoongi appreciates the warmth and the weight on his body. “See, I think… I think maybe the concept of home isn’t as singular as we were led to believe.” (Yoongi laughs a bit, because that whole sentence was a very Namjoon thing to say and it sounded funny with his deep, slow weed voice, but Namjoon just continues.) “And I don’t think home is a place or a person at all. Home is just a feeling. And maybe you need to look out for whatever gives you that feeling, and make sure it’s more than just one person. And then maybe that makes it okay. Maybe it’s fine when Tae makes you feel at home, as long as you also feel at home somewhere else. Like maybe in that home studio you’re building, or your bathtub, or here with Kumamon and Sherlock the octopus and that duck.”

“Shinichi.”

“Shinichi. Sorry.” Namjoon shifts again, craning his neck so he can look at Yoongi, but Yoongi’s looking at the ceiling. “You haven’t been back in Seoul that long. And you barely just moved here. Just give yourself some time, yeah? Rome wasn’t built in… Uhh…” When Yoongi looks back down at him, Namjoon stares blankly at his face, thinking hard, then he snorts and shrugs his shoulders. “Well, you know what I mean.”

Yoongi laughs and pats his back. “Yeah, I know what you mean,” he says softly. “And I know you’re right, I know. It’s just something I’ve been struggling with for so long, it’s hard to give myself even more time. I never felt at home with my parents, not even as a kid, and then later there was just that short period with Hoseok and even that broke, so… I don’t know. I just wish I could figure that out right now, but I guess I can’t. Sucks.”

“Sucks,” Namjoon agrees. “But you’ll do it. If there’s anyone who can, it’s you.” With that, he pushes himself up on his elbows again, to lean over and press a kiss to Yoongi’s forehead.

Yoongi blinks at him, then he snorts and holds out the joint again so Namjoon can pick it from his fingers with his teeth. “Wow, I haven’t gotten one of those from you in a while,” he says dryly, still feeling like something’s tingling on his forehead. “How high are you?”

“Not that high,” Namjoon says around the joint. “Otherwise it would have landed on your mouth.”
“Fair enough.” Yoongi watches Namjoon roll on his back again, so this time Yoongi rolls on his side so he can rest the side of his face on his shoulder. His body feels heavy, but in a good way, like he’s still asleep somehow and everything is going to be fine. “Remember when I came out to my mom and she asked if it’s because of you and your drugs?”

Namjoon breaks into another giggle fit that smashes his shoulder against Yoongi’s cheek, but he doesn’t particularly care right now. “She thought that? Oh my god, is that why she hated me?”

“No, she just hated everyone, that was kind of her thing.”

“Oh, Well, did you ever tell her that the drugs weren’t my fault? Hoseok got you into weed, didn’t he?”

“Namjoon, I was already smoking everything I could get my hands on before I even came to Seoul. I got Hoseok into weed.”

Namjoon chuckles at that, and then he wedges one arm between Yoongi and the mattress until he can wrap both of them around him and hold him so close that normally, Yoongi would be kicking him in the shin, but right now it feels just fine. “We’re all really weird and messed up,” he concludes this conversation. “But you’re one of my homes, man, and maybe one day I’ll be one of yours too.”

Against the crook of Namjoon’s neck, Yoongi closes his eyes and smiles. “Thanks.”

So maybe it’ll be alright. Yoongi can’t really remember what he was so nervous about earlier, anyway. He feels okay, sleepy and soft and okay, and maybe this whole day hasn’t been that bad.

It’s quiet for a while, then Yoongi says, “After Tae blew me this morning, he said I should eat more fruit. Can you believe that? What a little shit.”

Namjoon’s laugh sounds like he was just dozing off, but also very amused. “Maybe he should buy you some fruit, then.”

“That’s what I said!” Yoongi says and fumbles around blindly with one hand until he can pat Namjoon’s chest. “Also, he chose to swallow, why does he complain afterwards.”

“Jin’s like that, too. Kims are divas.”

“Joon, you’re a Kim.”

“I am? Fuck, you’re right. Well, then you better not come in my mouth.”

In spite of several allusions to it, Yoongi and Namjoon do not end up making out that night. Yoongi falls asleep with his face buried in Namjoon’s hair somehow, wakes back up in the middle of the night to close the window, set his phone to silent and pull his blanket up over both of them, then he passes back out. Namjoon, fast asleep, still holds him close under the covers, and that seems to be all he needed for now.

Things stay the same for a while after that. The world feels slow and mostly soft and at least somewhat okay to both of them, for different reasons. Yoongi waits for his storm to pass, and
Taehyung does the same. Yoongi finds solace in work and his friends once more, and Taehyung rejoices every time he remembers that Jimin talks to them again and his bond to his best friend is as good as ever, if not stronger.

Time drags on until it’s almost June. Things feel alright until Taehyung’s parents call him into the kitchen one day and look at him with coffee mugs in their hands and shadows under their eyes and those looks on their faces that Taehyung knows can’t mean anything good.

“Taehyung,” his mother says, and Taehyung can tell that she’s trying to smile, but it doesn’t quite work out. “Your father and I think that you should visit your aunt for a little bit.”

Taehyung stays in the doorway, holding onto it with one hand, digging his fingernails into the wood carefully. “You want me to go to Daegu? Alone?”

“Actually,” his father clears his throat, “we were thinking maybe you should take Yoongi with you.”

Something in Taehyung’s chest seems to sink down deep, very deep, until it’s somewhere in his stomach, acidic and painful. If they want their son to leave town, it’s getting personal. If they want their son’s boyfriend to leave town, it’s getting really fucking ugly.

He swallows dryly. “Okay,” Taehyung says.

“You’ll be safe there,” his mother says gently, and now she does smile, but now it’s Taehyung who can’t return it. “And he will be, too. You don’t have to tell him anything. Just take him home.”
Fear

Chapter Summary

It's an eventful drive, all the way down to Daegu.

Chapter Notes

warning #1: there's another blowjob coming up, which is very unsafe driving behavior and i'm gonna need y'all to promise me that you won't Try This At Home

warning #2: this chapter also features the description of someone having a panic attack. for this, i'm breaking aesthetics and put marks in the text to let you know when the respective scene starts. both the beginning and the end of it are marked with three asterisks: ***. the second asterisks triplet, so the one at the end of the scene, also features a link to a page where i give you a very quick and non-graphic rundown of what you missed out on in case you skipped it. you don't have to read that if you don't want to. you won't miss any major plot. just make sure to proceed with caution and stay safe.

if there's anything else you need, don't hesitate to message me. i'm easy to reach on twitter and tumblr.

So maybe Taehyung is nervous now.

He wasn’t nervous before. When he told Jimin that he wasn’t worried, he really wasn’t.

But he is now.

It’s a kind of fear Taehyung has gotten used to over the years, in a way, in the tentative and incomplete way you can get used to fear. It doesn’t change how he feels it, not at all. It’s still an almost painful flutter in his chest, wavering in its intensity but never quite leaving, it’s still sweaty palms and a voice breaking around the edges, it’s a total of three fucking stress pimples on his chin because his skin always does that. It’s flinching at loud noises and letting Boop sleep in his bed, because it doesn’t make that big a difference if he’s ten years old or twenty. He is scared, alright.

But he knows how to deal with it, for the most part. Sleeping close to his dog is the first thing that helps, busying his hands and mind with biology is another. He goes on with his life, he meets up with his friends, he goes to class, he does his homework. It might not take the vague feeling of a threat out from between his shoulder blades, but at least eases it a little. His parents have gotten in a number of quarrels in the past two decades, Taehyung knows that -- they’re careful and diplomatic whenever they need be, but some things can’t be avoided, is what they say. And it always scares him, it does, it’s terrifying, but they have somehow made it through each and every one of them. So for the most part, he knows how to deal with it.

Still, this one is different.

Somewhere Taehyung always knew that he might still end up as collateral damage. Sure, most clans
and gangs will leave him alone and not directly attack him, but there’s always a slight possibility of him getting harmed in the crossfire, even when nobody planned for it.

But now people might have actually planned to harm him, and that’s new, and people might have planned to harm people close to him, and that’s newest, and it’s an abysmal sort of horror Taehyung has never felt before, and makes all of this so very different from what he’s used to.

The Jeons are keeping a close eye on Jimin. Taehyung trusts them, fully and with all his heart, but the thought that it’s even necessary all of a sudden is mildly breathtaking in a bad way.

And then, of course, there’s Yoongi.

Taehyung’s parents doubt that the enemy knows about him, they say. But they also say that they can’t be sure. They have to be prepared for everything and it’s better to get him and his boyfriend out of the way than risking anything at all. Taehyung understands that, he thinks it’s reasonable. They might not exactly find out about the whole dating thing, be it fake or not, but if they can figure out that he’s friends with Jimin and Jungkook, they can figure out that he’s friends with Yoongi, too. He’s on his parents’ side here, he wants Yoongi safe and he wants to get himself out of the line of fire, too. Taehyung was raised to stay out of these things and he’s damn glad about it. He might be loyal and supportive of his parents and the Jeons, but he’s sure as shit not about to fight anyone if he doesn’t absolutely have to.

So, he’s on board. He gets what’s happening and he thinks they’re making the best possible choices, it’s all well and reasonable. But he still doesn’t know how to break this all to Yoongi.

Well, not really all of it, anyway. He’s not going to tell Yoongi about the kkangpae thing, not now. He still might at some point, but Taehyung doesn’t want it to happen while they’re in crisis. This is kind of a state of emergency, after all, and Taehyung knows it’s going to be easy for Yoongi to think that it’s always going to be like this if he fills him in now. He wants to wait for this to blow over, hope for it to blow over quietly, and then maybe he can tell him what exactly his father’s company does. He’s going to take his time with that, so that’s not the issue, the issue is explaining to Yoongi that he’s going to high tail the fuck out of the city for a bit, and he wants him to come.

That’s going to sound weird. Honestly, Taehyung doesn’t even fear that it’s going to sound suspicious, because Yoongi knows him by now, Yoongi saw him spontaneously plan a whole trip to the States, so Taehyung doubts that he’s going to bat an eye at spontaneous trips to his hometown that’s only a few hours away. Taehyung going home won’t confuse Yoongi, no, but Taehyung has no idea how he’s supposed to make Yoongi come along with him. New York happened before Yoongi had his job, and because Yoongi wanted to get away, and even picked the city himself.

Daegu is, basically, the opposite of what Yoongi would pick, Taehyung’s pretty sure. He hasn’t forgotten the pictures Yoongi showed him from his trip around the country. He hasn’t forgotten the photos of every tiny corner of South Korea, of Yoongi going everywhere but Daegu. He doesn’t want to go there, he doesn’t want to be there, and Taehyung knows why, and he can’t exactly hold it against him.

And Yoongi knows that Taehyung knows, which means Taehyung can’t just play innocent and happily coerce Yoongi to come to their miraculously shared hometown with him because he thinks it’s going to be so much fun. Yoongi knows that Taehyung knows about his past and still Taehyung has to find some sort of excuse for thinking that Yoongi should go there with him, without outright telling him that a bunch of angry gangsters might track him down and kill him if he doesn’t.

Yoongi could stay here. Taehyung has talked about that with his parents, they think it’s feasible. He could get similar treatment as Jimin, have someone watch him,tail him and make sure his parents’
clan is the only one keeping watch on him. They could do that, but Taehyung doesn’t feel good about it. To Jimin, they could explain all this, they’ve introduced him to the people that are going to watch him so he recognizes them and doesn’t panic when he notices he’s being followed. They could send someone after Yoongi without telling him, of course, while Taehyung would be in Daegu by himself, but Taehyung has already imagined a thousand things that could go wrong with that, all while he’s not there to catch Yoongi and fill him in, and he doesn’t want that.

Daegu will be safe enough. That’s not the issue either. The only issue is, still, selling this trip to Yoongi without sounding like an asshole.

He’s going to ask him any second now. Taehyung is on his bed in boxers, Yoongi next to him in boxers and a shirt, both of them letting the aircon dry the sweat on their skin after going down on each other in Taehyung’s room. No, Taehyung didn’t exactly plan to get Yoongi all fucked out and satisfied before talking to him about this, but… Well, he can’t say he’s displeased about it. Maybe it’s a good start.

Just seconds ago, Taehyung dropped back on the mattress after opening the door to his room to let Boop in, who had been lounging around in the hallway waiting for them to finish, which Yoongi called a little fucking creepy, but she’s happily stretched out between them now and he’s not complaining. Actually, Taehyung can, from the corner of his eye, see Yoongi’s hand move to scratch Boop’s back.

“Hey Yoongi?” Taehyung says carefully, to the low rumble that’s Yoongi’s responding hum. He turns his head to look at him but Yoongi has his eyes closed, still looking blissfully relaxed, and Taehyung feels horrible about this. “Do you… uh, do you think you’ll ever go back to Daegu? Even just for a few days?”

Yoongi opens one eye to squint at him, then both to look at the ceiling. He shrugs. “Dunno. Maybe, for a few days, yeah. I mean, it’s not like there’s a lot to do there, anyway. Why?”

Taehyung presses his lips together and takes a breath. That sounds at least a little better than he had feared. He turns to his side, which results in Boop licking his chin, so he pushes her face away gently to pet her head instead. “I’m going there soon,” he says. “Friday through Tuesday next week, Boop and I are driving down to visit my aunt. She still lives in the house I grew up in, it used to be a pig farm, but she just has a bunch of chickens now. They think Boop’s one of them, one enormous black chicken with big teeth.” Yoongi frowns at that, but he’s laughing softly, the quiet, huffy laugh he does when he’s tired. Taehyung smiles at him, but Yoongi still looks at the ceiling, and it’s fading quickly anyway. “So, I was just… I guess I was just wondering if you wanna come?”

Yoongi doesn’t move. Taehyung feels like he worded this horribly because he shouldn’t leave Yoongi any way to back out if he wants this to happen, and they need it to happen, but he doesn’t want to force Yoongi into anything. Not into this, especially not into this.

“My aunt is super sweet,” he continues softly. “She’s older than dad, almost a decade, and a little more open-minded, too. I actually came out to her way before Australia and she was cool about it and all. She’s pretty badass, really. I think she’d like you, and I know she wouldn’t mind if you stayed there with me. And I…” Taehyung really wishes Yoongi would move. He’s still looking at the ceiling, one hand still on Boop’s back, and Taehyung has no idea where he stands, but he can’t back out now either. “I get if you don’t want to. Totally. I just thought if… If you ever want to, maybe it’d be nice to stay at a nice place with good people and Boop, so you wouldn’t be alone and… I don’t know. It’s-- it’s just an offer, I guess. If you’d rather go with Hoseok sometime or alone or never, I get it. Just--”

“It’s okay,” Yoongi says. He’s so quiet Taehyung almost doesn’t catch it, but he cuts in like he
doesn’t want Taehyung to continue throwing words around making it more and more obvious that he doesn’t know what to say anymore. “If there’s anyone who should take me there, I guess it would be you.” Taehyung blinks, then stares. There’s a weird smile on Yoongi’s lips, small but there, when he finally turns his head to look at him over Boop’s ears. “Like you said. You have family there. You know the place, too. I mean, I know you moved away before me, but you’ve been visiting regularly, no?”

Taehyung nods, and Yoongi nods too. He looks away again, at Boop this time, and goes back to scratching the soft fur on her back.

“I’ll think about it,” he says, and Taehyung almost doesn’t dare to breathe, just to make sure he hears every word right. “I’ll let you know in time, but give me a few days, okay? I’m not even sure I could just take time off like that.”

“Your bosses are dad’s friends,” Taehyung reminds him gently. He doesn’t tell him that they technically work for his father and will do whatever he says. “I’m sure he could sweettalk them into a few vacation days.”

“Oh, right,” Yoongi says, and huffs another one of those exhausted laughs. “I still forget how easy things are when you have the right connections.”

Taehyung forces himself to laugh along with him. This is going far better than he had thought it might, but he still feels bad. He feels like he’s using Yoongi’s trauma for this, acting like it would be better and easier to work things out with his hometown if he just comes with him, when it’s really not about that at all. It’s not right, he thinks, but it will have to do.

Oh, Yoongi shouldn’t be doing this. Yoongi really, really shouldn’t be doing this.

There were a number of ideas he entertained before Taehyung made him this offer. The two most prominent were, as Yoongi liked to call them, balk or talk. Either he was going to spare himself all this nervousness and pain and find some way to spend less time with Taehyung, avoid him until this stupid feely shitstorm is over, or he was just going to fucking tell him. Yoongi guesses he figured out why people in fiction seem to think that confessing is a good idea. Maybe it helps to get things over with, to deal with them, even if it’s in a horrible, shitty way. But he thought that either he was just going to piss off, or he was going to tell Taehyung about it, get rejected, and then go on with life.

So he supposes he should be doing one of those things. The latter, probably, if he really forces himself to not be a baby about this.

He should not be spending half a week alone with Taehyung in Daegu of all places.

But he’s right. That’s just the thing. Taehyung was right about the things he said, about staying with good people in a safe place instead of forcing himself through it alone. Yoongi did think about going there with Hoseok at some point, he used to think that would be the most reasonable choice, and he still thinks it would go over pretty well. Hoseok knows most of the story.

Taehyung, though, knows all of it.

So maybe he’s an even better choice. Or maybe he’s a terrible choice because Yoongi’s stupid ass fell in love with him and doesn’t know what to do about it, but he kind of doesn’t really want to acknowledge that right now. He’s much happier with the thought that this trip might not have
anything to do with him being in love, it has to do with his hometown and not being alone there, with the fact that between all of his friends, going there with Taehyung simply sounds the most reasonable if you completely ignore any romantic feelings, and that’s exactly what he needs, isn’t it? Pretend like those feelings aren’t there, at least for a little bit. Take a break from them and focus on Daegu and impressing Taehyung’s aunt as his fake boyfriend and watching Boop pretend to be a chicken.

It sounds good. He shouldn’t be fucking doing this, but it sounds too good to say no.

He doesn’t even know what exactly he’ll do in Daegu. There’s no place to go. Someone else lives in their old apartment, both of his parents are buried in Seoul. There’s his old middle school, Yoongi guesses. He could visit his old piano teacher, show her his bachelor’s degree. He probably won’t, though. If he does go to Daegu, it’s not exactly to meet anyone, it’s just to be there one more time, to really let himself feel that he’s a different person now.

That’s it, really. He didn’t want to go there alone after breaking up with his boyfriend and selling all his belongings, broken and barely functioning, because it would have felt like it won. Yoongi was never one to blame the city for what people did to him, but some part of him still can’t shake it off. He left Daegu as a mess and he didn’t want to return as one.

But he’s better, now. In love with someone he can’t have, maybe, sure, but he’s been dealing with that, no? He stopped smoking, he doesn’t drink as much anymore, he has an apartment and a job and is back in touch with all of his friends, patched things up with Hoseok. The Taehyung thing sucks, but he could be taking it worse. He’s better, and the longer he thinks about it, the more he wants to prove that. Come back to Daegu a changed man, just to rub it in, because one of the best parts of recovery is spiting everyone who thought you wouldn’t make it.

If it was solely up to him, Yoongi guesses, he would have waited a little more. Make sure his bosses don’t hate him for taking time off after only working for a little more than a month, but Taehyung is sure that it’s going to be fine. So maybe Yoongi should grasp this opportunity and go now that Taehyung is driving there anyway, now that their fake deal is still on and they haven’t had any awkward talks about Yoongi’s feelings, and now that he hasn’t talked himself back out of it yet.

All signs point to yes, he thinks.

Well. Most signs point to yes. Enough signs point to yes.

He talks about it with Hoseok, who nods very slowly and calls him brave. Yoongi isn’t sure if that’s because of Daegu or because of Taehyung, and doesn’t want to ask. Seokjin and Namjoon think it’s sweet. Yoongi supposes it is, in a way. Just not in the way they think.

And lastly, Taehyung seems oddly relieved when Yoongi tells him yes. Yoongi figures it makes sense with how careful Taehyung was, always scared to hurt him in some way, always doing his best to keep him comfortable. That’s all.

And Yoongi is indeed very comfortable in the passenger seat of a shiny Mercedes, Taehyung driving them out of town and Boop curled up happily on the back seat.

They’re going to be on the road for roughly three and a half hours, Taehyung guessed, four if traffic is bad even when they’re out of the horrible car swamp that is Seoul, four and a half if they take what he called a wee-wee pause. So Yoongi’s going to have to spend about four hours in a car, on the road, on their way to his hometown, and somehow not freak out about it.

He can do it. He knows he can. Cars have a vague, eerie sort of threat on them for him, but he can
take it, especially like this. Yoongi himself has never been in an accident, so all his mind has to go
crazy with is the very blurry outline of his mother’s crash that officials gave him, carefully and
watered down to make him and his father stop crying somehow. He can’t picture what it’s like
exactly, he just knows that driving is dangerous and accidents can happen on a whim with no prompt
whatevsoever, one second he can be lounging on the passenger seat and the next he can be thrown out
of the windshield and scattered over the asphalt.

But it’s a fear Yoongi has come to accept, because he had to. He got pretty far on his trip through
South Korea by only taking trains for a while, but then his brain reminded him that trains derail,
sometimes storms throw trees on them, sometimes people ram their car into or in front of trains, and it
was the same thing all over again. And sooner or later, Yoongi was forced to take buses again, to sit
in a taxi without breaking into cold sweats, and he just kind of got used to it. In a tentative and
incomplete way, he got used to the quiet danger of sitting in a car.

“If you want, we can switch places halfway in,” Yoongi suggests once they’re on the highway. He
usually feels safer when he’s the one driving. He trusts his own hands more than others, a lot more.
“Not that you get too tired or anything.”

“Eh, I can take four hours,” Taehyung says with a shrug. “We can, though, if you want. I bet you’re
just trying to get your hands on a Mercedes steering wheel.”

“Don’t be a dick, rich boy,” Yoongi says with no venom whatsoever. He would absolutely not be
completely against driving a Mercedes for once in his life.

Snickering, Taehyung doesn’t say anything for a few seconds. Then, he says, “Hey, have you ever
had sex in a car?”

Yoongi laughs. “Is that what you’ve been thinking about? Or was that only because I called you a
dick?”

“You told me not to be one, I don’t know if that counts,” Taehyung says. He keeps his eyes trained
firmly on the road while he talks, not wavering once. Yoongi loves it. “So? Have you?”

“No,” Yoongi says. He picks at the hole in his jeans with his fingers, and then he continues talking
without thinking about it, with the weird but soothing knowledge that it’s okay to say this to
Taehyung, like with most things. “I’m only just, uh, recovering from a fear of, like, cars. Or traffic in
general, I guess. Car sex wasn’t really my top priority there.”

“Oh shit, really?” Taehyung says immediately, barely even letting him finish. He does throw Yoongi
a single, wide-eyed glance now, but it’s so quick he almost misses it. “You could have said
something, we could have taken the train.”

“No, it’s fine. I said I’m recovering. My mother died after getting into an accident,” Yoongi says, and
hears Taehyung take a sharp breath, so he continues quickly, “but that was years ago. Really, I’m
good. You drove me once before and that was fine, and I know you’re double careful with Boop on
board. Don’t worry, I’m good.” Taehyung chews on his lip and makes a vague noise of agreement,
but he still doesn’t seem too happy. Yoongi leans in a little and lowers his voice, as if he doesn’t
want the dog to hear him. “Do you want to have car sex?”

“Um,” Taehyung says loudly. Yoongi watches the flush creep over his neck and his fists tighten
around the steering wheel. “I mean, I dunno. I considered it, is all. No, uh, you know, no pressure.”

Yoongi hums, eyeing him up as obviously as he can, in case Taehyung can still see him from the
corners of his eyes. “We could try roadhead. I bet I could do it.”
“That’s nice that you could do it,” Taehyung says, his voice going up an octave. “What about me? You just said you’re scared of accidents!”

“No,” Yoongi says slowly, “I said I’m not all that scared anymore, and I said I think you drive safe. You can just pull over if it gets too much.”

Taehyung is worrying his bottom lip again, but Yoongi can see it on his face, the competitiveness that usually comes with these things for him, the refusal to seem scared of something he obviously finds hot in a way, the urge to keep up with Yoongi’s own urges. “We have to wait until Boop sleeps, though,” he mutters.

Yoongi leans back into his seat with a grin. “Fine, we can do that. Use the time to brace yourself.”

They use the time to banter some more instead, fighting over radio channels for a bit until Yoongi grabs the aux cord and shoves it into his phone’s headphone jack to kill the discussion and force Taehyung to listen to good music for once. Yoongi almost forgets the roadhead thing, almost forgets where they’re headed, too. Taehyung babbles just as much in the car as he does everywhere else, and for a good while, it feels like they’re just taking some sort of elaborate Boop walk. Yoongi feels a pleasant sort of warmth burning away quietly in his stomach, something he knows to identify as the good part of being in love, even if it’s unreciprocated. The part where it just feels nice to be with him, welcome and comfortable and, fuck it, home.

They’re nearing the two hour mark already when Yoongi turns in his seat a little to check up on the dog, and finds her sprawled out on her side, snoring loudly against the music. “Boop’s asleep,” he informs Taehyung, voice low. “Pretty sure we won’t taint her innocent eyes if we do it now.”

“It’s not about that,” Taehyung mutters back, leaning to the side just a bit so Yoongi can hear him clearly. “I was more worried that she’d, uh, ruin it. Jimin and I had sex with her in the room once and she kept trying to lie down on us. Also I still vividly remember her licking my ass cheek. Worst case scenario, she thinks you’re eating something and tries to climb to the front and eat my dick.”

Yoongi already started snickering two sentences in, and now he actually has to press a hand to his mouth to keep himself from laughing. Yeah, he hadn’t considered that. He was fully ready to believe that Taehyung just wanted his dog to be asleep so she wouldn’t have to see something as dirty as roadhead.

“So are you still up for it?” he says after carefully composing himself again.

Taehyung looks around briefly; there aren’t that many people on the highway, and most of them are rushing past on other lanes. Yoongi can tell he’s slowing down a little now, not enough to disrupt the whole highway flow, just enough to make people think that this just happens to be a very slow Mercedes. Good call, Yoongi thinks. “Sure,” says Taehyung.

“Oh okay.” Yoongi turns a little in his seat, eyes fixed on Taehyung’s crotch already, and hesitates. “I’m gonna have to remove my seatbelt, won’t I?”

He’s not looking at his face, but he can hear Taehyung laugh. “Have you thought this through, Yoongi?”

“Yes,” Yoongi says, determined. The seatbelt stays where it is for now, because Yoongi figures he should start slow, give them both the opportunity to get used to it first. He stretches one of his hands out instead of diving down already, palm finding Taehyung’s thigh and rubbing over the fabric of his pants to the inner side of it, then travelling up until his fingers hit his groin. Yoongi can hear Taehyung swallow, but he doesn’t move at all, hands still on the wheel, head unmoving. So far, so
Yoongi cups him carefully over his pants, and when Taehyung gasps softly, Yoongi gasps, too.
“Tae,” he says, quietly. “You’re… This whole idea already turned you on, huh?”

“A little,” Taehyung says. His voice is wavering, going well with the little bulge in his pants. He’s
not fully hard, Yoongi can tell, not even close, but he’s not fully soft either. Yoongi grins, pushing
the heel of his palm against him carefully, watching Taehyung tense and his chest rise with the breath
he’s taking.

“Eyes on the road,” Yoongi reminds him, unnecessarily, then he reaches up to unzip Taehyung’s
pants. Taehyung’s snort gets lost in a choked little whimper as Yoongi shoves his hand in to grab
him over his boxers. “Pull over if it gets too much.”

“Shut up, I can do this,” Taehyung hisses, so Yoongi laughs and pushes the waistband of his boxers
down. A truck passes them, the loud noise thankfully drowning most of the kind of gross sound of
Yoongi spitting in his hand before grabbing Taehyung’s cock again. He drags his hand all the way
up, going slow at first, watching him grow and harden in his hand, and Yoongi wonders if someone
else might look through their window when they pass them. It’s a very pretty car going sort of slow,
maybe people would get curious.

He doesn’t think they could see anything, though. Maybe if they looked through Yoongi’s window
instead, they could see him shifting around in his seat and turning towards Taehyung completely
now, carefully folding himself down. Taehyung is on the far right lane though, so nobody will.
Yoongi doesn’t think he cares, anyway. He just figured out he can push his seatbelt down under his
arm, which is still not really safe, he guesses, but better than taking it off completely. For some
reason he forgot that there was going to be the gearshift between them, but he can maneuver past that
as well without poking himself in the side.

“Oh my god,” Taehyung says weakly, somewhere above him. Yoongi can tell he tensed up, upper
body pressing back firmly against his seat, but the car isn’t swaying; not even once he raises one arm
and places it higher on the wheel, so Yoongi doesn’t have to worm in between his limbs.

It’s an easy dive down now, on his knees on the passenger seat and with one hand wrapped around
the base of Taehyung’s cock, and Yoongi barely hesitates before circling the tip with his tongue.
Taehyung moans, which is a little early to be vocal even for him, but Yoongi supposes he needs to
even out the stillness of his body somehow, and he’s just fine with that. It’s a little early for him to be
this hard too, honestly, but Yoongi isn’t going to say any more about that. The mere fact that the
thought of this alone got Taehyung going sends a little shiver down Yoongi’s spine as well; it’s like
they’re taking their semi-public thing to the next level, because a car on a highway is a good few
steps further than a restroom stall.

Yoongi presses his tongue flat against the side of Taehyung’s cock now and lowers his head slowly -
- it’s a weird angle, new even for him, but it’s not like it matters much. He still fits the whole thing
in his mouth inch by inch and he still feels Taehyung’s hips quiver just beside his free hand which he
uses as leverage, so it’s all good. Yoongi goes as deep as he can and stays there for a few seconds,
his jaw loose and his throat relaxed, then he pulls up and swallows around him. Taehyung whimpered
something that sounds like two swearwords jumbled together while Yoongi takes a deep breath
through his nose and paints subtle lines on his length with the tip of his tongue, then he takes pity on
him and starts bobbing his head in earnest.

Taehyung doesn’t last long. Yoongi keeps wondering if he’s going to pull over, if he’s going to say
something or try to stop him, but all he does is take his foot off the gas for the few brief seconds it
takes him to strain every nerve, suppress all his spasms and spill down Yoongi’s throat with an
unusually loud, raspy groan. Yoongi stays still, swallows, waits until he can feel him soften between his lips, then he pulls up and gently tucks Taehyung back into his boxers and at least readjust his pants a little.

While Taehyung is still catching his breath, Yoongi sits back up and finds it slightly disorienting to see the highway again, mostly unchanged, speeding past again now that Taehyung’s foot is back on the pedal. “Wow, you’re not bad,” he says before clearing his throat against the hoarseness.

“Yeah, right back at you,” Taehyung mutters. Yoongi snorts.

“You packed a bottle of water, right?”

“It’s behind your seat.”

Yoongi turns again and reaches behind himself, diligently ignoring Boop’s tired gaze following his hand. He turns back towards the front, swallows down a few big gulps, then passes the bottle to Taehyung, who had his hand outstretched towards him.

“Thanks,” Taehyung says, looking a little less dazed after drinking. He’s grinning, now. “Man, I am good.”

“Yeah, you should get that on a shirt,” Yoongi says, stretching lazily. “Got roadhead and didn’t crash.”

“I’m looking forward to getting arrested,” Taehyung says, then he throws Yoongi a frown. “Hey, do you want me to pull over and return the favor, by the way?”

“Nah, I still owed you one from that morning blowjob a few weeks back.”

“Oh. You’re right. What, do you keep book or something?”

Yoongi laughs, not really in the mood to tell him he still remembers that morning vividly, because that day Taehyung took a toothbrush out of Yoongi’s drawer and used it and kept it there, and it’s been staying in his bathroom ever since, and he’s used it two more times. And Yoongi keeps thinking that it’s a weird and stupid thing to get hung up on, fucking gross even, maybe, but he can’t help it. Taehyung has his own toothbrush in Yoongi’s apartment now, since then, since that stupid amazing morning blowjob, right after he painted the ceiling in his bedroom. And it doesn’t mean a damn thing, but Yoongi wishes it did.

“My dick has great memory,” Yoongi says.

The rest of the drive is quiet and safe, as if they’re trying to make up for their earlier escalation. Taehyung stops once to fill up the tank and give them all, including Boop, a chance to pee, and half an hour later they’re already driving past a bunch of signs that announce Daegu as the nearest city.

They put a nervous pull in Yoongi’s chest, each sign making it a little worse. He’s not entirely sure what he’s scared of; the city can’t harm him. There’s nobody there that could do anything to him. It’s just a place, it’s just houses and streets with signs and bus stops, and sure, it’s what he had to look at every day for a long time in another part of his life, the part where every day was a struggle and he wasn’t sure if he could make it to the end of high school, but that’s over now. There’s no reason to be scared.
But it’s not like he isn’t used to pointless bouts of panic. Yoongi has had them since his teenage days, they’ve come and gone in various intensities and he can now spot them from miles away. It’s another thing he talked about with counselors all over the country, something he has a good grasp on, but that doesn’t mean they don’t happen anymore. They’ve gotten rarer, much rarer, but that’s as far as he will get, Yoongi thinks.

And that’s okay. He knows himself by now, knows what to do and what not to do when the first waves come, when all rational thinking shuts down and lets him know he’s on his fucking own for this one, he can deal. It’s okay.

He just doesn’t want it to happen right now.

*** But they’re past city limits now, and Yoongi can feel it in his gut. Gradually, everything inside him is tightening, a foreboding pain like everything inside his body is shrinking to half its size. He takes slow, deep breaths and tries to focus on the music his phone is still playing over the car’s speakers, tries to think about something else. If he can’t stop this from happening, maybe he can at least postpone it, wait until the drive is over, until he’s shaken Taehyung’s aunt’s hand and can excuse himself to the bathroom, get away with five minutes of very quiet hyperventilating and then come back to them like nothing happened. It’s not the most graceful solution, maybe, but it would save him some dignity, and he’s done it before.

“The old farm house is pretty far out,” Taehyung says to his left. “We’re gonna have to drive through the whole city, but we’re almost there.” Yoongi’s eyes go out of focus for a second, then he’s staring at the windshield and breathing through his mouth. He can hear the grin in Taehyung’s voice. “I’m excited!”

Yoongi forces a vague grunt out of his throat and turns his head to look out the window. Honestly, he doesn’t think he knows this part of Daegu, it’s not like he went everywhere while he and his parents still lived here. But it is his hometown, he knows it is, and that seems to be enough. He feels like the buildings are about to close in on them, like soon they’re going to be leaning over the road and blocking the view towards the sky, like this whole damn town is going to swallow them alive and that’ll be it. Oh, it’s never done anything to him, Daegu has never hurt him personally, but his time here was enough to leave a scar. He sure loves talking about it like it’s a great place, and god, yes, he misses it sometimes, he really fucking does, because he likes the look of it and he’s had some great times here, too, but maybe he shouldn’t have come. Maybe this was a bad fucking idea, because now his lower jaw is quaking and his hands are starting to sweat, and he can even hear the damn dog shift around until she’s sticking her head in between their seats and sniffing his shoulder like she can tell what’s about to come.

“Tae,” Yoongi says, and swallows. His voice sounds far away but he needs to get it out, now, before it’s too late. “Can you pull over? I think I’m about to have a panic attack.”

For a moment, everything seems slow and surreal. Yoongi realizes that his voice sounded perfectly rational, like he was just asking for another toilet break. And Taehyung doesn’t say anything, doesn’t even make a single shocked noise, he just slows down and stops the car at the side of the road, half on the sidewalk in the middle of the city, next to what Yoongi absentmindedly identifies as a bicycle shop.

The world resumes its movement when Taehyung kills the engine and unbuckles his seatbelt to turn in his seat and gently push Boop’s head away from Yoongi’s shoulder. “Are you gonna be okay?” he says, and Yoongi can’t bear looking at him with how gentle his voice alone sounds. “Can you tell me what you need?”

Yoongi takes three deep breaths and pulls his feet on the seat so he can hug his legs close to his
chest. Balling himself up into something small has always helped with the tightness in his guts, but he can still feel the dizziness coming, still helplessly watches his vision sliding in and out of focus. “Don’t touch me and don’t say anything,” Yoongi says, his voice fast and raspy now, and he squeezes his eyes shut before he adds, “Please. Maybe just, maybe take the dog outside and just, like, give me five minutes alone so I can deal with it, that would be-- I don’t need much, just--”

He’s drowning now, metaphorically drowning but very literally gasping for air, and words are hard, but Taehyung is nodding and moving and that’s the last thing Yoongi sees before he presses the heels of his hands to his eyes.

“You sure?” Taehyung says from somewhere. Yoongi can hear his own heart thump between his ears.

“Yes,” he says, he thinks he does, he’s not sure but he hopes so.

“Okay. We’ll be outside, I’m leaving the car unlocked. Just get out or knock on the window if you need me. You… You can do this, alright?”

The laugh bubbles up Yoongi’s throat and leaves as something hysterical and shaky, but he nods against his hands. He can do this. He’s done it before, again and again, he’s a pro, he’s handling himself, he can do it he can do it he can do it, the driver’s door falls shut. Another car door opens, Boop’s leash clinks into her collar and she scrambles off, and the door closes again.

He can do it.

“Okay,” Yoongi says into the empty car. His voice is gone and it’s only a whisper, a frightened rush of air, but it’s there. He can do it.

“You’re okay,” he says, something he always ends up saying when this kind of thing happens, even when it’s not true yet. The world is black from his palms pressing against his eyes and red from the fear radiating through his entire body and he’s still fighting with the air in his lungs, his windpipe a clogged straw and his mouth a desert, but he says it again, and again. “You’re okay. It’s okay. You’re okay.”

And then it comes, the wave hitting him because he’s still a drowning man at sea, pushing him under water in an entirely random bout of rage, and Yoongi digs his heels into the car seat and screws his eyes shut so hard they hurt and he sees stars, his body throwing itself into survival mode. His throat is burning like fire now, his breaths loud and ragged and too fast, he’s making himself dizzy and it hurts all over, every muscle cramping as he curls in on himself as far as he can, tears stinging in his eyes when he finally pulls his hands away from them. He reaches into his hair instead, and he has learned not to pull, not to tear, but he’s grabbing it like he needs it for purchase, like the dry strands of his bleached hair are the last thing reminding him that he’s still himself, grown up, free, alive and dry and not drowned at the bottom of the sea.

He sobs into his jeans, dry heaving uselessly in between breaths, and some part of him is screaming that he’s going to die, he’s going to choke to death on the passenger seat of a car because he can’t bring his lungs to function and it’s scaring him, everything is scaring him and his body is so rigid he thinks he can’t bring it to move even if he tries and he’s going to die, he’s going to die on the side of the road in Daegu and it was stupid to come here because it’s killing him it’s killing him it’s killing him what was he thinking he’s going to die he’s going to

But Yoongi throws his head back and opens his mouth and air surges in and back out and back in, so much it makes his mind swim, but his chest relaxes, gradually, and so does the rest of his body, gradually. He keeps his eyes closed, tears and sweat drying coolly on his face, and then, it’s over.
Yoongi closes his mouth and swallows audibly. He blinks his eyes open, releases the death grip his arms had around his legs and lowers his feet again. There’s a soft, ugly buzz in his head, right between his temples, from the lack of air, but it’s getting better, he’s breathing. He’s breathing. He looks through the windshield and Taehyung is crouching down several feet away from the car on the sidewalk, picking up a Boop turd with a tiny black plastic bag and then throwing it away in the nearest bin. Boop is looking at Yoongi. Or maybe she’s just watching the car.

Slowly, Yoongi opens his seatbelt and then the car door. His hands don’t shake, they never do. His knees are a different story, he can feel them wobble when he gets out and stands up, but he can still walk. He knows he can. He’s had panic attacks in the middle of classes and managed to walk to the bathroom and back without anyone noticing; his legs work.

Taehyung still looks at him with the most worried expression Yoongi has ever seen on his face when he carefully approaches. “Hey,” he says, gently pulling on Boop’s leash to keep her from rushing into Yoongi. “Better?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says hoarsely and shoves his hands into his jeans pockets. Taehyung watches him and nods.

“Can I do anything for you?”

Weakly, a smile climbs its way onto Yoongi’s lips. It’s a weirdly Taehyung thing to do, he thinks, to keep asking what he needs, what he can do for him. Attentive in such a simple, comforting way. “Just remind me to drink something when we’re back in the car. And I’m gonna need something to eat once we’re at the house, but not any earlier. Right now I’d just throw it back up.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says, and then he shifts on his feet and throws him a very sheepish grin that makes Yoongi feel oddly warm in the clammy cold of his insides. “Can I… Is it okay if I hug you real quick?”

Yoongi doesn’t say anything, he just opens his arms towards him. It’s okay now. It wouldn’t have been okay earlier, but it is now, and Taehyung doesn’t rush in and jump in his arms, he approaches slowly and carefully and embraces him so warm and thoroughly, it’s more than okay. Yoongi hugs him back and closes his eyes and his throat still burns but it’s better now. Boop licks his hand somewhere.

“I’m so proud of you,” Taehyung says right next to his ear, and Yoongi blinks his eyes back open. He doesn’t get it at first, too lost in his own thoughts of failure. He wanted to come here as a changed man, he was going to prove something and he thought he failed by not being fearless, by having another bullshit attack like he used to back then, but Taehyung doesn’t seem to think so. And it takes Yoongi a few seconds, forces him to open his mind a little and cut himself some slack, but maybe, maybe he gets it.

He’s still here, intact. Shaken up, sure, sweaty and a little teary-eyed, but intact. He used to rip his hair out, he used to scratch himself raw with panic, he used to scream and vomit and he used to run away, give up. But he’s still here. He saw the fear coming and he faced it, and he’s still facing it now, because he’s still talking about going to Taehyung’s aunt’s farm and driving through the rest of this city to meet her and the chickens and see the house, and spend time in Daegu. Sure, he panicked, but after that he resurfaced and got up and he’s on his own two feet now.

So perhaps, Yoongi thinks, still feeling Taehyung’s hands fist in the back of his shirt and Boop licking his fingers, that is something to be proud of.
The city seems to drag past them in a quiet state of defeat after that. Yoongi spots his old school along the way and watches it in the side mirror, nothing but a building, just walls and windows and floors that can't do anything to him. Traffic is slow as people are starting to come home from work, but eventually their car makes its way into the outskirts again, Taehyung leading them on a broad dirt road that looks like a serial killer's wet dream until Yoongi spots a pretty looking, enormous house at the end of it.

“There we aare,” Taehyung chants and slows the car, leaving them parked square in the middle of the wide empty space directly in front of the house. “Looks cool, doesn't it?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says honestly, peering out the window. It's definitely a huge change from being used to Seoul. He leans back against his seat and looks at Taehyung though. There's still something he wants to have said. “That was a pretty good reaction earlier, you know?”

“Huh?” Taehyung says. He's fiddling with the keys and not looking at him.

“About the attack,” Yoongi says gently.

“Oh,” Taehyung says. He opens his door and gets ready to slide out and just smiles at Yoongi over his shoulder. “Yeah, I used to get them too.”

Yoongi stares after him while Taehyung leaves the car and helps Boop out too, who immediately runs over to the nearest tree and pees next to it. The sudden knowledge of something very personal, something very horrible too, leaves Yoongi with a heavy feeling right in the pit of his stomach, but he forces himself to try and deal with it later. For now, he just exits the car as well and joins Taehyung as he climbs up the three almost flat steps to the front door.

Taehyung has a key, but his aunt still greets them in the hallway. She looks older than Yoongi would have thought, but most of her wrinkles seem to be from laughing, and that fits the picture Yoongi has of this family pretty well. Taehyung introduces him as his boyfriend Yoongi and she beams at him before going for a bonecrushing hug. Yoongi barely gets out all the polite formalities he practiced in his head before she starts babbling about dinner, and Yoongi is almost definitely overwhelmed, but it's still nice somehow.

He eats his jjigae in careful silence while Taehyung brings his aunt up to date with his studies, his parents, his friends, his time in Australia. When he starts talking about their relationship, Yoongi nods along here and there, but Taehyung keeps that chapter short, like they're still mostly doing this to lie to his parents, not so much his other relatives. Boop is still licking her bowl clean when Taehyung and Yoongi get up from the table again and grab their backpacks, so Taehyung can lead him upstairs and show him his old room.

It’s not quite as colorful as Yoongi had imagined, but he realizes quickly that that’s because the gaps in the posters on the wall are from posters that Taehyung took with him when they moved and that are now in his room in Seoul. This one is smaller, but also tidier, probably because his aunt cleans up here now and then. The bed still looks big and soft, which was Yoongi’s top priority, the shelves are filled with mostly children’s books and what looks like one actual heart in a jar, and there’s a dresser on one wall with a whole bunch of framed pictures. Yoongi stills to look at them, unable to stop the smile on his face at a puppy picture of Boop. There’s a bigger family picture next to it, with Taehyung’s young parents and him as a baby, and his aunt standing next to his father. Next to that one is a black frame with a picture of Taehyung as a child, maybe six or seven, and another even
younger child, probably a girl from the way she’s dressed, sitting on his lap. Yoongi can tell it’s Taehyung just from the boxy smile he’d recognize anywhere, even if it’s missing a total of three milk teeth. He’s never seen the girl before, though.

“Who’s this?” he asks, pointing at the picture when Taehyung shows up next to him to gently pull the backpack off Yoongi’s shoulders. He looks up at him, and Taehyung smiles at the photo, but Yoongi doesn’t like this smile.

“That was my sister,” Taehyung says.

Yoongi’s heart plummets.

It’s not hard to deduce, the use of past tense with the sad smile, and then the mention of his own panic attacks, the gentle but insistent care with which his parents handle him, and how that one damn time in New York, something he suddenly remembers clear as day, Taehyung said that what he misses most about Daegu isn’t the city, but the people. Yoongi opens his mouth and closes it again, swallows, and only resumes functioning because Taehyung is pulling his backpack away now to put it down next to his own in front of the bed.

“I’m sorry,” Yoongi says. Taehyung turns to look at him, and his smile grows at least a little bit brighter.

“Thanks,” he says. And then, after a few seconds of uncomfortable silence, he huffs out a helpless laugh. “It’s been twelve years, Yoongi. Please, stop looking at me like that.”

And Yoongi’s mind is still racing, but he snaps out of it, because he knows what Taehyung means. He knows the look he must have on his face right now from other people’s faces, and he knows he never wanted them to look at him like that when he told someone about his messed up childhood. So he just licks his lips and cracks a smile and stops looking at Taehyung like that, and Taehyung smiles back at him and nods.

“I’ll tell you about her some other time,” Taehyung says softly, and puts one hand on Yoongi’s shoulder to maneuver him around towards the door. “Come on, let me show you around.”

So while Taehyung shows him the cute, rustic house that’s in such stark contrast to their penthouse apartment in Seoul, Yoongi allows himself to realize that there’s still so much he doesn’t know about Taehyung. There are things he’d been meaning to ask, sure, but it never felt like the right moment, and even right now it doesn’t. Taehyung introduces every chicken by name and Yoongi listens, even if he wants to ask him so much more about his family and his growing up here, but he keeps it to himself, because Taehyung said he’d tell him about it some other time. Yoongi has no idea when that other time will finally be, and he has nothing but Taehyung’s word that it will come sooner or later. Nothing but Taehyung’s word, and the subtle feeling that while they’re here in Daegu, he’s going to learn more about him, whether Taehyung wants him to or not.

Yoongi has no idea how right he is.
Wrong Time, Wrong Place

Chapter Summary

Shit hits the fan.

Yoongi’s head is heavy on his shoulder. Outside, the sunrise is painting the horizon in orange, red, and purple streaks, no cloud to be seen if you look through the big, pristine window at the foot end of Taehyung’s bed. Inside, they’re huddled together at the other end of it, Taehyung’s laptop perched on Taehyung’s right knee and Yoongi’s left knee, blankets pulled up to their chests, and Yoongi’s head is heavy on his shoulder.

It’s new, Taehyung thinks. Having him this close and cuddly, it’s new. Maybe it’s Daegu, softening Yoongi up until he curls up at his side like this, maybe it’s something else. Taehyung isn’t sure, and he’s too tired to think about it.

He woke up around four in the morning, panting and nervous. Taehyung knows he had a bad dream, but he can’t remember the details. He sat up and stared out the window for a while, thinking about how this place is usually like vacation to him, how he comes here to relax and unwind and now it’s all jumbled up and fucked over, now he has bad dreams on his first night in his old bedroom just because his dad’s old enemies won’t let up.

And because, as an extension to that, he still feels bad about dragging Yoongi down here, tries really hard but fails not to feel responsible for that panic attack he had in the car, the tear streaks he could see on his face if the light hit it right. Taehyung still wishes he didn’t have to put Yoongi through this, but they’re here now, and they’ll have to sit it out.

It was weird being up before Yoongi, both of them usually sleeping in as long as they can. But when Taehyung came back from quietly sneaking into the bathroom, Yoongi was on his side blinking at him, so now they’re both awake.

At least Yoongi doesn’t seem nervous, just tired and a little disoriented. He’s been pretty quiet through most of the process of fishing Taehyung’s laptop out of his bag and connecting it to his aunt’s new speedy wifi, only laughing softly at Taehyung’s explanation that she’s been playing a lot of Overwatch even if that wasn’t exactly a joke. He let Taehyung pick what they’re watching too, as almost always, so now they’re watching one of Taehyung’s favorite nature series.

“If they ever make a movie about my life for whatever reason,” Taehyung says with Yoongi’s hair tickling his cheek, “I want it to be narrated by this dude.”

Yoongi makes one of his vague noises of agreement, and sniffles. Blinking, Taehyung lowers his head, trying to catch a glimpse of Yoongi’s face, but he only catches one eye staring blankly at the laptop screen.

“Are,” Taehyung says slowly. “Yoongi, are you crying?”

“No,” Yoongi says, sounding too appalled to be credible, and sniffles louder. “Maybe a little.” He clears his throat. “How come you of all people can just watch animals die like this?”
Oh. Oh, he’s crying about the documentary. Taehyung’s worried expression softens into a smile so endearing he’s kind of glad Yoongi can’t see it. “Hey, that’s just how life goes,” he says gently. “As long as it’s not us doing the killing but other predators that’s just, you know, nature. That pack needed something to eat, otherwise they would have died. That’s nothing to be sad about.”

Yoongi pulls his blanket up higher and snorts quietly. Taehyung tries to imagine the pout on his face right now, but he quickly changes his mind and watches the scene on the screen instead. “That calf was just a kid,” Yoongi mumbles. “And they chased her away from her herd, she must have been so confused.”

“Oh my god, Yoongi,” Taehyung says, trying very hard to suppress the laugh now. He puts one arm around Yoongi’s shoulders to hug him, half expecting him to swat him away and swear at him, but he doesn’t. Yoongi must be really exhausted, he thinks, and puts his other hand on the touchpad. “Come on, we’ll put a different episode on. There, this one’s less about hunting and more about birds. You won’t cry about birds.”

“I’m not-- I wasn’t crying.”

“Okay.” Taehyung pats Yoongi’s shoulder, and now Yoongi swats him, but he doesn’t actually try to move away from him, either.

Taehyung was right, and Yoongi doesn’t cry about birds. Instead, he seems to find them mostly boring, yawning at least five times in the first ten minutes, until his head slips off Taehyung’s shoulder halfway in and he complains incoherently about something. Taehyung asks him if he should switch off the documentary, to which Yoongi replies, “No, I’m watching this,” but his eyes are closed and don’t open anymore, so Taehyung closes his laptop and pushes it off their legs to gently maneuver Yoongi back on the mattress. He’s out like a light immediately.

That’s okay. Taehyung will deal. By now, at least it’s not quite that early anymore and he’s pretty sure his aunt should be awake already, so he’s not the only one up in the house. In fact, when he carefully climbs over Yoongi and out of bed, even Boop greets him in the hallway, albeit still stretching her limbs and blinking blearily.

“Hey, big girl,” Taehyung greets her quietly, scratching her ears and smiling once she bumps her head into his hand. “You doing alright? Wanna go outside for a bit?”

Taehyung thinks she does, or at least she follows him downstairs and into the yard. He shivers a little in his boxers and a loose shirt, especially once he spots his aunt standing by the chicken coop in a fuzzy bathrobe pulled over her long pyjamas, looking a lot warmer than he feels. Boop trots right past her, ignoring the chicken’s good morning squawks and going straight for the little bushes nearby to do her morning routine.

“Hi,” Taehyung says softly, wrapping his arms around himself as he comes to a halt next to his aunt.

Kim Moonhee is a small woman; Taehyung has always felt like she shrank a little bit more every time he visited, even if it was just because he was growing so much. She’s a lot smaller than her younger brother, though, which -- according to both of them -- never stopped her from kicking his ass on a friendly sibling basis. Taehyung has heard almost all of the stories, and he has a lot of respect for her. Especially now that he’s realized she’s carrying a rifle under her bathrobe.

“Good morning, Tae,” she says, looking away from her chickens to throw him a warm smile, and Taehyung tries to smile back, but he frowns instead.

“Are you, uh, expecting someone?”
She blinks, following his gaze towards the rifle, the smile growing a little more weary when she looks off towards the driveway. “I’m always expecting someone these days, aren’t I?”

Boop comes back to them more lively this time, wagging her tail and nudging Taehyung’s hand until he opens the chicken coop and lets her in. He watches her greet her friends, one of them immediately hopping on her back and settling there, and it makes conversation a little bit easier. “Dad said they’re coming to Seoul,” he says quietly. “Why do you think someone would come here?”

“Oh, I trust our spies,” Moonhee says with a dry laugh that makes Taehyung uneasy. “If they say they saw them leaving for Seoul, fine, and if your father says he saw some of them in the city, I trust his judgement. It’s them you can’t trust, Taetae.”

Taehyung grimaces, looking out towards the driveway where Moonhee was watching just now. “You think some of them are still here and they’ll, like… double-attack or something?”

“I don’t know what’s going on in their stupid little heads, kid,” Moonhee sighs, but she puts an arm around Taehyung’s shoulders and pulls him close, her head bumping into his arm. “But I know I’ll fucking annihilate them if they try any shit in my own four walls.”

Taehyung can’t help but laugh, even if he knows that she is very much a woman of her word. The reason Taehyung’s parents sent him down here is that the enemy clan, originally still working here in Daegu, seemed to have been relocating towards Seoul and gearing up for an attack there, but he supposes Moonhee is right and they all know it. They don’t know anything for sure, and it’s best to be prepared.

“Anyway,” Moonhee says airily before Taehyung really has time to finish the thought, “why’re you pretending to date that poor quiet boy?”

“What?” Taehyung says immediately. His tired mind is still working on actually digesting the question, but his body is already trying to take a shocked step back, which doesn’t work out with Moonhee’s iron grip on his shoulder.

But she releases him with a laugh, only patting his back gently. “You can’t fool me, Kim Taehyung,” is all she says. Her gaze is still on him, though, questioning, while Taehyung still feels a little bit dizzy.

He grins at her eventually though, remembering that it’s fine, it’ll be fine, he can talk to her about anything. “I’m proving something,” he says softly, “to mom and dad.”

“Oh,” Moonhee says to that, wiggling her eyebrows secretively. “Sure. I won’t tell them anything.”

“Thanks.” One of the chickens is trying to groom Boop’s fur. Taehyung shifts on his feet. “I think they were worried that I wouldn’t, you know, find someone. Like, someone who makes me happy.”

Moonhee hums quietly. “So you found someone who pretends to make you happy?” she says, and Taehyung can feel her eyes on him, but he’s suddenly busy staring at the chickens, opening his mouth and closing it again, because that doesn’t sound right. “Or you found someone who does make you happy?”

“I,” Taehyung says and swallows. His neck feels uncomfortably warm. “Well, yeah, he does make me happy, of course. We’re friends. We just pretend to…” He stops there, because suddenly what he was trying to say doesn’t seem to make sense anymore. It has to be because he’s talking about this with an actual adult for the first time, not with Jimin or Jungkook or Yoongi.

“You just pretend to be something else,” Moonhee finishes for him. Taehyung nods and tries to feel...
relieved, but his laugh still sounds uneasy to his ears.

“It’s kind of stupid, I know.”

“How long have you two been at it?”

“Since I came back from Australia, so, March. Or technically February, when we started planning.”

“That’s a pretty long time for a smart kid like you to be doing something stupid,” Moonhee says. Taehyung is still trying to come up with a valid defense when she continues, “So maybe it’s not that stupid at all, hm?”

Taehyung doesn’t know what to say to that. He still feels warm despite the cold morning air, and there’s an uncomfortable feeling in his gut, like something is trying to tell him that he’s lying to his aunt. But he’s not. They’re friends who pretend to be dating and it’s been making him kind of happy and it’s a little stupid, that’s the truth. That’s okay, that’s perfectly fine.

“I’ll go inside and fix us some breakfast,” Moonhee says somewhere, shouldering her rifle as she strolls past him. “Be good and come help me once you’re done stewing over this, alright?”

“Yes,” Taehyung says automatically. And then, just as automatically, he coaxes Boop back out of the chicken coop and follows his aunt into the house. Of course he’s done stewing over this. There’s nothing to stew over in the first place. There never was.

After breakfast, Yoongi makes out with him on his bed until Taehyung is rock hard in his pants. Yoongi snickers at him, but he still jerks him off until Taehyung spills all over his hand and shirt, and maybe part of Taehyung can already tell right then, but his mind is preoccupied with climaxing, so he doesn’t really think about it.

But a little later, after Taehyung has recovered and pushed Yoongi down on the mattress to climb into his lap and ride him, he notices.

Something’s different. Off, even. There’s something about Yoongi that’s not the way it was before, and Taehyung can’t tell what exactly it is, can’t really put his finger on it, put he can put his ass on Yoongi’s hips and watch him choke on a moan and realize that something, something, isn’t right.

It’s not that it’s bad. It isn’t. The sex is still as amazing as ever, Yoongi’s fingertips buried deep in the skin just over Taehyung’s hip bones, the body underneath him rolling upwards in languid but powerful thrusts, rubbing against that spot that’s starting to make shiver after shiver run down Taehyung’s back. It’s good, still, it’s great, but there’s also something different about it.

Yoongi looks at him differently, he thinks. Touches him differently. Softer, somehow, gentler. He wasn’t violent before and he’s not featherlight now, but it is something. Like he was starving before, making him hungry and rough and stormy, and now there’s something less like hunger in his eyes, in his touches, and something more like... like longing, like he’s trying to take his time to take all of Taehyung in, watch his every movement, like he’s trying to remember it all and make it last as long as possible. Like he misses him, somehow, even if Taehyung is still right here, with his hands on Yoongi’s chest and his name on his lips.

It scares him.

It gives a new, eerie sort of tone to the things his aunt said to him, (someone who pretends to make
you happy) more urgent now, like it’s trying to tell Taehyung something (or someone who does make you happy). And he knows, he knows he should get it, he knows he’s good at reading people and he’s perceptive and smart and damn it, some part of him knows exactly (maybe it’s not that stupid at all) what this means, but it scares him. It scares him too much to acknowledge it at all, it scares him too much to do anything but ignore it and move on, keep fucking himself down on Yoongi until they’re sated and spent and dirty and Yoongi rolls off the bed and wobbles towards the shower so he can’t look at him like that anymore.

(That’s a pretty long time for a smart kid like you to be doing something stupid.)

They spend the whole day on the farm that’s not much of a farm anymore. Yoongi gets up close and personal with the chickens with great care, but also with great interest, and Taehyung watches over him to make sure nobody starts another Great Chicken Coop War. He has enough scars from those. While Taehyung entertains Boop with the new toy his aunt got her, Moonhee and Yoongi have an animated discussion about how radio as a medium has changed over the past few years, and after that, Yoongi spends almost three whole hours kicking Taehyung’s ass at every single Nintendo 64 game he still has lying around here, muttering something about how years of friendship with Jin have prepared him for this moment. For dinner, they all help Moonhee in the kitchen, crammed into the place shoulder to shoulder, lending hands and chatting away, and it’s still not leaving Taehyung’s mind.

It’s still there, at the back of it, (or you found someone who does) flaring up whenever he glances at Yoongi, whenever (make you happy) Moonhee laughs at something he said, whenever Yoongi smiles at her like they’ve known each other much longer, like he’s somehow (you found someone who does make you happy) part of this family.

It’s still scary.

Taehyung thinks the scariest part might be that it kind of makes him want to open up more, to fill Yoongi in on it all. He can’t even really explain the urge to himself, let alone fully comprehend it, but some part of him wants to let him know, as if he’s completing some sort of puzzle and this is one of the last pieces.

But it’s not the right time.

They drive out into town the next day. Taehyung lets Yoongi drive, listening to him going on about how weird it is to be driving through Daegu by himself, since the last time he was here he was too young to have a license. “Dad let me drive his car around on an empty parking lot one single time, and I almost pissed myself,” Yoongi tells him, and Taehyung laughs. Yoongi shows him his old school, lying before them like an enormous dead carcass since it’s Sunday and nobody’s there. There’s a spot behind it where Yoongi smoked his first cigarette.

In turn, Taehyung shows him the building where his father’s company’s headquarters used to be. It’s used by a different company now, but Taehyung can still point him towards the garden next to it where he used to play as a child, shows him the swing he fell off of and scarred both of his knees. Yoongi seems very interested, like he’s only been waiting for this kind of stuff, for any sort of information on how Taehyung grew up, and Taehyung’s stomach churns.

They wander around a little aimlessly after a while, Yoongi marveling at places that weren’t there the last time he was here, Taehyung occasionally doing the same. Taehyung finally finds the market he’s been looking for and they stuff their faces with street food, ditching their initial plan to have dinner at a restaurant and ending up in a café instead.

“I keep thinking,” Taehyung says around his straw, eyeing the back door of the place they’re sitting
in, “that we should make out in the restrooms here, just because it’s what we do, but it’s…”

He trails off, giving Yoongi a pointed look, who snorts and nods without Taehyung having to finish the sentence.

“It’d feel weird,” Yoongi says.

“Yeah. Like, wrong.”

“We’ll just bang when we’re back at your aunt’s place. Obviously we both don’t mind fucking in your kid’s room.”

“Don’t make it weird.”

Yoongi doesn’t make it weird when he pushes Taehyung up against the door in his room. At least he tries not to, Taehyung’s pretty sure. There’s still this soft, pensive note about his touches, but Taehyung decides to forget about it, decides to focus on shoving his own fingers under Yoongi’s shirt while their mouths slide against each other. He drags his palms up over the soft bumps of Yoongi’s spine and Yoongi hums appreciatively into the kiss, already slotting one thigh between Taehyung’s.

Taehyung grinds down once before pushing himself off the door and walking Yoongi backwards through the room. He refuses to break the kiss, one hand steady on Yoongi’s neck as he maneuvers them past their backpacks and the comic books he left on the floor, right until Yoongi almost slips on a Batman Annual and they break apart giggling. Yoongi ducks his head to mouth at Taehyung’s jaw instead, his fingers pushing the plaid shirt off Taehyung’s shoulders so he’s only left in his tee, then slipping underneath the hem of it to ghost over his stomach. Taehyung lets him for a second, then he pushes him backwards into his bed.

His phone first vibrates when he straddles Yoongi on the mattress, both hands pushing his shirt up and teeth scratching over his throat. It’s only once so they both ignore it, Yoongi rolling his hips up and Taehyung grinding down, minds preoccupied with something more important. Yoongi groans quietly and skitters his hands down until he can grab two fistfuls of Taehyung’s ass, making Taehyung moan right back. Taehyung holds himself up by the elbows so he can leave Yoongi’s throat alone and kiss him again and Yoongi licks into his mouth immediately, only snorting softly when his phone vibrates a second time.

They roll over so Taehyung is on his back and Yoongi grinds his ass against his hips, hands fisting in Taehyung’s shirt. Taehyung grabs his thighs and squeezes, while Yoongi yanks the fabric down and bites at his collarbone, and they both groan against each other.

“I wanna ride you,” Yoongi says, a little breathless, his hips rolling. “I’m gonna fuck you until y--”

His phone vibrates. Not just once this time, but continuously, like someone is calling him. Yoongi sits up on his hips and then they both still, looking down at Taehyung’s jeans where his phone is raging in one of the front pockets. When Taehyung gives no indication of wanting to take his hands off Yoongi’s thighs and pick up, though, Yoongi gives a dry little snort and starts rolling his hips again, pushing himself against the vibrations from Taehyung’s jeans. Taehyung laughs and mock-guides him with his hand now, lets Yoongi grind against his phone until it finally stops again.

“Okay,” Taehyung says softly and grins up at him. “You were saying? Fuck me until I what?”

But before Yoongi can say anything, his phone goes off again, and Yoongi sighs loudly. “What the fuck,” he says heartily. “Just pick up, okay? Shit. Go.”
Taehyung is already wrestling his phone out of his pocket, but once he sees Jungkook’s name both in his texts, missed calls and current call, he almost drops it. Yes, Jungkook likes to double and triple and quadruple text for no reason, but if he calls him, it's urgent.

He stays on his bed, Yoongi still sitting on him looking mildly annoyed but mostly curious, and presses the phone to his ear. “Yeah? What's up?”

“Tae? Thank god,” is the first thing Jungkook says. He sounds out of breath and Taehyung immediately feels like he might throw up. “Where are you? Are you with your aunt?”

“Oh, yeah. I mean, she's in the house somewhere, I’m pretty sure.” Taehyung pushes himself up with his free hand so he's sitting mostly upright. “Why? What's going on?”

“Okay,” Jungkook says quickly. “Your dad is trying to reach her, but he -- okay, no, he's got her, apparently. Listen, Tae, grab Yoongi and hide. Your dad says you have a panic room there? Go--”

“Are they coming?” Taehyung hears himself say. His voice is hushed and hoarse, and Yoongi was looking at him with vague amusement before, but he's frowning now. Jungkook hesitates with his answer and Taehyung feels like that's all he needs to know.

“Yes,” Jungkook says. “Seoul was a ruse. They wanted us to think that they were planning a coup up here so we'd deem Daegu safe. We think they were just going to come for your aunt, but they probably know you're there, too. You need to hide. You know they didn't hesitate last time.”

“What's going on?” Yoongi whispers, still tentatively amused, but it's dropping off his face quickly when Taehyung looks at him.

“Get up,” Taehyung manages to say. His mouth feels dry and heavy. “We need to go somewhere else. Get up, quick, we -- Jungkook, how much time do we have?”

“We don't know,” Jungkook says. “Not much. Your dad and mine are just getting into the heli to fly down there, but it'll take them an hour. They could attack any time, though, Tae. Literally in two seconds, for all we know. Please. Go hide.”

“Auntie knows, right?” Taehyung says. Panic is making his voice quiver, and Yoongi is stumbling off of him and staring at him now, but he can't quite bring himself to care. “She knows?”

“She knows,” Jungkook says quietly. “I don't know how she reacted, though. Your dad talked to her, and he's off now. They don't want me to come.”

“Good,” Taehyung says. Yoongi asks him again what's going on, but then Taehyung hears engines rev in the front yard and instinctively ducks out of sight if someone were to look at his bedroom window. “Fuck, they're here,” he whispers into his phone, free hand grabbing Yoongi and pulling him down too. “Jungkook, auntie’s gonna want to stand her ground, I can't let her--”

“She's a grown woman, Tae,” Jungkook hisses. Downstairs, the front door flies open with a loud bang and Yoongi flinches. “Take Yoongi and hide, damn it!”


“Take care,” Jungkook still says, but Taehyung is already lowering the phone to end the call. He stuffs it back into his jeans pocket, then reaches for Yoongi’s arm to grab him again.

“Someone’s breaking in,” he says automatically, which is, essentially, still true. “I’m taking you to
the panic room, quick.”

“What,” Yoongi begins, but at least he doesn’t fight back when Taehyung starts pulling him through the room towards the hallway. “It’s the middle of the day! Why was Jungkook calling? Is this some sort of—”

“No, it’s not a joke,” Taehyung mutters. The house has been lying eerily quiet ever since the door flew open. He pushes himself in front of Yoongi and peers out into the hallway, stepping out when he doesn’t see anyone. The panic room is up here, the door hidden inside the wall, but it’s a few steps away from his own door. Taehyung wills himself to stay quiet now, and whether by instinct or by fear, Yoongi is doing the same. He wants to cry out for his aunt, find out where she is and what she’s about to do, make sure she’s okay, but he can’t. He doesn’t know where Boop is and he wants to call for her so bad, but he can’t. He just has to get Yoongi to the panic room safely, it’s only a few steps, he just has to

Someone rounds the corner and starts towards them. For a fraction of a second, the world stands still. Taehyung doesn’t recognize the face, has never seen it in his life, but he sees determination and black clothes and a gun in gloved hands, and— and this is it. The man is between them and the door and he’s charging closer, and Taehyung has no weapon whatsoever, he can’t do anything, and this is it. It’s over.

A guttural, borderline infernal growl rips through the air. The man yelps to the squelch of canine teeth tearing through flesh, then falls flat on his face. The gun slides out of his hand and over the floor and Taehyung catches Yoongi staring at it like at some sort of alien artefact, before he himself looks up and sees Boop standing in front of them in the hallway, teeth bared and dripping blood, fur bristled. She’s still growling.

“Good girl,” Taehyung says somewhere far from his mind. He can tell the man on the floor is still conscious so he pulls Yoongi along quickly when he steps over them and flicks open the fake light switch on the wall. He presses his thumb to the pad beneath, his fingerprint making the door inside the wall slide open, then pushes Yoongi forward. “That’s our panic room, go in there. I’ll be with you in a second, I’m just grabbing Boop.”

Yoongi doesn’t say anything, which is probably for the better, so Taehyung makes another huge step to the feet of the man on the floor, towards his dog. She was raised to do exactly this, do whatever she needs to protect him, but that was years ago and she’s twelve years old and greying, and he’s not going to let her stay out here. His aunt, maybe, if he really has to, but not his old puppy.

Knowing she’ll trust him at least, Taehyung grabs her around the middle, and that’s when he sees the man on the floor moving again. In less than a second he has pushed himself up on his elbows and reaches inside the still open panic room with one hand, grabbing for Yoongi. His hand seems to catch on something and Taehyung hears a dull thud, and his heart stops beating for a second. Yoongi must have fallen down and Taehyung is frozen in place, doesn’t know what to do -- he wants to set the dog back down and let her go at him, punch this guy himself, and grab his gun off the floor all at the same time, but he doesn’t do any of that, just stays where he is with his arms around Boop for the miniscule period of time in which nothing happens.

Then, Taehyung watches the man pull his arm back, one of Yoongi’s slim ankles in his hand. Taehyung makes a step towards him, determined to step on that arm and break it if he has to, when Yoongi’s other foot shoots out of the panic room and kicks the man square in the face. Taehyung can hear his nose shatter and is actually completely sure he saw a tooth flying off through the hallway.

“Fuck you,” Yoongi says from inside the room. Taehyung has trouble closing his mouth.
While the man on the floor is still moaning in pain, Taehyung finally hurries over into the room, carrying Boop with him. He sets her down next to where Yoongi is sitting on the floor, lets her sniff him worriedly while Taehyung closes the door and switches on the screen on one of the walls. The room is smaller than a bedroom, but it's not exactly a broom closet, built with his family in mind. The screen is split in four, connecting him with cameras at the front door, back door, in the kitchen, and the large sitting room in the middle of the house, but Taehyung barely dares to look. The walls are lined with shelves, filled with canned food and drinks on one side, and weapons on the other, and Taehyung grabs some parts from the latter before he sits down on the floor with Yoongi and Boop and allows himself to breathe.

Yoongi is staring at him, somewhat understandably, but he’s also holding his left wrist so Taehyung focuses on that and nods towards it. “What happened?”

“Landed on it when that asshole tripped me,” Yoongi says. His voice is quaking, and Taehyung can tell his eyes are darting back and forth between Boop, who is now sitting in front of the door like the guard dog she was raised to be, and Taehyung, who is on the floor assembling an AK-47. “I can still move it, it’s not broken or anything, I guess. Taehyung, what the fuck is going on?”

For some reason, the breath Taehyung was taking exits his lungs in a desperate, huffed laugh. There’s no point in keeping it from Yoongi now. Taehyung can’t think of any lie he could pull off well enough for him to still believe him, and he doesn’t think he’d really want to do that, either. “For the record,” he says to his hands, “this really isn’t how I wanted you to find out, and I was going to tell you at some point. I just didn’t want you to--”

“Is your family kkangpae?”

The words sound like they just fell from Yoongi’s mouth, like he didn’t plan them, but they forced their way out. Taehyung stops messing with the rifle and looks up, trying to figure out Yoongi’s expression. But his face is a mess, like a storm at sea, fear washing over it in one second, then anger in the next, always with an aftershock of confusion. Taehyung is still trying to bring himself to just nod when Yoongi takes another breath.

“The connections, the money, the company,” he says quietly. “You talking about everything except for your family’s business. Fuck, this used to be a damn pig farm, you told me -- you’d think I’ve seen enough damn movies to figure it out by then.” He laughs at himself, hollow and devoid of any humor, and Taehyung looks back down into his lap.

“I’m sorry,” he says, his voice barely audible to his own ears. “I really was going to tell you.”

“What’s happening out there?” Yoongi asks sharply. He looks up towards the monitor and Taehyung follows his gaze for a second, wincing when he sees someone in his aunt’s kitchen throw the fridge to the floor. He can’t spot Moonhee anywhere. “Who are those people?”

Boop growls once, then stops. Taehyung throws her a glance and takes a fluttering breath, still not able to really look at Yoongi. “An enemy clan,” he says softly. “When we still lived here, they and dad had a turf war going on, but they took it too far. They came to our house, they came for my mom and my sister and me. That’s… It’s against the rules. People like my parents, they don’t have much of a codex, really, but there’s still this, at least. You don’t come for somebody’s family like that. Dad was livid. He launched a counterattack, killed their leaders. Dad’s clan was considered to have won the feud, but we still moved away. Mom and dad, they couldn’t bear staying here, you know. I didn’t really care, I was too young anyway. Only my aunt stayed, kept up the branch of the clan that was still down here in Daegu. Most of it’s in Seoul now, but not all of it, so.” Taehyung shrugs and finds that his shoulders hurt from how tense he’s been this entire time. It can’t have been more than a few minutes, he realizes now, even though it feels like hours. “The people out there, they’re… Well, the
enemy clan’s new generation of leaders is apparently old enough to take over now, so the whole thing has been coming back to life. They want revenge, obviously. We thought they were coming for my parents in Seoul, but apparently they were just messing with us.”

Yoongi’s wrist looks swollen when he gingerly puts it into his lap, but maybe Taehyung is just imagining things. “Jungkook is in on this?” Yoongi says now. Taehyung can barely grasp what he just told Yoongi, his mind struggling to keep up. It takes him a few seconds to understand that Yoongi hasn’t forgotten the phone call and is just putting two and two together.

“Yeah. Pretty much. Dad’s old right hand man betrayed him down here, helped the enemy attack us. So when we moved to Seoul, he got a new one, and that’s Jungkook’s dad. Jungkook and I aren’t exactly… We’re not really active, you know. Neither of us wants to follow in our dads’ footsteps, just in case you were wondering. We grew up with this, but we’re not exactly into it.”

“Well, that’s nice,” Yoongi says, a hint of his regular dryness returning to his voice, even if it’s just a fleeting shadow. “Those dudes obviously still want you dead.” With a quiet gasp, he stares back towards the screen. “Fuck, where’s your aunt?”

“I don’t know, actually,” Taehyung says. He still can’t see her on any of the cams, and somehow, this calms him a little. Moonhee knows what she’s doing, he thinks again. If anyone currently in this house does, it’s her. “Probably in the basement loading up on hand grenades or something. She could come in here if she wanted to, her fingerprints are registered too, but I doubt she’s gonna. I guess she’ll kick those guys’ asses until backup gets here.”

Yoongi says nothing to that, though he looks like he’s going to laugh for a few seconds. He ends up shaking his head instead.

Silence spreads between them like plastic bags pulled over their heads, stifling and uncomfortable. Yoongi is still watching the monitor and Taehyung can still barely bring himself to look, only holding the weapon in his lap and staring at the door, waiting for something to happen. Eventually he remembers to dig his phone back out of his pocket and at least text Jungkook that they’re okay and inside the panic room. Jungkook replies that backup is almost there and Taehyung is relieved but doesn’t know how to reply to that, so he just doesn’t. Yoongi shifts against the floor, back to holding his wrist. It’s starting to look bruised now. Taehyung feels sick.

Finally, Yoongi takes a breath and only says, “That scar on your side.”

Taehyung grimaces, instantly remembering how that was one of the first things Jimin asked too when he found out, and wondering if this is going to be similar. If Yoongi is going to want nothing to do with him for a while, leave and not talk to him, and Taehyung won’t even be able to hold it against him. At least Jimin came back. Yoongi might not.

He resists the urge to touch the scar over his shirt, keeping both hands firmly on the AK-47 lying over his legs, but he nods. “Graze shot,” he says. His voice is a raspy disaster; his throat feels like a desert. “Back when they first attacked us here. They almost killed both of us that day.”

“Both?” Yoongi starts saying, but then he takes a shocked breath, as if he just slapped himself awake. His next words aren’t a question, they’re a statement, full of terrified certainty. “That’s how your sister died.”

Taehyung nods and says nothing. He was too young to still remember much today, but he doubts he’ll ever forget how much it hurt, the pain in his side nothing compared to the hole his sister left in the world, in this house, in the way his family interacted, everywhere. He doesn’t remember much about her, but he remembers that they were just children. Taehyung was just turning eight, she was
even younger. They were just children.

“I’m so sorry,” Yoongi says. Taehyung looks up, a little surprised, and finds almost the same sort of surprise on Yoongi’s face, like he didn’t expect himself to say it, and to feel it. To mean it. But he does, Taehyung can tell. He manages a weak smile somehow and almost takes a breath to thank him again, but Yoongi is faster than him and nods towards the shelves behind Taehyung, the ones with the weapons. “Can I get one of those? I don’t know how to shoot a gun, but I think I could do some decent damage with a knife.”

Taehyung snorts. “You did very decent damage with just your foot,” he says. Part of him is screaming not to do it, not to pull Yoongi in and give him a weapon, but he is in already, isn’t he? He’s in here with him and kicked a tooth right out of a gangster’s mouth, and if push comes to shove and someone does manage to open this door somehow, they’d better be prepared. Taehyung turns a little and pulls a hunting knife from the shelf by its blade to hold the hilt out to Yoongi. “So, sure. Here.”

“Thanks,” Yoongi says softly, wrapping his good hand around the handle and squeezing tentatively. He eyes the rifle in Taehyung’s lap, then his face. “So you do know how to shoot these things?”

“Yeah, mostly,” Taehyung says. It’s heavy in his hands. “I’ve never shot at a real person, but my parents taught me. I’m pretty bad at it, though.”

“Great,” Yoongi says, “That’s exactly what I wanted to hear in this situation.”

And Taehyung can’t help but laugh softly at that, and Yoongi is huffing a laugh as well, even if Taehyung can barely believe it. Simultaneously, they both turn towards the door, Taehyung with his rifle and Yoongi with his knife, both still sitting on the floor and feeling anything but prepared for someone to come in here, but they can still pretend. They’re great at that, obviously. Now and then, Taehyung’s gaze flickers to the side, watching Yoongi. He looks pale and shaken, his hair is sweaty at the temples, but there’s something determined about him that’s the last thing Taehyung would have expected right now.

“You’re, um,” he says carefully. “You’re a lot more chill than I thought you’d be.”

Yoongi throws him a quick look, only to look away again with another one of those breathy laughs. “I’m scared shitless,” he says, and Taehyung instantly believes him. “But I’m pissed at those guys for shooting little children, and also, I…” He clears his throat and looks at the knife in his hand, shrugging. “I still have a thousand questions about your family when this is over, but for now, if… If growing up like this is what made you so calm and understanding about what happened with my father, if that is what made you pick my side, then… I don’t know. I’m still low-key pissing myself here, but I think, it… You know, it could be worse.”

He smiles, slow and tentative, and Taehyung smiles back the same. He really guesses it is, in a way. Really, he has no idea how he might have turned out if his family wasn’t like this, but the ease with which he was able to take Yoongi’s confession back in that hotel bed in New York, that certainly came from how he was raised. He has seen people do way worse than an abused child getting a tiny smitherene of justice through harming their father.

Taehyung almost gets as far as saying something nice to thank Yoongi for that, turns his head and opens his mouth and breathes in. Then a crash rushes through the air so loud Taehyung thinks he’s going deaf for a second, the floor vibrates underneath them and he instinctively reaches out with one hand to grab Yoongi, unsure if he’s steadying him or rather himself. Yoongi makes a noise at the back of his throat, surprised and scared and quivering, but Taehyung can barely hear it. His ears are ringing, and someone right outside the door is yelling indistinctly. Taehyung’s gaze rushes towards
the monitor in the wall. The front door is calm, people are still moving through the kitchen and their living room. In front of them, Boop is on all fours and staring at the door, her tail between her legs. Taehyung only lets go of Yoongi to carefully pat her back.

“What the fuck was that?” Yoongi whispers next to him. He’s close now, right at his side, and Taehyung thinks he can feel him shaking a little.

“I don’t know,” Taehyung says quietly. They’re both staring at the monitor now. The screen to the back door is black.
Min Yoongi knows fear. If he had to name a feeling that has been with him for the entirety of his life, it would be fear. Closely followed by anger -- often literally. First comes the fear, then comes the rage, the fury with himself for being scared, and the fury with others for making him feel that way.

The first few instances of fear he really remembers were when he was just a little child and his parents were fighting. His father was always quiet, stoic, his mother the one who would sooner or later explode, her yelling bouncing off the walls of their small apartment. If Yoongi sat with his ear pressed against his door, he could hear it all, learning all those expletives he would later use without thinking much of it. And he felt fear then, the louder his mother got, the more scared he felt that soon things would escalate, and maybe the two of them would start hitting each other and they would become one of those families who hurt themselves. (At this point, of course, he thought they weren’t, yet.)

He felt fear later when he was a bit older, a cold sort of dread deep in his guts, every day after school. Because school being out meant having to go back home, face whatever hellhole the apartment had turned into this time, while he had been gone.

He felt fear when his parents told him that they were going to move to Seoul and he was to start high school there, a dizzy cloud of white in his head, pushing out all rational thought and bombarding him with worst case scenarios for the new school, new people, the new apartment, even the logistics of their move.

He feels panic, sometimes. It used to be not that bad in Daegu, only happening during weird times that didn’t make sense to him back then, but would later. When teachers talked about abuse like it was an outlandish thing that could only happen to people not present in this classroom, the coldness would start to leak into his back; when someone touched him without asking, no matter where, his windpipe would close up. It got worse in Seoul then, where everything is even fuller -- schools, markets, subways, it all brought panic. Panic is an ice cold wave of salt water burning his body from the inside and wiping out everything else, not letting him think straight or even see clearly, not letting him talk or listen or move. Panic is an ocean trying to drown him.

Yoongi is scared now. But it’s different.

It’s no cold dread, no white cloud, no liquid panic. It’s nothing pooling in his guts or his head or his back. It’s everywhere, all-encompassing white-hot fear. Something is coming, and this time around he’s not being irrational when he thinks that danger is out there, behind this closed door they’re still
staring at, and Yoongi supposes that changes things. There is very imminent threat right outside these walls, and if things go wrong, he could die today, and it’s a thought that seems to bounce off his entire body, resonating through every limb, right into his aching wrist.

But it’s not as numbing as he would have thought it might be. The fear he knows, no matter which type, has always been paralyzing, deafening and blinding even, leaving him feeling helpless and out in the open for any sort of predator, unable to do anything at all to defend himself.

This one is clear. It’s burning terror, hot on his skin and inside him, but it’s clear. He can still move. The knife is heavy in his good hand. He will if he has to. Someone might still get in here (Taehyung said the door is fingerprint-activated so Yoongi has had gruesome visions of them cutting off fingers or dragging Moonhee’s lifeless body up here), and if that happens Yoongi has absolutely no idea if he even stands a chance, but fuck him if he’s not going to try.

When he looks to the side again, Taehyung has the same kind of horrified determination on his face. The back door screen is still black and they still have no idea what the hell happened when it sounded like a literal explosion (not that Yoongi has ever heard a live one), people are starting to move on the other screens again, and Taehyung is holding his rifle like a life raft. Yoongi can see his heart race just from how visibly his jugular is pulsing, and Taehyung looks like he wants nothing more than to run away somewhere and never face any of these people, but he also looks like if push comes to shove, he’s not going to go down without one hell of a fight.

Taehyung moves so suddenly that it startles the dog and pulls a confused little bark from her, but Yoongi saw it too. There's movement on the screen, even if it's still mostly black. It's like whatever has been obscuring their vision there is moving now, slowly but steadily. Yoongi thought the camera was broken entirely, but now it looks like there's just a lot of dust that's now starting to settle, a mere few seconds after the crash, even if they felt like hours.

He's about to throw away the last remains of his pride to ask what's going on again, even if he's starting to get sick of hearing the words leave his mouth, when Taehyung utters a laugh that makes him flinch worse than Boop. It sounds distinctly relieved, but still a little too hysterical to really give Yoongi a good feeling. Taehyung is on his knees now, leaning closer to the screens and squinting his eyes a little to catch everything going on there, but Yoongi still only sees a vague, moving dark mass.

"They're here," Taehyung says then. Which is still really fucking ominous and doesn't tell Yoongi anything. “Fuck, thank god, we're safe.”

“What?” Yoongi just says. He follows Taehyung's hand with his gaze when he points towards the screen, only not to the still recovering back door cam but to the other three, where there are more people now. Yoongi can't really tell what's happening at first, but after a few more seconds he realizes that half the people there are being pushed to the floor or held at gunpoint. He sees two people lying on the floor in the living room lifelessly and looks away quickly, to watch someone wrestle someone else into a headlock in the kitchen instead.

“Backup,” Taehyung says and Yoongi can see him grin from the corner of his eyes. “The rest of our Daegu-based branch, they made it. Jungkook said they were coming, but we didn't know how quick. The others are way outnumbered now, it's over.”

“Then,” Yoongi says slowly, feeling a little stupid, “that just now, the explosion or whatever, that was them?”

Taehyung laughs again, though quieter this time. “Yeah, I guess. Look at the back door screen.”

“I can't see any--” Yoongi starts, but things are actually taking shape now, and his eyes go wide.
“Holy shit.”

The wall where the back door should have been is gone. There’s no better word for it -- it’s gone. Where the door and the wall used to be, there is now a car. The sight is so surreal to Yoongi that he's starting to question the reality of his whole situation, for the first time. The fear seeping into every fiber of his being had been so real and lively this entire time, he never even thought of questioning his mind on this, never asked himself if this is just a dream, but the image of a car parked halfway into a wall is pushing him a little closer to that edge. The more he looks, the more he thinks it has to be some sort of custom made tank-land rover hybrid, the thing itself already looks terrifying even on the grainy screens. But that's nothing compared to what's around it. Yoongi sees people trapped under the wheels, someone lying square over the windshield, unmoving. People are on the floor between pools of blood and it only dawns on him now, just how many of them were out there, how many of those enemies were downstairs in the back of the house, and how gruesomely effective it was to smash them all with a car and some wall splinters.

“Don't,” Taehyung says hesitantly, his voice soft now. “Don't look too closely, okay? You don't have to see this.”

“It's kinda badass,” Yoongi hears himself say, eyes fixing on the car again. He knows what Taehyung means; he truly doesn't feel like staring at dead or dying bodies, but he also knows he wouldn't be able to look away now if he tried. He has to find some sort of balance to keep himself as sane as he can.

Taehyung's weird detached giggle reminds him that he's not permanently surrounded by death either. “Yeah, auntie’s friends don’t fuck around. Dad's gonna be pissed about that wall when he gets here.”

Yoongi is still trying to put a reasonable order to the words inside his head about how that wall should be the least of their worries right now, when the door slides open and they all jump. Suddenly he’s clinging to his knife again, Taehyung is actually holding the AK-47 the way you hold a rifle now, which is a scary as hell thing to see in his peripheral vision; Boop crouches and growls, but stops barely a second later.

“Aww, you gave the kid a knife,” is the first thing Moonhee says to them.

Taehyung drops the rifle to the floor and surges forwards, his arms flying around his aunt’s neck as the door slides shut behind her again. There’s a series of relieved mutters as Moonhee stumbles backwards a bit, laughing hoarsely and patting Taehyung’s back.

“Easy, son,” she says. “I think I might have cracked a rib or two.”

Of course, Taehyung immediately pulls back again and looks her up and down a few times. “Anything else?” he asks, his voice quivering way worse now than it did when shit was actually going down. “Are you alright?”

“I’m okay, I’m okay,” Moonhee says, even if Yoongi notices a slight limp as she walks further into the room. She pulls out one of the boxes filled with supplies and sits down on it, looking back at the two of them with a frown. “What about you? Anyone hurt?”

“No,” Yoongi says, but he’s not sure if Moonhee even heard him with Taehyung talking over him.

“Yoongi sprained his wrist.”

It almost gets Yoongi tempted to roll his eyes at him; he feels weird and almost embarrassed about a mere sprained wrist when Moonhee looks a lot more banged up and people are dying there. “I’ll
“live,” he says quietly, relieved that Moonhee doesn’t look like she’s about to make a big deal of it either, but Taehyung isn’t done yet.

“One of them grabbed him as he was just about to get in here, so Yoongi fell, but he kicked the guy in the face. Knocked him right out, I bet. I swear I saw a tooth fly.”

“Oh, that one,” Moonhee says with a tired cackle. “Yeah, he’s still lying around outside. Looks like he’s taking a nice long nap.”

Taehyung’s obvious pride fades a little at the mention of outside; slowly, he sinks back to the floor, pulling his knees to his chest. “How’s it going out there?” he asks quietly. “Are we… Are we good? Are we doing okay?”

“We’re doing great,” Moonhee says immediately and Yoongi thinks he can literally feel his chest expand. “It’s already over, really. We’re just keeping them restrained now until your dad gets here and we can all have a little chat, then we’ll see how we proceed. But they failed, today. That much is sure.”

From that exact second on, fear starts seeping out of Yoongi’s body, leaving him only with a sweaty shirt and sore muscles, like he ran a marathon.

Things twist into a strange sort of blur after Taehyung’s father arrives. First off, Yoongi is impressed by the literal damn helicopter, then he tries to fully realize that apparently, that person to his right is Jeon Jungkook’s father, and that’s really not the way he ever thought he’d meet the guy. Their whole presence is tough to take in somehow; they’re still not the suit-wearing gangsters Yoongi knows from movies, Taehyung’s father looks the same as always, if a little paler, but the mere knowledge of who they are and why they’re here makes his stomach twist a bit every time he looks at them.

With them, more people arrive at the scene, more backup with guns that rushes into the house to “take care” of things, and three whole actual doctors who instead escort them out of the house to look people over. Yoongi gets to sit on one of the benches in the backyard while someone examines his wrist and he catches himself staring at that enormous car stuck in the wall again. It really is just sprained, so Yoongi at least knows how to deal with it, having had the same kind of injury a few times before, after some unlucky basketball matches in school. The thought is so mundane now, it almost knocks the breath out of his lungs.

Taehyung tries to stay with him but doesn’t manage eventually. While Yoongi is still cooling his wrist with ice cubes wrapped in a slightly scorched kitchen towel, Taehyung skitters off to look after his aunt and make sure she’s really okay, and when Yoongi looks for him a little later, he’s seemingly having a very animated talk with her and his father. Yoongi figures that kind of stuff is more than necessary for them right now, so he quietly retreats back to his bench and lets the doctor put a bandage around his cold wrist.

The shock is numbing him now, he thinks vaguely, sitting still and staring into space. Part of him was scared he’d start overthinking and panicking if he was left alone, but he’s not really thinking much about anything right now. He’s still trying to fully wrap his head around what happened, and it’s not going so well.

At some point, Taehyung comes to pick him up and leads him to the rest of his family, where his father looks at Yoongi gravely and puts a heavy hand on his shoulder. Taehyung reaches for his good hand and holds it in his and he asks if Yoongi wants to take the heli back to Seoul right now,
he could be back home in two hours if he wants, but Yoongi can’t think of anything more terrifying than to be stuck in his own, empty apartment right now, crushed by Seoul’s familiarity and routine. He can’t go back to normal life right now, not just yet, and he doesn’t even want to think about his apartment. Yoongi shakes his head and tells Taehyung that he’ll drive back whenever Taehyung is driving back, and it puts a touched little smile on his father’s face that Yoongi dutifully ignores.

Somewhere along the way, he realizes that everyone else is talking about the ruined wall now. Taehyung is still holding his hand, and he’s running his thumb up and down the back of it now and Yoongi feels a lot better and very calm, but he’s still not really listening. People are moving around them but he feels like Taehyung is still trying to subtly keep him from looking at them, making sure he doesn’t have to see any blood or bodies while his family decides how to proceed. His father does seem kind of exasperated about having to fix the wall, and Yoongi notices split knuckles on Moonhee’s hand when she swats his shoulder for it. Someone says something about safehouses, but Yoongi doesn’t even really question it until he understands that he and Taehyung are on their way to the Mercedes to drive somewhere else.

The hotel room wakes him up a little more. Yoongi figures it’s just the right mixture of familiar and strange, something he knows in the aftermath of something wild; something along those lines. Maybe it’s just because he’s alone with Taehyung here, but he can finally think more clearly and doesn’t feel like someone wrapped him in bubble wrap anymore, like he’s finally resurfacing after staying under water a little too long.

He sinks down on the bed in their plain little room while Taehyung finishes up talking to the man standing guard outside their door. His wrist feels a little better now, he realizes, keeping his hands in his lap and moving his fingers carefully. It’s the first thing Taehyung looks at, too, once he finally closes the door and turns around to face him.

They both take a simultaneous deep breath. Then, Taehyung smiles at him sheepishly and starts shifting on his feet in front of the bed like he doesn’t quite dare to sit down next to Yoongi. “I guess,” he says quietly, “I owe you an explanation or ten.”

“You gave me one in that panic room,” Yoongi reminds him. But he knows; he knows there’s more he wants to ask, and it’s nice to know that there seems to be more Taehyung is ready to disclose, too. Yoongi shifts a bit on the bed, pulls his feet up on the mattress and pats it with one hand afterwards, until Taehyung moves and sits down across from him, cross-legged. Yoongi almost wishes he could take his hand again, but he doesn’t, for now. “You said you were going to tell me,” he says instead. The memory is already starting to blur, but he knows that much. “Were you really?”

Taehyung smiles at his feet. “I was,” he says. “But I’m not going to lie -- I don’t know when. I really didn’t want to keep this a secret, but then things started to get wilder recently and I figured I should wait with telling you until everything has calmed down a little…” He utters a dry, helpless laugh that makes Yoongi’s chest hurt and shrugs his shoulders. “I guess there was no point in that, in the end.”

“So,” Yoongi says carefully, “things aren’t like this normally?”

“No.” Taehyung shakes his head. “Not at all. They’re really calm, usually, nothing ever really happens, especially not to me. This thing right now had been lying dormant for over ten years, and they’re the only people who’d dare to take it up with my parents like that.” He falls silent after that, and Yoongi doesn’t really know what to say either. Taehyung rubs his eyes with a sigh. “If all this hadn’t happened, I guess I would have told you soon. Jungkook and I just recently told Jimin, and that went somewhat okay, mostly.”
“Wait,” Yoongi says quickly, feeling his own eyes widen. “Jimin knows? Was that why he wasn’t talking to you two for weeks?”

“Yeah. I mean, it could have gone worse, really. He was pretty shaken, but we couldn’t exactly hold that against him, he’s known us forever and he just needed… you know, he just needed some time to swallow all that.”

Yoongi feels like that’s just another piece of information he now has to swallow somehow. “And he’s cool with it?” he asks. He knows he’s staring at Taehyung and he wishes he could stop, but he can’t, really. Now that his body and mind are waking up, he has to keep himself from going right into overdrive. “Jimin just, like… rolls with it now?”

“Pretty much,” Taehyung says with another powerless shrug. “See, things were different when we told him. He didn’t find out, like you, Jungkook and I just sat him down on his couch and told him what’s up, and there was no turf war going on and nobody was getting hurt, so, I figure that probably helped. Jiminnie got the nice, calm treatment, and you got… kkangpae treatment.” With that, Taehyung buries his entire face in his two enormous hands so Yoongi can’t see an inch of it anymore, only hair falling over his fingers, and he looks so small and fragile all of a sudden that Yoongi thinks he can feel goddamn tears sting at his eyes. “Fuck, I’m so sorry.”

“Hey,” he says softly, reaching out to curl his fingers around at least one of Taehyung’s wrists. “Hey, Tae, it’s alright. It’s, I mean, it’s not like I got shot or whatever, I’m okay. I sprained my wrist like a thousand times in school and I’ve already seen a lot of fucked up shit in my life. I’ll live, and you know I will. Come on.” Slowly, Taehyung lets Yoongi peel one of his hands away from his face, and Yoongi takes that hand in both of his and holds it tightly. He tries to catch Taehyung’s gaze and doesn’t manage, because Taehyung is looking at their hands, but it’s a start. “How about you just tell me what Jungkook and you told Jimin? Forget about the ambush and give me the calm treatment, too, and then we’ll see what I say?”

“Kay,” Taehyung mutters, and takes a deep breath.

From there, he embarks on a wonky journey of telling Yoongi about his father’s clan. It’s a weird mixture of sounding like it’s some sort of script he has learned by heart, and still mixing up words and messing up his sentences and having to start over again until Yoongi tells him that it’s okay and he understood him anyway. Yoongi doesn’t say much else. He sits and listens, brows furrowed, nodding along, and he understands, and it’s a lot more calming than he would have thought. Taehyung really does manage to make it sound like nothing but a big business, and the amount of times he stresses that he’s not usually involved in it at all and doesn’t plan on ever changing that actually has Yoongi smiling at some point, when he reiterates it for the fifth time. Yoongi believes him. Out of everything he’s heard today, Taehyung wanting to stay out of organized crime is the most believable.

“So,” Taehyung says finally, sounding a lot more stable when he takes another breath, “what do you say?”

“I say that explains a lot,” Yoongi answers. He’s idly playing with Taehyung’s fingers that are still lying in his hand, while watching his face. “What about my bosses? Have I been working for gang members this whole time?”

“No, not members,” Taehyung says. He’s been managing to meet Yoongi’s eyes now, even if Yoongi can still tell that this is uncomfortable on him. “Dad calls them affiliates. They know what’s up and they profit from it here and there, but they’re not active members.” He pauses and adds, more quietly, “I hope that’s okay for you.”
“Dude, it’s my dream job and pays for my dream apartment,” Yoongi says immediately and grins. “I’d do radio for Al Capone if it always worked like that.”

Taehyung stares at him, then he laughs, small and huffy, but genuine. “You’re,” he says slowly, “really something. You’re not mad? Or anything?”

“Well, my knees still feel like literal jelly,” Yoongi says, truthfully, “and I know I’ll be nervous as shit the next time I have to go outside, and I won’t forget this that quickly. Scared the piss out of me, I’ll admit that much. But I’m not mad at you, no.”

Yoongi wonders if he should. Honestly, he’s not even completely sure what exactly Taehyung thinks he would be angry about. About Taehyung not telling him sooner? That’s hardly fair, they’ve only known each other for a few months. Maybe about Taehyung getting him into danger like this, but that’s even less fair, since all Taehyung was trying to do was get him to safety. He has explained that, too. Getting Yoongi to Daegu was meant to keep him out of the line of fire, and it’s not Taehyung’s fault that didn’t work.

So he’s not angry with him; he’s still shocked, he thinks, and a bit scared, but all in all Yoongi feels a lot better than he thought he would. He’s not entirely sure why, why this whole thing doesn’t bother him that much, why it bothers him so little that even Taehyung seems baffled, until he looks around a bit.

They’re in a hotel room, once more. It’s a lot smaller than in NYC, it’s really just a little bathroom and one drawer and a bed, nothing else, but it’s still nice. The hotel belongs to the family or something, Yoongi wasn’t listening that well, only knows that someone is stationed outside to not let anyone in and that Moonhee is in another location, partly to keep them separated and make follow-up attacks harder, partly just because she wanted room for the chickens. Boop is asleep in a corner of the room, looking like someone knocked her out cold after the day she’s been having, but Yoongi just focuses on the room they’re in. How they’re back in a hotel and back to sitting on a bed together and telling each other about their secrets, and he understands then.

“Remember what you told me in New York?” Yoongi says, playing with Taehyung’s thumb, but looking at him. “In that hotel bed in your sleep, after I told you about mismedicating my father?” When Taehyung just looks at him blankly, Yoongi smiles. “You said some people don’t need to be in this world. And you told me not to feel bad. I told you that I thought I might have at least accelerated my father’s death, and you told me that I shouldn’t worry about it because, basically, some people just shouldn’t be alive. You said that, and for the longest time I thought, He didn’t mean that. He can’t. I felt so messed up about the whole thing, and I thought nobody would ever understand that because nobody I know has been through shit like this and so nobody I know was ever in a situation where morals just get skewered, where everything we’re taught about good or bad just-- just gets straight up fucked in the ass. That’s what it felt like for me, and I thought nobody I knew could ever comprehend that, especially not you.”

Taehyung still isn’t saying anything, but he’s looking back at Yoongi with something like hope in his eyes, something nice and warm and positive, and Yoongi thinks he understands, and that’s good. Yoongi understands too, now. It only really started becoming clearer when he was saying it aloud, but it makes sense to him now.

“I know you don’t kill people. And I guess I didn’t technically kill him, either. I don’t know. But I’ve said it before, in the panic room, and I think I’ve made my point. It’s selfish, really, but I think the reason why I’m pretty fucking okay with this all is because it makes me feel less alone. Does that make sense? I thought I’d never meet someone who’s seen life and death like I have, but now that I know all this, I actually think you might come pretty close.”
There’s a brief second of silence, before Taehyung surges forwards and pulls Yoongi into a hug. It’s awkward with how they’re still sitting on the bed, but Taehyung’s arms are warm and tight around his shoulders and his hair tickles Yoongi’s cheek and Taehyung sways to their sides a little bit, and that’s good enough. “Thank you,” Taehyung mutters into his shirt. “Thank you, Yoongi. I feel less alone too and I’m-- I think I’m glad you know now. I’m still sorry about your wrist, though.”

“Forget about my wrist,” Yoongi mutters, actually already rubbing Taehyung’s back with his injured hand, automatically. “Just tell me one thing, yeah?”

Taehyung nods, a blur of hair rubbing against Yoongi’s neck. “Anything.”

“Where do we go from here? I mean, are we still in danger? Is it safe to just go home like we planned, or… What’s the protocol for this, basically?”

“I don’t wanna make any promises,” Taehyung says. He’s picking at the back of Yoongi’s shirt with his fingers now, chin resting on his shoulder. “But I don’t think we’re in danger. Auntie’s and dad’s people are looking for the rest of them, especially for their leaders, and then this’ll finally be finished. You and I can spend the night here to calm down a little and then we can drive back to Seoul tomorrow, it’s even safer there. Dad is assembling all his allies, and the city pretty much belongs to us at this point. Your apartment is safe, and your work place too. Nothing’s gonna happen to you.”

Yoongi pulls back just enough to look at him. “And you?” he asks, ignoring how his heart skips a beat when Taehyung laughs a bit.

“I’m even safer. Trust me. The whole clan is gearing up like crazy to make sure nothing happens to me.”

“Okay.” This time it’s Yoongi who takes a deep breath. “Okay. So we rest here, and then we’re driving back home, just you and me and Boop again?”

“I’m actually half sure that dad’s gonna tell someone to drive in front and behind us for the trip,” Taehyung says with a giggle that sounds almost embarrassed. “But in the car itself, it’ll just be you and me and Boop, yeah.”

“So no roadhead this time,” Yoongi says automatically, pulling another honest laugh from Taehyung that seems to resonate in his entire body. It makes him smile right back at him, before he turns his head a little and watches the dog sleeping in the corner. “So,” he says, “Boop is twelve years old and you said that first attack was twelve years ago.”

“Yeah, she was trained to be my guard dog,” Taehyung says and drops sideways on the bed with another giggle. “You can’t really tell anymore. She used to be really fierce, but she’s old now so we don’t expect her to maul people anymore. She’s retired, basically.”

“I don’t know, she almost bit that dude’s leg off.”

“Yeah, well, true. You never unlearn some things, I guess.” Taehyung heaves a long, deep sigh, but he’s still smiling when Yoongi turns to look at him, blinking up at him slowly, his hair fanning over the bedspread. “I’m not gonna lie, I feel about ten pounds lighter right now.”

To fix that, they drag themselves down to the small buffet and wolf down half of it. Yoongi didn’t realize how hungry he was until he actually saw the food, but it feels good to stuff his face now. Taehyung’s family’s people are in the room with them, someone waiting by the door, two others having dinner as well but always keeping an eye on them, and it’s weird, but not necessarily bad. If Taehyung trusts them, Yoongi wants to trust them, and he wants to believe that they’re going to be
safe.

That night, Boop sleeps on their bed and they let her. Yoongi falls asleep with her curled into a ball between them and wakes up to her stretched out and Taehyung clinging to her like a pillow, both of them breathing deep and loud. Everything else is perfectly quiet. Yoongi smiles on his way to the bathroom, and doesn’t even realize that his knees finally feel solid again.

Taehyung lets him drive the Mercedes on their way home. There’s always one black car in front of them and one behind them, like Taehyung predicted, and Yoongi jokes about how driving a car hasn’t felt this safe to him for years. Halfway in, Taehyung gets a call on his phone, takes a sharp breath and then exhales very slowly, then he turns to tell Yoongi that they found the enemy leaders and are dealing with them now. A minute later, all three cars pull over for celebratory rest stop sandwiches and Yoongi keeps thinking that these gangsters are surprisingly nice to chat with.

When they first set foot in Yoongi’s apartment that evening, it really does feel like they’re switching worlds again. Everything is where Yoongi left it in his fortress of normalcy; his coffee machine doesn’t know what he found out yesterday, and the still empty TV corner in his living room has no idea that he sprained his wrist fighting with an armed gangster. Yoongi tries to take solace in it, even if it doesn’t come quite naturally.

Taehyung closes the apartment door behind them and leans against it, fiddling with the car keys. Boop is already sniffing the couch in the living room like she’s contemplating going to sleep there, but Taehyung doesn’t look like they’re going to stay.

“Listen,” he says quietly, watching Yoongi toe his shoes off. “I just… I’m not expecting you to make any sort of decision right now, don’t get me wrong, but I just really want you to know that…” He sighs, shoulders drooping. “After all this, if you don’t wanna keep up our whole thing, then that’s okay. I’m happy you’re still fine with me as a person, but that’s one thing, and fake-dating me in front of my parents now is something else. So if you wanna drop the pretense now, just let me know. I’ll deal.” He smiles at Yoongi, carefully, tired. “No hard feelings.”

Yoongi stands in the doorway to the living room, shoes off, backpack still on one shoulder, and looks at him. This is his chance to get out, he thinks. Between all the commotion in Daegu he almost forgot his little problem, but the familiar light and smell and view now is reminding him of how he’s been feeling, here in Seoul, in his apartment, always alone with Taehyung and that horrifying knowledge that it’s a little more than pretense for Yoongi by now. It’s reminding him that he’s been thinking of quitting, and Taehyung just gave him a free pass.

“Don’t be stupid,” Yoongi says and snorts. “We’ll keep this up, it’s no big deal. Don’t worry about it.” Taehyung’s smile grows softer, and Yoongi’s insides do, too. He jerks his head towards the rest of the apartment. “You wanna stay the night?”

“Oh,” Taehyung says and blinks. “Uh, I think I do, actually. But I have to drop by at home first, say hi to mom. She’s been worried, she’s gonna wanna see me. I’ll just come back afterwards, if that’s okay.”

“Sure,” Yoongi says, ignoring the idiotic pull in his stomach because he can’t help but feel like he just did something incredibly stupid.

But when Taehyung comes back that night, without Boop this time, slips into the apartment like he lives here too, shoves down his pants and crawls into Yoongi’s bed with a smile on his face, Yoongi
still thinks he did the right thing. Because Taehyung tells him about how glad his mother was, about all of them being alright of course, first and foremost, but also about them still being together. He tells him about how worried she was that Yoongi might not want to be with him anymore, how often she asked about him, and how happy she was for Taehyung that he’s sticking through this with him. And Yoongi knows he couldn’t have quit on him, not like this.

Not when the entire point is to prove to his parents that Taehyung can have a good relationship that won’t be shaken this easily, not when it’s Yoongi’s job to prove that a boyfriend wouldn’t just bail on him. He can’t do it to Taehyung, he can’t break their deal like this, and he’s glad that he didn’t do it. He’s glad that he kept his word.

Yes, even when Taehyung is fast asleep next to him, and Yoongi is still sitting up wide awake and watching him, watching the city lights play on the soft skin of his face and his fingers twitch on the pillow, he tells himself that. He is just keeping his word.

Taehyung leaves early the next day, grimacing at Yoongi about how he has to sit through business meetings now when he’d rather be in class. Yoongi ushers him out anyway, he figures there are important things to discuss in his family right now and personally, he’d rather Taehyung listens to that and keeps him updated. While Yoongi is still sitting around in his kitchen clutching a coffee mug and staring out the window, work calls and tells him that they’re giving him another day off, “to recover.” Yoongi finds that he’s not exactly surprised, but a little disappointed. He would have been fine with going to work. He’s not completely sure what to do with himself now.

Of course, when Jimin shows up on his doorstep around noon, Yoongi isn’t completely sure what to do with him, either.

“Hi,” Jimin says, his grin apologetic already, making Yoongi squint a little.

“Hey,” he says slowly, wondering if he should let him know that Taehyung isn’t here. Still, Yoongi automatically steps to the side to let him in.

“I know this is gonna sound fake,” Jimin says, pushing past him slowly and into the living room, “but I was really just in the neighborhood, so I’m dropping by.”

“Alright,” Yoongi says. He followed him, of course, but he’s still watching him cautiously. He likes Jimin, he does, he just doesn’t know why he’d drop by without Taehyung or Hoseok around. It’s not like he’s very close with him.

“How’s your wrist?” Jimin says, grin getting wider and even more apologetic. “Tae told us what happened, obviously.”

“Obviously,” says Yoongi. “It’s fine. Thanks for asking.”

“Alright,” Jimin says and looks around sheepishly. He swings back and forth on his feet for a second, seemingly contemplating something, then he huffs an awkward little laugh and looks back at Yoongi. “Okay, look, I was just wondering -- like, we’re not gonna have to look for a new fake boyfriend for Tae, are we? I mean, I’d understand if we should. Just, like, let us know.”

Yoongi blinks at him. He tries to be amused about how everyone seems to expect him to walk out on Taehyung like this when something acidic crawls up his throat and he realizes it’s the thought of Taehyung fake-dating someone else. Now that would be one hell of a situation, one he didn’t even
consider when he thought about quitting himself. Taehyung might want to try again, and Yoongi might have to watch him play pretend with another guy, and that’s not a mental image he’s enjoying currently. He’s never truly been the jealous type, and he’s not sure if that would even count as jealousy when mostly it’d just be… heartache, he guesses. He doesn’t need that, and he wasn’t planning on quitting anyway, not for the mafia thing, and maybe he’s not actually amused about it but kind of pissed because he doesn’t want everyone to think he’d just up and leave like that. And maybe it’s been showing on his face, because Jimin is raising his brows at him now with a mixture of humor and slight fear.

“Wow, okay, sorry I asked,” he says quietly, without Yoongi actually replying in between. “I just guess I still remember you sitting on our couch and skyping Tae for the first time, all grumpy and anything but motivated. I’m glad you’re still around, believe me, Tae’s really happy about it and all. But I wasn’t so sure you’d stay through this.”

Yoongi almost snaps at him because Jimin is the one who didn’t stay at first when Taehyung and Jungkook told him, but that’s not what this is about, and it’s not what Jimin meant either. So Yoongi just shrugs and tries to get his face under control. “I’m staying. Call it con artist pride, or whatever. I’m just keeping up my end of the deal.”

“Uh huh,” Jimin just says at first. Then he looks right at Yoongi for an uncomfortably long span of time, scrutinizing, so much it makes Yoongi feel oddly naked. “Wow, you’re in deep, hm?”

“What?” Yoongi says.

Jimin seems to hesitate for a second, then he shrugs and starts shuffling past Yoongi towards the door again. “Nothing; don’t worry about it. I got what I wanted, so I’ll be on my way. Take care, Yoongi.”

“Bye,” Yoongi hears himself say before he stares after him, baffled.

In deep?

*He’s damn right I’m in deep, I’m in right up to my neck and I’d let it drown me without batting an eye.*

The thought comes so quick and aggressively, Yoongi actually flinches at himself. He throws his apartment door shut and turns around again, frowning at his living room like his coffee table insulted him, fists clenched. What’s that even supposed to mean? What does Jimin know about this?

Maybe Hoseok talked to him, Yoongi thinks wildly, even if he knows that Hoseok wouldn’t just talk to other people about his feelings, not even his boyfriend. No, Hoseok couldn’t have told Jimin that Yoongi has feelings for Taehyung. Jimin must have just… must have figured it out. Only based on the knowledge that Yoongi doesn’t want to stop being Taehyung’s fake boyfriend.

Slowly, Yoongi walks through his apartment, sinking down on his couch carefully, like it might bite him any moment.

That’s just the thing, isn’t it?

He knows about Taehyung now, knows about his family and his past and his secrets. He knows that his aunt used to have pigs who would literally feed on corpses. He knows that Taehyung might be peaceful, but Taehyung’s parents have murdered people, literally, single-handedly killed other human beings. Taehyung’s parents, the couple Yoongi has had calm dinners with in their home, who joked around with him, who helped him move and find a job.
When Jimin got wind of all this, he stuck around, sure, because he’s known Taehyung for half his life, but even he had to take some time off first. And somewhere, rationally, Yoongi understands that. Jimin wanted to stay friends with Taehyung and Jungkook because they’re so important to him, but that kind of information, it fucks with your mind, and it’s best to give yourself some space and deal with it in some peace and quiet first, before facing those people again.

That’s what everyone thought Yoongi would do. Should do, maybe. But he doesn’t. He won’t.

And that’s just the damn thing.

Yoongi sits on his couch and stares out the window and carefully puts a hand over his chest, right where it hurts, where it burns and pulls and scratches at him; he’s still in love with Taehyung. He never stopped. Not for one second, down there in Daegu, stuck in a panic room, fearing for his life, having to look at Taehyung holding a giant rifle in his hands -- not for one second did he stop being in love with him. He still is, and it’s so much, so overwhelming, he’s in so deep, he’d stay with him through anything. An enemy clan with knives and guns and the obvious readiness to kill can’t stop him from being in love with Taehyung and wanting to stay in this stupid fake relationship with him.

This can’t be normal, Yoongi thinks. It can’t be healthy.

Slowly, he sinks against the back rest of his couch, one hand still on his chest, feeling his heart drum against his palm. He feels sick now; the realization scares him. Even after everything he’s learned in the past days, this one scares him the most. Knowing that nothing will stop him from feeling this way for Taehyung is almost too much to handle for him, because how is he going to proceed? The plan was to wait for it to blow over -- his problem is still that Taehyung doesn’t feel the same way for him, so Yoongi was just going to sit it out and act like it’s nothing, but can he really do that now? Is there really any chance it’s just going to blow over anytime soon when even this couldn’t stop it, couldn’t even put the slightest damper on it?

Yoongi jumps when his phone vibrates in his pocket, and pulls it out. Taehyung has sent him a selfie with his tongue out and his eyes rolled eerily far back, the caption about how bored he is between his parents’ friends. Yoongi wants to both throw up and kiss him on the lips. The fear is deep black and filling his chest like tar oozing through his lungs.

He’s in deep, alright.
Yoongi sucks in a sharp breath when Taehyung’s hand brushes past his knee and up his inner thigh without warning.

They’re both on Taehyung’s bed, Yoongi on his back with his phone in his hands, Taehyung sitting next to him with his legs crossed, and last time Yoongi checked he had a biology textbook in his lap, but it has magically disappeared now that Yoongi squints at him past his phone. Taehyung grins at him like he’s found some sort of treasure with his fingertips drawing circles against Yoongi’s sensitive skin. Yoongi supposes that’s what he fucking gets for taking his pants off -- it’s June and of course Taehyung’s parents’ penthouse apartment is air-conditioned, but Taehyung’s room is on the south side and you can still feel the summer heat creeping in. Yoongi is in his shirt and boxers, Taehyung has already discarded his shirt and is only sitting there in his briefs now. When Yoongi makes the mistake of letting his gaze drop to his tan back, broad and spotted here and there and fucking beautiful as ever, Taehyung apparently takes it as an invitation.

In a swift motion, he shifts on the bed and ends up on his knees between Yoongi’s legs -- Yoongi doesn’t even fully remember spreading them for him. He regrets it a little bit now, what with Taehyung running both of his stupid big hands up his thighs now, watching him like he’s waiting for Yoongi to get out his cheerleading pom-poms.

Yoongi keeps holding onto his phone and scowls at him. “You have an exam tomorrow.”

“Yes,” Taehyung says, dragging the syllable the same way he drags his hands towards the back of Yoongi’s knees, where it tickles. “But you have tonight off, and we should make use of that.”

“I’ll have other nights off in the future, Tae,” Yoongi says. His voice is calm, his body has other plans. But with Taehyung’s hands busy on his legs and Taehyung’s gaze fixed on his face, Yoongi is hoping he won’t notice. “We can make use of those, after your finals.”

Taehyung huffs loudly and pouts, fingers kneading Yoongi’s calves playfully now. Yoongi realizes that maybe it was counterproductive of him to even come here when Taehyung should be studying, but he knows that when Taehyung texted him earlier today, neither of them just wanted to be alone. For once, Taehyung doesn’t have family business to attend to, but his parents are out of the house and Yoongi has the creeping suspicion that recent events are still taking a toll on him and he got cold feet in the apartment on his own. And Yoongi would be lying big time if he pretended like he himself didn’t feel a lot safer here than alone in his own bedroom.

“But it’d help me clear my head,” Taehyung declares now, initiating a puppy eyes attack. “Stress relief is good before finals. People score better marks if they fuck before exams, it’s been scientifically proven.”
Yoongi frowns. “I’m gonna need a source on that,” he says dryly. He does slowly discard his phone, though. “I could just help you study, like a normal person.”

“What do you know about normal people, Mister Horny?” Taehyung quips, leaning down towards Yoongi now, just a bit, just enough to make Yoongi stare at his bare chest. “You wouldn’t understand a word anyway.”

“Hey,” Yoongi says, looking up again to give him an offended look. “I would understand some stuff. Like, at least five words.” Taehyung laughs and Yoongi has to fight to stay serious himself now. “I could still quiz you if you just let me see your notes or something.”

“Or,” Taehyung says, hands running up his hips and under Yoongi’s shirt now, making him inhale with a shudder once more, “you could let me fuck you to get my mind off things.”

Yoongi pretends like he ponders this for a few more seconds; if he’s honest with himself, his cock has already made the decision for him. He’s far from hard, but he’s on his direct way there, just from Taehyung being this close, hovering between his legs with his fingers ghosting over his ribs. Still, Yoongi plays it off with a loud sigh and a roll of his eyes. “Fine, whatever.”

“Oh yeah, that’s how I like it,” Taehyung says, rolling his eyes right back at him and sitting up on his haunches, sadly pulling his hands back and resting them on Yoongi’s knees instead. “Gimme that halfassed, clearly annoyed consent, baby.”

It’s code for I won’t if you don’t really want to, Yoongi knows that, but he’s just smiling up at Taehyung now. It’s good, of course, knowing that Taehyung will still sit back and watch him attentively until he gets a clear answer, and Yoongi decides to reward him by reaching up and curling a hand around the back of his neck to pull him back down again, pressing their lips together as soon as he can. Taehyung hums almost immediately, low in his throat, supporting himself with one hand next to Yoongi’s head and letting the other rest idly on his chest.

“Are you sure you’ve studied enough for tomorrow?” Yoongi asks without really separating their mouths, knowing fully well that Taehyung is going to pass out right after they fuck. Taehyung sighs right against his lips, so Yoongi presses another kiss to them before he continues. “I just don’t want you to fail. You’ve had a lot on your plate this semester.”

“You mean the past few weeks,” Taehyung mutters, eyes closed, following Yoongi’s example and just speaking into his mouth. “Things were cool before that. And it’s my only exam this time, and I feel pretty solid on all topics. I’ll be fine.”

“Alright,” Yoongi says softly. He turns the vague movement into an actual kiss once more, while grabbing the hand Taehyung has on his chest around the wrist to drag it down, and place it on the slowly growing bulge in his boxers. When Taehyung pulls back a few inches to look at him, Yoongi grins. “You may proceed.”

“Ooh,” Taehyung says immediately, with a tentative squeeze that makes Yoongi’s hips twitch. “This little guy is keen to help me study, too.”

“Okay, you can’t ever call him that again,” Yoongi deadpans.

“So it is a he. What’s his name?” Taehyung asks with a shit-eating grin, pressing his palm against him rhythmically now as if Yoongi wasn’t back to glaring at him.

“He doesn’t have one.”

“Come on. You’re exactly the type to give his dick a name. I bet he’s named after a rapper, or
something musical. Like Meat Microphone. Or Dicki Minaj, or--”

“Tae, I’m literally about to go soft in the palm of your hand if you continue,” Yoongi says, and Taehyung’s mouth snaps shut. He sighs. “He might have had one in high school. But I’m not telling you.”

“Pleeease.”

“My lips are sealed.”

At this, Taehyung shrugs. “Fine, then. Mine aren’t. I’ll just go ask him in person,” he says, and next thing Yoongi knows, his fingers hook into the waistband of his boxers and shove them down.

He’s going to miss this.

Not Taehyung’s tongue flattening against his semi and dragging all the way up in agonizing slow-motion -- well, he’s probably going to miss that too. But more than that, he’s going to miss the banter. The conversation right in the middle of things, and how easy it comes to them. As messy and complicated as this whole deal started out, things with Taehyung turned out to always be very simple and easy-going, pure relaxation therapy for Yoongi’s anxious mind, and he’s going to miss bickering with him without having to worry about actual venom behind anyone’s words, he’s going to miss talking shit while they’re feeling each other up.

But there’s no point in keeping this up. Because as much as Yoongi now enjoys the heat of Taehyung’s mouth around his cock combined with the last bits of amusement still buzzing through him from their talk, as much as it seems simple enough on days like this, there’s more to it now. There is too much to it now. Maybe it’s still all nice and easy for Taehyung, but for Yoongi it’s gone back to messy and complicated, and he needs to remind himself that he should know when to quit.

He knows his limits. He has worked hard on himself to see signs and be kind to himself, and Yoongi knows when he needs a damn break from something. When it’s time to give something up and just leave himself some room to breathe again.

And he will. He will. Soon, after this. He’s still working up the nerve for it and maybe lying on his back on Taehyung’s bed and watching his fingertips dig into Yoongi’s hips as he lowers his head on his dick isn’t the best path towards that, but he’s not fucking perfect and he needs this.

One last time.

For the last time, Taehyung hollows his cheeks around him. Yoongi groans loudly, his head pressing back against the mattress, fingers scrambling for hold on the bedspread before he remembers that Taehyung likes getting grabbed.

For the last time, Yoongi buries both of his hands in Taehyung’s soft hair, tugging at the strands in his fists and shuddering when Taehyung’s moan vibrates around his cock. Taehyung gets spurred on as always, starting to bob his head, fast and merciless, and Yoongi’s toes curl against the bed. He’s definitely hard by now, and he’s not going to last long enough if Taehyung goes on like this, but he doesn’t want it to end just yet, either. Who knows when he’s going to get a blowjob like this again. He needs to salvage all he gets.

“Tae,” he grits out, although unsure what exactly he was gonna say after that. Yoongi’s legs are bent at the knees, thighs quivering as they press against Taehyung’s shoulders, he doesn’t know what to do with his body, what to say to him. “Tae-- fuck--”

Taehyung pulls back and licks his lips and Yoongi almost moans at that sight alone, their plump
flush combined with how tousled his hair is now, Yoongi’s hands still holding on to it. Taehyung is watching him with huge, dark eyes, thumbs rubbing over his hip bones in small circles. “Do you think,” he says hoarsely, “you could go twice?”

For the last time, Taehyung reads his mind in bed.

Yoongi has no idea if he could go twice -- usually his body just likes to power down and flop around uselessly after sex, because it’s fucking exhausting. There have been exceptions, sure, but he doesn’t know if today is going to be one. He just knows he wants to try.

“Yeah,” he gasps out. “Yeah, I think so. Shit, go on.”

Taehyung doesn’t waste a second. He dives back down and immediately takes him to the hilt and Yoongi almost literally yells when his tip hits the back of Taehyung’s throat, his whole body twitching in bliss. “Holy fuck,” he says to the ceiling. Of course, Taehyung hums around him as an answer and Yoongi holds onto his hair for dear life when he goes back to work.

He pulls off almost completely and Yoongi can feel his tongue circling the tip of his cock, pressing up against that sensitive spot right below the head now and then, with exactly the right kind of pressure to make Yoongi keen, make him press his head back into the mattress until his neck strains. Taehyung lowers his head again right afterwards, swallows around him once and starts to move again before Yoongi has even recovered from that, and it’s a quick run downhill from there.

Somewhere far off, Yoongi was worried he might not actually be able to lose himself in bliss like this, with his mind preoccupied with his own struggle, with already missing Taehyung before it’s even over. But right here, right now in Taehyung’s bed, with his fists wrapped tightly around his hair, his legs pressed to his shoulders and his cock buried deep in Taehyung’s throat, his head is wiped clean of any thought that’s not about the mental image of spilling into Taehyung’s mouth.

He comes with a strangled moan and his eyes pressed tightly shut, an ache between his shoulder blades from the tension.

For a few seconds Taehyung stays where he is; Yoongi can hear him breathe heavily through his nose while he comes down from his high. Only when Yoongi’s own breathing starts to normalize again does he pull off slowly, swallowing audibly as he does. Yoongi bets that if his eyes weren’t still closed, Taehyung would be holding eye contact with him right now. Goddamn tease.

“So,” Taehyung says and clears his throat, a smirk audible in his voice. “Ready when you are.”

“Yeah, yeah, gimme a minute,” Yoongi mutters. He puts a hand over his eyes and breathes deeply; admittedly, he doesn’t feel much like sleeping right now. His train of thought comes barreling into his head once more, gearing up for the crash of the century. This might have been the last time he came down Taehyung’s throat, and that’s a really fucking weird thing to get emotional about, but everything since Jimin and Jungkook talked to him in that club in February has been really fucking weird, and he’s just going to have to deal with it somehow. “Do something useful and tell me something about biology in the meantime, if you’re so well prepared.”

“It’s unlikely that sharks ever fart, because of the way their digestive system works.”

“Great.”

“Right? Man, remind me to get you a fruit basket soon.”

*That won’t be necessary, Yoongi thinks, it’s over, but he can’t say that out loud, so he blindly kicks at Taehyung’s naked side instead. Taehyung fakes a gasp and then Yoongi hears him shuffle around,*
opens his eyes to Taehyung rearranging himself until he’s on his back next to Yoongi. Yoongi stays still at first, gaze trailing down over his flat chest, heaving just a little, to skin stretching over his hip bones, to those boxer briefs he’s still wearing, bulge pressing up against the front distinctly now. The sight alone is enough to at least send some more energy through Yoongi’s body, so he pushes himself up from the mattress and swings one leg over Taehyung’s to straddle him.

“Hi,” he breathes. His shirt is sticking to his back and his naked ass is now seated on Taehyung’s underwear, the aircon in the ceiling is blowing cool air through his hair and Taehyung’s sides still seem to burn into Yoongi’s skin where his thighs are touching them, and he tries to take it all in. His knees digging into the mattress, Taehyung’s dark brown hair against his green pillowcase, every mole on his chest and the way Yoongi’s hand looks sprawled against it, even the way he only uses one hand because he still shouldn’t put too much weight on his other wrist. He wants to remember it all, make it into a tattoo on his mind because he’ll miss it, he’ll miss it so much.

“Oh, is that what we’re doing?” Taehyung says from somewhere and runs his hands up Yoongi’s thighs until they disappear beneath his shirt. Automatically, Yoongi sucks in his stomach, but he still cocks a brow at Taehyung with a smirk before he starts gyrating his hips slowly, carefully coordinated, in the hopes of spurring himself on like this too. Taehyung’s hands glide up Yoongi’s ribs and down again, finding back to his thighs to grab them, knowing fully well how Yoongi reacts to that. “This is kind of unfair, don’t you think? Getting me all worked up now when you’re not even hard?”

“Life sucks,” Yoongi says. Taehyung bucks his hips up once and Yoongi can feel his hot hard-on press right up against the cleft of his ass through the fabric, pulling a gasp from his throat.

“I suck better,” Taehyung says and Yoongi rolls his eyes at him, even though they flutter shut a second later because one of Taehyung’s hands has found underneath his shirt again and has fingertips ghosting over his cock now. The touch makes his head swim with how sensitive he still is, but it’s just on the verge of good now, not too much anymore but starting to send sparks through his body again. When he forces his eyes open, Taehyung is smirking, but not even at Yoongi’s face -- his gaze is directed at where his hand disappears underneath Yoongi’s shirt, where his cock twitches into Taehyung’s fingers. “There we go,” he says softly, and Yoongi closes his eyes again.

He feels it too, of course, the first indicators of getting hard again. It’s still going to take him a bit, but it’s coming, Yoongi can feel the life seep back into his body, between his shoulders and in his guts, in his legs rubbing against the bedspread while he’s still grinding down on Taehyung. When Taehyung shifts and momentarily presses himself up against Yoongi even more, they both exhale shakily, Yoongi’s breath disappearing in the air above them, Taehyung’s breath hitting Yoongi’s throat when he sits up and noses along his jaw.

Yoongi uses both hands now to grab Taehyung’s shoulders, drag his fingers down his back and then push his blunt nails down against the soft skin to rake them up again, smiling silently as Taehyung arches his back against the touch. For the last time, he leaves blurry dark claw marks on Taehyung’s skin while for the last time, Taehyung grabs the hem of his shirt to pull it up and off of him. Yoongi tries to shake off the thought when cool air from the ceiling hits his sweaty back and he groans quietly, heat relief mingled with hot arousal from Taehyung biting and sucking his way down the side of his neck. Large hands skitter up his back as Yoongi runs his fingers through Taehyung’s hair again, and he’s still rolling his hips, still rubbing his ass against Taehyung’s clothed erection, pulling soft whines and whimpers from his throat that vibrate with his lips against Yoongi’s collarbone.

“Come on,” Taehyung mutters softly now, one hand going down to grab one of Yoongi’s ass cheeks, fingers digging into flesh, the other one going back to his slowly hardening cock, careful, but determined. “Come on, come on, come on.”
Yoongi thinks it’s actually Taehyung’s hushed chanting that sends the most sparks through him, this dedication to getting him hard again after having sucked him off just before, the thought that Taehyung can probably still taste him in the back of his throat and is already working for more. He moans softly when Taehyung bites at the dip between his collarbones, pressing his tongue against it afterwards, the hand on his ass guiding Yoongi gently, giving even more push to Yoongi’s increasingly frantic rutting. It’s not just feeling Taehyung’s cock press up against his ass now, but thanks to the shift in position he’s also rubbing his own cock against Taehyung’s stomach, combined with the hand that’s still softly working him, and that’s definitely doing something to him.

His next breath comes out sharp and uneven and he whines when Taehyung’s hips buck up again, probably unwittingly, but that just makes it hotter. Taehyung’s hand on his cock is soft and slow, but the one on Yoongi’s ass is trembling with how much he’s pulling himself together, Yoongi can tell, Taehyung’s entire body radiating heat against him and his lips close to his ear now, panting so close to him it makes him dizzy.

“Okay,” Yoongi gets out, and swallows audibly. “Fuck, okay, okay.”

“You ready?” Taehyung says breathlessly, still managing to press his teeth into Yoongi’s shoulder when Yoongi is already nodding hectically.

“Yeah,” he says, and puts his hands on Taehyung’s warm chest to push him away just a bit. “You get lube, I’m gonna get you out of those stupid briefs before I let you fuck me through them.”

“Well, that’d be new,” Taehyung says, but he’s already leaning back towards his nightstand before Yoongi can swat at him for it. While he rummages around, Yoongi shifts on the mattress to pull Taehyung’s underwear off, leaving both of them completely naked. One more (last) time, his gaze glides up his entire body, watching his long, slender legs with the scarred knees, a bruise on one shin and two mosquito bites on the other. He watches those thighs that were one of the first things Yoongi noticed about him in that stupid Skype call, and he watches his own hands glide over them, thumbnails leaving dark welts that won’t last the night in his skin. Straddling Taehyung again, he watches his hard-on bounce against his flat stomach, watches his hands brush over his hip bones and then to that scar on his side.

Yoongi stills automatically, fingertips ghosting over the lighter patch of skin. It doesn’t look very faded but now that he knows that it’s twelve years old already, Yoongi wonders how it looked at first, if it looked even worse. He thumbs at it gently, trying hard and failing not to think about all the pain that must have come with it. And how fucking tough it must have been to keep that a secret to his friends, that not even Jimin knew.

He can’t keep fucking Taehyung that often, he thinks, but he’s going to wait just a bit more before he ends this. Yoongi doesn’t want him to think it’s about his family, about what he saw and learned in Daegu.

He’s going to break up with him.

But he doesn’t want Taehyung to think that it’s because his parents are actual crime lords, because it’s not. Not directly, at least.

In a way, Yoongi guesses, it actually is. He’s been living with the knowledge that he fell in love with Taehyung for well over a month, but the realization about his family was what made him understand just how bad it is. What made him understand that Taehyung could say, do, or be anything, anything at all, and Yoongi still wouldn’t stop falling for him, and he can’t do this. It’s too much, too deep, too hard to deal with when he knows Taehyung doesn’t feel the same, so he’s going to end it.
But he can’t let Taehyung know why.

It’s okay. He’ll wait a bit and he has multiple other excuses in his head and he’s going to have to lie to him, but that’s okay. It’s okay. He just doesn’t want Taehyung to think that it’s because of his family, because that’d hurt him, and he doesn’t want Taehyung to hurt.

“Hey,” Taehyung says softly, and Yoongi barely keeps himself from physically flinching.

How long has he been staring at the scar?

“You alright?” Taehyung asks, so Yoongi quickly moves his hand again, running it up Taehyung’s chest as he looks up into his face, to a pained but knowing-looking smile. There’s a condom lying on the mattress next to Taehyung, and he has a bottle of lube in one hand, fingers of the others glistening wetly already. Yoongi straightens his back.

“Yeah, sure,” he says and presses his ass against Taehyung’s hips, giving himself an excuse to smirk at his breathy gasp. “You gonna get in me or what?”

“You’re pretty impatient for someone who was still soft three minutes ago,” Taehyung says and sits up, laughing past Yoongi’s glare and biting his shoulder again while his clean hand pulls his ass cheek to the side. Yoongi ends up leaning his forehead against Taehyung’s collarbone, exhaling slowly when one cold, slicked up finger pushes inside him. He closes his eyes and rolls his hips back against Taehyung’s hand, trying to get him to move and not be so damn slow.

“Go on,” he mutters against Taehyung’s skin, still hot and slightly sweaty now. “I can take more.”

“Already?” Taehyung says quietly, but he pushes the second finger in nonetheless. With how relaxed Yoongi’s body still is after his first climax, it’s an easy slide, and Yoongi lets out an appreciative hum to let him know that, yes, already.

“Don’t wanna waste too much time,” he says, pressing a kiss to Taehyung’s chest while rolling his hips again, back against Taehyung’s fingers and forwards to rub his cock against Taehyung’s stomach. “Who knows how long you’re gonna last.”

Taehyung pulls his fingers back and thrusts them in with more fervor this time. “Rude,” he breathes into Yoongi’s ear, barely audible over his moan. Yoongi doesn’t say anything to that anymore, mostly because Taehyung starts setting a pace and stretching him in earnest, and also because he’s still trying to savor this, make sure he won’t forget how Taehyung’s fingers feel inside him.

Eventually, though, even he can’t quite take the wait anymore -- he’s somewhat surprised that Taehyung hasn’t been complaining yet, especially considering how Yoongi can feel his cock brushing against him now and then when he moves his hips, rock solid. He must be aching by now, and when Yoongi grabs his wrist to pull his fingers away from his ass, Taehyung does drop back into the pillows with a relieved sigh.

“My fingers are sticky,” he says as he pushes the condom wrapper towards Yoongi, and now there’s urgency in his movements, and Yoongi would have to lie if he said he didn’t find that a little bit pleasing.

Still, he remains silent as he rips open the packet and shifts around on his knees, first to roll the condom onto Taehyung’s flushed erection, then to position himself above it and sink down carefully. Taehyung groans loudly, his head pressing back against the bed and his eyes closed in bliss, hands skating up Yoongi’s naked thighs. Yoongi himself releases a shuddering breath, watching Taehyung’s throat work, open and on display, as he takes him inch by inch.
“Fuck,” Taehyung moans. Yoongi’s ass touches his hips now, and he can feel him quiver in an attempt to stay still and not thrust up into him already. The fingers on his thighs are gripping tightly now, almost painful but not quite, and Yoongi finally closes his eyes again. Taehyung is hot and deep inside him and Yoongi’s breathing is loud first through his nose, then even louder through his mouth. He waits for the subtle sting somewhere down his spine to pass, shifts tentatively, and then clenches around Taehyung with no warning.

Taehyung jolts -- Yoongi doesn’t see it, but he can feel it, and he’s pretty sure his whole upper body jerked off the mattress for a second -- and scratches his nails over Yoongi’s thighs with a kind of force that Yoongi hopes will actually leave streaks that last a while. “What the fuck,” Taehyung says in what might just be a literal whimper, and Yoongi keeps his eyes shut while he laughs at him quietly.

Only when he unclenches and raises himself up on his knees does he open them again, keeping his gaze fixed on Taehyung’s face before he rolls his hips back down. Taehyung looks positively fucked out already, hair fanned out against his pillow like a halo, sweat glistening on his chest, his lips flushed and open. Yoongi can feel cool lube residue drying on his thighs, burning a little where Taehyung scratched him, and it’s filthy, and it’s so good.

He finds his rhythm quickly, hips moving against the strong grip Taehyung has on his legs, rolling up and forwards simultaneously to put on a show. Taehyung’s eyes are fixed on them and he keeps giving small, weak groans, fingers twitching now and then when Yoongi’s own hands come down on his chest. He supports himself with his good hand, doesn’t want to put weight on the other but uses it instead to run his fingers up and down his torso, digging into smooth skin now and then, taking in the feeling, the heat.

Out of nowhere, Taehyung bucks his hips up and Yoongi gasps, but moves down against him immediately. His breath comes out in silent panting as Taehyung fucks into him now, quick and jerky, his hips slapping loudly up against Yoongi’s ass, and Yoongi one-handedly clings to Taehyung’s shoulder now.

“You’re quiet,” Taehyung remarks between two thrusts, breathless and almost voiceless himself and Yoongi swallows. Is he? He didn’t think that he is, but Taehyung has gotten horrifyingly good at reading him and picking up on things Yoongi didn’t even notice, so maybe he did get lost in thought.

Still, that’s nothing Taehyung should know. Yoongi wets his lips and cocks his head at him. “Want me to narrate the whole thing?” he gets out, voice quivering with how Taehyung keeps slamming up into him. “You that deep into dirty talk now?”

“You’re fault if I am,” Taehyung says, and god it stings, the immediate thought that Yoongi left his mark on Taehyung too stings, the knowledge that they’ve been changing each other and mostly for the better, that they showed each other things they now enjoy, it fucking stings because it turns out that it means something different for Yoongi than it does for Taehyung, and maybe both meanings are equal in worth, but they’re still not the same and it stings, it stings.

Yoongi stills his hips and watches him, both of them breathing heavily, silent for a second. Then he grins and leans down, locking his thighs around Taehyung’s body and grabbing his shoulder harder. “Fuck me till we’re both in tears, then,” he breathes, and flips them around so his back hits the mattress.

Taehyung thrusts back inside him before Yoongi has even fully rearranged himself, his legs now hovering in midair, a loud moan falling from his lips. “Oh, that’s better,” Taehyung says against the side of his neck, and he bites down at the same time as he starts setting a fast, merciless pace, and Yoongi thinks he might black out for a second. He scrambles for hold, hands grabbing Taehyung’s
back again and his legs wrapping around his middle tightly to drive him in deeper, harder, keep that angle so he can’t even see straight.

When Yoongi’s hands slide down to Taehyung’s sides, Taehyung grabs the opportunity and pushes himself up a little, hands on the mattress to the sides of Yoongi’s head, so close to his shoulders he can feel himself getting shoved up against his arms with every thrust. His vision of Taehyung is blurrily at first but he slides into focus more each time he pistons himself into him with that impeccable aim, each time Yoongi can hear his own voice moaning at him.

Taehyung looks like a god. His chest broad, his shoulders broader, arms flexing through holding up his own weight, hair falling into his eyes, face relaxed in bliss; the dying light of the day falls through the windows in his room and illuminates only one side of him, playing on his skin when he moves, dancing across it like it’s art, like everything about him is art. Yoongi chokes on his own breath looking at him, his next moans coming out as dry, desperate sobs instead, fingers clawing up Taehyung’s arms for purchase.

His cock is aching between them, heavy and throbbing and smearing precum over Yoongi’s own stomach and he squeezes his eyes shut because he doesn’t want to look at Taehyung anymore, it used to be his favorite thing to do while fucking him but he can’t anymore, it’s enough and it’s too much, it’s always too much. “Tae,” he says, his voice hoarse and breaking, scratching mindlessly over Taehyung’s shoulders. “Tae, please, come on.”

“I know,” Taehyung murmurs softly, and for the fraction of a second Yoongi is convinced that the big warm hand wrapping around his cock is the only thing keeping him from having an actual breakdown in the middle of sex.

Yoongi bucks up into his hand and clenches around Taehyung at the same time, head lifting off the mattress with how brutally climax is hitting him. It starts slow now, his body still spent from the first round, but it comes in waves and washes over him with white-hot bliss over and over again until static fills Yoongi’s mind and all he knows are his fingernails in Taehyung’s skin and Taehyung’s cock deep and hot inside him.

When his head falls back on the mattress and he can hear his own shallow breathing again, Taehyung is resting his forehead on his chest, panting harshly against his rapidly cooling skin, hair tickling it in some places. Yoongi has no idea if and when he came, but he sounds like he did, and he pulls back slowly and reaches down to pull off the condom, so Yoongi figures he just missed the moment by being a little busy with himself. He winces a bit when the tip of Taehyung’s cock slides out of him, then all his limbs drop heavily on the mattress and he sighs, spent and tired, feeling like his weight has somehow tripled in the last minutes.

For the last time, Taehyung rolls off of him.

Yoongi grabs a tissue from the nightstand to clean himself up, and looks after Taehyung as he stumbles off the bed to discard of the full condom, gangly and clumsy. Perfect, somehow, in his imperfection. He closes his eyes and fishes for the blanket with one foot. Yeah, he needs to end this, and soon.

But not tonight.

Taehyung drops down next to him so heavily Yoongi almost expects to get catapulted off the bed. When he opens his eyes again to send him a weak glower, Taehyung is, of course, smiling at him happily. “I am going to ace this exam,” he announces.

“Yeah, you better,” Yoongi says with a voice that’s barely even there. “Or I’ll kick your ass.”
As he crawls under the blanket next to Yoongi, Taehyung laughs. He rolls on his side and looks at him, still smiling, though sleepily. As Yoongi predicted inwardly, he doesn’t last very long after this. Mumbling a little more about the digestive systems of most sharks, Taehyung falls asleep just a few minutes later.

For Yoongi, sleep doesn’t come.

It’s pitch black outside and he’s still lying on his back and staring at the ceiling two hours later. He’s been thinking about going home, but he doesn’t really want to. His body is so exhausted and heavy that he’s not fully positive he’ll actually be able to move in the morning, especially if he doesn’t fall asleep anytime soon, so getting up now and getting dressed and dragging himself home somehow sounds like a nightmare. He’d have to take a taxi, too, since the subways are closed, he realizes vaguely. He doesn’t want to spend money.

And he doesn’t want Taehyung to wake up alone. Or maybe Yoongi doesn’t want to wake up alone himself. He doesn’t know when he’ll be able to calmly lie around in a bed next to Taehyung again, if ever, and he doesn’t want to waste this time. Occasionally, he’ll grab his phone and check the calendar app on there, trying to figure out when would be a good time to tell Taehyung that he’s dropping the fake boyfriend deal, thinking maybe it’ll be easier when he has a distinct plan, a date. Because he wants to wait, he does, but he doesn’t want to postpone it forever and keep dragging himself through this hell. He’ll have to do it sometime. This month, hopefully. July if he chickens out. But not any later.

That’s as far as he gets with the planning, though. Yoongi always ends up putting his phone back on the nightstand and rubbing his eyes, rolling around trying to finally fall asleep. Taehyung is restless next to him too, which isn’t really helping, his mouth open and even his eyes not fully closed, now and then muttering something incoherent and tossing and turning.

It’s when Yoongi just shifts around to roll on his side again that Taehyung bolts upright in bed with a gasp so loud it makes Yoongi flinch with his whole body, tensing up when Taehyung feels around on the bed with both hands, hitting Yoongi’s knees somewhere along the way. “No,” he mutters hoarsely, head turning to the sides, but Yoongi doesn’t think his eyes are really open. “No, no, no--”

“Tae,” Yoongi says, very carefully reaching out with one hand to touch his back. He has a wild vision of Taehyung turning on him and kicking him if he touches him in this state, but instead, he seems to relax a bit under his hand. “Tae, it’s okay. You had a bad dream. You’re home, you’re alright. Nobody’s here but you and me.”

Panting, Taehyung blinks his eyes open. He stares at Yoongi, then whips his head around towards the window, then the door, then back to Yoongi. His shoulders droop. “Oh,” he says softly. Slowly, he runs a hand down his face, Yoongi thinks he can see it quivering a little in the dark. “Sorry. Did I scare you?”

“It’s fine,” Yoongi says immediately, even if his knees are shaking under the covers and he feels a bit sick. He watches carefully as Taehyung lies back down. “Was that about the… the enemy clan?”

“Yeah.” Taehyung’s voice is just a hushed murmur, but his eyes are still wide in the dark, staring at Yoongi from the side. “You ever get dreams like that? Since then?”

Yoongi resists the urge to reach out and thread his fingers through Taehyung’s hair, or just hold his
hand. He’s calming down rapidly, Yoongi can see that, but he still looks shaken, and young, almost too young to be home alone at night. “My dreams are fine, mostly,” Yoongi says quietly. “But I have my moments. When I’m awake.”

He does. Yoongi was a bit surprised himself with how he really didn’t get any bad dreams about the attack on Taehyung’s aunt’s old farm, but apparently his subconscious saves its nightmares up for his own family. Whenever Yoongi does manage to sleep, he sleeps alright, but it’s daytime now that scares him sometimes.

Maybe, he thinks now, listening to Taehyung sigh and mumble something about being sorry while scooting closer, it’s because the attack happened in the middle of the day too. Maybe not; he has no idea. The point is that Yoongi didn’t get away completely unscathed, that he does see shadows in the corners of his eyes sometimes, or get the cold, dry feeling of someone watching him from behind. Occasionally he’ll get the overwhelming urge to text Taehyung just to make sure he’s okay and nothing went down since they last talked, and loud noises have been making him flinch even more than before lately.

It’s all bearable, he figures, and he can already feel that it’s getting better, that he’s calming down. But it is still there; and he knows how Taehyung feels right now, curled up with his breath still shaking in his throat, nervous about something that didn’t actually happen.

Taehyung stays close to him like that, breathing on Yoongi’s naked shoulder from where he’s balled up into something small right by Yoongi’s side. They lie in silence, both awake for a while this time, but it’s good silence, it’s okay. They let each other know that they’re both still here, and the house is still quiet, it’s just them and they’re fine.

When Taehyung falls asleep this time, Yoongi’s own eyes are drooping shut, too.

July seems reasonable.

And indeed, by July, Taehyung feels pretty good.

Most of all, things with his family are calming down considerably. He isn’t forced to attend any meetings anymore because they’re not super important now, and his parents have sufficiently “dealt” with the enemy clan, as they enjoy to put it. A lot of them were killed, Taehyung knows, some others were captured and squeezed until they talked about any other possible plans, and he doesn’t know if his parents killed them after then or not, he doesn’t want to know. All he does want to know is that his parents seem happier now, everybody seems to feel safer, and that’s all he needed.

He still gets nervous sometimes, and now and then he still jerks awake at night. Yoongi does, too. Taehyung knows. They haven’t slept next to each other in a few weeks, but he can see it on his face when they meet, in the bags under his eyes.

But they’re both getting better, it’s process, and it’s fine. Yoongi seems to have some sort of dry spell concerning sex lately and Taehyung doesn’t know if it has to do with this or not, but he’s not about to press him on it, so it’s cool. It’s fine.

He’s doing good. He got a phenomenal grade on that exam he took after his last time with Yoongi, so that lifted his spirits considerably, and now he’s on semester break. Jimin, Jungkook and he have been talking about driving away together for a few weeks sometime in August maybe, or possibly even for Jungkook’s birthday, and it all sounds fantastic and he’s looking forward to it, and
everything is going well.

Why he’s still nervous then, standing here in front of his apartment complex with Yoongi and Boop after walking her together, he doesn’t know. Maybe there’s something in the air.

Maybe he felt it.

Because when Yoongi says his name, his actual name, not just Tae, Taehyung freezes with his hand on the door and feels his stomach do a flip. Something isn’t right.

“We need to talk,” Yoongi says.

Fuck.

“Okay,” Taehyung says, despite himself, and questioningly gestures towards the door. “You don’t wanna go upstairs first?”

“No,” Yoongi says. He has his feet planted firmly on the pavement like he planned this whole thing out, whatever the hell it is, and can’t change a single detail about it. “Out here.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says again, pulling his hand back from the door. It feels numb. Some part of him, he thinks vaguely, knows what’s coming.

Yoongi stares at him in silence for a few seconds, taking one breath after the other. Then he clears his throat and says, “Alright. I’ll just get it out there quickly. I want to quit our deal.”

Of course he does, is Taehyung’s first thought. Of course. What else would it be.

“Okay,” he echoes himself, because he’s not going to stop him. He said that right from the start. This whole thing rises and falls with Yoongi’s decision, and his decision only. If he wants to quit, he’ll quit. Okay.

Yoongi sighs. “I know you probably think it’s because of what happened in Daegu,” he says to the eery silence in Taehyung’s head. He hadn’t thought about that at all, but now he does. “And I want you to know that it’s not. If it was, I would have bailed way earlier, right? It’s not because of that, it’s something completely different, but I also want to say that I’m open for discussion here. According to our story, we’ve been lasting for eleven months now, that’s almost a year, and I figured that should be enough to, you know, get your point across to your parents, but if you don’t think it is, or if you think the Daegu thing compromised it somehow, I can stay longer. Just say the word.”

Sometimes, Taehyung forgets why they’ve been doing this. His parents accepted Yoongi into their house so easily and fake dates with him have become such a regular habit, he almost doesn’t know what Yoongi means when he talks about the point he wanted to get across.

But he’s right, Taehyung thinks. Eleven months should be fine. A lot of straight people their age don’t even last eleven months, right? And Daegu was weeks ago now. The whole matter is resolved. It’s all good, time-wise. He’s sure they’re on the safe side. There’s no reason to keep Yoongi around as a fake boyfriend. Even if he wanted to.

Why would he want to, though?

“No, it’s alright,” Taehyung finally says, feeling like his mouth is working on autopilot while he’s still not fully grasping the situation. “You’re right, we’re good. You don’t have to explain yourself, I know it’s not about Daegu. I mean, we talked enough about it when it happened, and all.”
“Yeah,” Yoongi says. Taehyung feels more than sees his eyes on him. “And it’s more like… I feel like I’ve finally fully arrived here, in the city, you know? I have a job and a place and friends and I guess, the next step would be, uh…”

Taehyung smiles at him. Slowly, his focus shifts from inside his head to Yoongi again, because thinking about Yoongi feeling better and at home here now is nicer than the chaos between his temples. “You wanna see other people,” he says softly. “Or I guess I mean, you wanna be able to actually date someone.”

“Pretty much,” Yoongi breathes. He seems relieved, Taehyung thinks. But he’s not sure. “Not that there's actually someone I've set my eyes on right now, or anything. But I just… wanna get myself out there again, and stuff.”

Taehyung nods, silent. He doesn't know what to say. Next to him, Boop sits down on the floor and scratches herself behind the ear. Yoongi throws her a look before glancing up at him again.

“And it's not like we won't see each other anymore,” Yoongi says and Taehyung wonders if he looks as lost as Yoongi’s soft tone suggests. “We're still…” He smiles at him. “You're my friend by now. A really good one, too. I'm still here for Boop walks, you still have the key code to my apartment. I'm still here. Just not as your fake boyfriend anymore.”

I can tell mom and dad that we parted on good terms, Taehyung thinks. That's good. That'll make it easier. He smiles back at him. “Alright,” he says. He shifts from one foot to the other, and then all he can think of is how many of their dates ended up in bathroom stalls, how often they joked about that they don’t know how to spend time together without making out. He clears his throat. “Then, I guess we shouldn’t… uh--”

“Fuck anymore?” Yoongi says with a weary little grin. “Yeah, I think that’d be smart.”

And that sounds like it makes sense, but something in Taehyung doesn’t want it to. They could still be fuckbuddies, no? Friends with benefits? That’s been working out well, and he really… He doesn’t want it to end, Taehyung thinks. He doesn’t want this to be over.

But Yoongi is right and they’re friends now and they’ll still see each other, and Taehyung should be happy with that. Who the fuck is he, anyway? He loves being friends with people, and he’s been very much enjoying fully clothed time with Yoongi, too. This is fine, this is alright. The only bad thing about this is that he’ll have to tell his parents sooner or later, but that’s it. They’re friends and Yoongi wants to find an actual relationship with someone and maybe Taehyung will, too, and that’s good for them, that’s all he should care about.

“Right,” he says. Everything still seems fuzzy and difficult, but he’s going to get a grip any second now. “Well… Then I guess it’s about time I say thank you.” Taehyung laughs at himself for sounding awkward, shakes his head a bit, and tries to focus on Yoongi again. “You’ve been amazing. Back in Australia when I blurted out to my parents that I’m taken, I really didn’t expect this to be so much fun, and… Yeah, just, thanks for everything, for even agreeing in the first place back then--”

“Tae,” Yoongi says, “come here.”

And next thing Taehyung knows, Yoongi pulls him in his arms.

They part with a promise to meet up in the park with Boop two days from now, a soothing smile on Yoongi’s lips, and Taehyung thinks he’s smiling too, but he can’t say for sure. His head is still swimming for some reason he can’t comprehend, his feet heavy on his way to the elevator and up to
the apartment. His throat burns and his eyes sting and Boop presses close to his legs all the time and Taehyung knows, he knows that means that he’s sad, but he can’t grasp why, because everything is alright. It’s not the end, not at all. It’s only the end of lying to his parents, but Yoongi said it himself, he’s still there. Taehyung gained a friend and they have something good, something deep, and they don’t have to fuck in public places or hold hands in front of his parents for that.

So if it’s not the end, why does he still feel like he lost something?

Seokjin, Namjoon, and Hoseok sitting huddled together over a table in a corner of their usual ramyun shop looks so normal that it makes Yoongi feel temporarily better about what he’s going to drop on them in a minute. They all look up with smiles on their faces when he approaches, his steaming bowl already in his hands, and throw various greetings around as Yoongi sits down across from Hoseok once more. He returns them all, of course, tells Jin he’s doing alright, congratulates Namjoon on his successful finals, and then he can already feel Hoseok’s gaze on him, like he can tell that something’s wrong. Yoongi stirs his chopsticks around in his soup a bit, then he leans back and looks at all of them.

“I broke up with Taehyung,” he says.

Namjoon chokes on a piece of pork.

“What?” Jin says softly, sounding very confused, while Hoseok repeatedly slams a hand on Namjoon’s back. “Why?”

Even while Hoseok is still busy, he’s exchanging a glance with Yoongi, frowning, knowing. Yoongi looks down at his food and smiles. “It wasn’t real,” he says. “We were… We haven’t been dating for a year. I’ve only known him for a few months. We’ve been faking it since February because he needed someone to help him prove to his parents that being gay doesn’t mean being alone for the rest of his life.”

Namjoon is breathing again, his face dark red, and he’s staring at Yoongi. “Back up,” he says hoarsely. “Faking it? You’ve been… You’ve been fake dating? Like in the movies?”

“Yes,” Yoongi says and carefully puts some ramyun in his mouth, just to have something to do.

“If you were doing it for his parents why were you acting all couple-y in front of us?” Jin asks, still sounding more puzzled than anything else.

“Wanted to see how far I can take it,” Yoongi says with his mouth full. Hoseok is suddenly also very preoccupied with his food, something that doesn’t get past Jin unnoticed, and he gasps and points an accusing finger at him.

“You knew about this!”

“Actually I think I kind of accidentally started it,” Hoseok says to his bowl. “If I hadn’t introduced Jimin to Yoongi at that party, they might have never started talking about this.”

The thought punches Yoongi in the guts somehow, the realization that if things had gone just a little differently, they might have just found someone else. None of this would have happened. He swallows quickly, but Namjoon pipes up before he can say anything.
"Wait. What party? Yoongi said February? Are we talking about the one we all went to in Itaewon, the one on Valentine’s Day?"

"What the fuck," Yoongi says now, staring at Hoseok in disbelief. "That was Valentine’s Day?"

"Yeah, Yoongi, I know you tend to forget that," Hoseok says dryly and Yoongi looks away again, "but yes, it was Valentine’s Day."

"You started fake dating a stranger on Valentine’s Day," Jin summarizes solemnly. "And now you’re breaking up with him? You’re just out to end every romantic trope in existence now."

"Yeah, so, why?" Namjoon says. "I was under the impression you two do actually get along pretty well, I know your acting isn’t that good. What happened?"

Most of all, Yoongi can feel Hoseok’s gaze on him. Maybe Hoseok is waiting for him to spill the whole truth, not just the beginning of it, to tell Namjoon and Seokjin what he told him. That he fell in love with the guy and needed a way out. Because Taehyung loves him, he does, but not in the way Yoongi needs him to, and all he was left to do was end this thing they had and give himself some more room to breathe again. That’s what happened. He fell in love with someone he can’t have and he’s just trying to save himself from drowning.

But then again, maybe Hoseok knows him well enough to know that’s not happening.

"Nothing," Yoongi says with a shrug and leans back in his seat. "It’s just that we’ve made our point now, and I’ve been getting a bit sick of being single without being able to tell anyone that I’m single."

"You could have just said you wanna sleep around again," Jin says and pats his shoulder. "It’s okay, we understand."

"Do we?" Namjoon says sharply, but immediately cracks up in his attempt at throwing his boyfriend a warning glare. The topic seems mostly over when they all giggle at that.

All of them, except for Hoseok.

He keeps watching Yoongi over their ramyun, worry etched into his features in this subtle way that’s lost on Namjoon and Jin, but very, very present for Yoongi, who reads Hoseok just as well as vice versa. But Hoseok has no reason to look at him like that, Yoongi tells himself. He’s doing the right thing, he’s saving himself. Maybe he’s just taking the easy way out, but sometimes that’s better, and Yoongi is no fucking superhero. He’s just trying to get by.

He made the right choice.

“It’s kind of weird,” Jin says with a laugh, “that you’re just ending like this, now. I mean, like in all the stories, you’d sort of expect something to come out of it, no? You’d never consider that it could just, at some point, end, and that’s it. But with you two I probably shouldn’t even be surprised.”

He and Namjoon are definitely having a good time. Hoseok stops looking at Yoongi and silently goes back to his food. Yoongi doesn’t feel much like eating anymore. He’s sick instead, somewhere deep in the back of his throat.

He has a feeling that that’s not going to go away for a while.

Chapter End Notes
remember, as the ancient writer saying goes: if it hurts you, it's probably hurting me more

there's a lot of stuff in this update that i've been planning and thinking about for a literal year. with this chapter, with is roughly the length of fellowship of the ring. we've surpassed two thousand kudos, and we're terrifyingly close to one thousand subscriptions, which is still a surreal number to me, so, u guessed it: once more i wanna thank you all. you're amazing. ♥

and i want to take this opportunity to promise, to swear, that these two will get their happy ending.
Taegi have horrible, horrible timing.
People talk a lot, Jihope represent all of us. And I drop one last unpleasant surprise.

warning for angst, i guess
this one's just sad. i'm sorry. believe it or not, it's uphill from here, though. :')

Jungkook and Jimin look at him like he just tried to explain the theory of relativity to them.

They’re all sitting cross-legged on the floor in Taehyung’s room, Jungkook and Jimin next to each other, Taehyung across from them, playing with the jar in his hands -- his dead shark baby came in the mail. Taehyung was just about to tell them that he thinks he’s going to name it Agata when he sat down and looked at them both and told them about Yoongi instead. Now both of them are staring at him with wide eyes, and Jungkook’s mouth is hanging open. Jimin’s hands are slack in his lap.

“Why?” Jimin says. “Wh-- Why, was it because of the Daegu debacle? Couldn’t he have thought about that earlier? I told him—”

“No, it’s,” Taehyung starts, then interrupts himself to squint at Jimin. “What did you tell him?”

Jimin blanches. “Nothing,” he says, unconvincingly, but Taehyung just throws him a tired look and lets it go.

“It’s not about Daegu, he made that very clear,” Taehyung says. He sounds calmer than he feels, but Jungkook and Jimin know him well enough that that’s not necessarily a good sign. “He’s just … had enough, I suppose. My parents think we’ve been together for almost a year now; maybe I’ll hold off on telling them about the, uh, I guess it’s a breakup -- maybe I’ll hold off on telling them about it for a bit more. I mean, Yoongi offered to change his mind and stay longer if I deemed it necessary to convince my parents, but I actually don’t? I guess we’re good. So there’s no reason not to let him go. He wants to, like, be able to put himself out there again, and stuff. That’s all.”

“Put himself out there?” Jimin echoes quietly.

“Yeah, like, go on actual dates with people.” Taehyung shrugs. “I mean, we never said that we’re exclusive or anything, but I know he never even flirted with anyone else just to make sure to keep up our farce. He has every right to grow sick of that.”

They’re all silent for a bit. Jimin watches Agata’s jar roll around between Taehyung’s hands with a frown, like he’s trying to find a reason to object. But he seems to be failing. “I guess he does,” he just ends up saying.
Jungkook still stares at him with wide eyes and an open mouth. His expression doesn’t really change when he says, “Are you okay, Tae?”

And that’s just it, isn’t it.

Taehyung has no idea.

He slumps a bit, exhaling in a heavy sigh and looking at the floor between them. “I,” he says helplessly, “I don’t know.”

“Oh,” Jimin says softly, and then he’s already scooting over the floor, coming closer until he can throw his arms around Taehyung’s shoulders from the side, one hand immediately going into his hair. “Aw, Taetae, baby -- did you… I mean, are you--”

“No,” Taehyung says firmly from where his temple is resting on Jimin’s shoulder now. He’s talking to both of them, but looking at Jungkook. “No, I’m not crushing on him. I know I’m not. It doesn’t feel like a crush.”

And it doesn’t. It really, really, doesn’t, because Taehyung knows what a crush feels like, he gets them all the damn time, and this isn’t one. He’s not being loud and dramatic and infatuated, he’s just… He’s just missing him. Even if they met up yesterday morning to walk his dog. He misses Yoongi.

Taehyung likes crushing on people a lot better than whatever the hell this is.

“Maybe I’m just grouchy because we can’t fuck anymore,” he says.

“You’ll find someone else to fuck, Tae,” Jungkook says helpfully.

“Yeah, but will I find someone who talks about fucking me against a hotel window in a public place?”

“Christ,” Jimin says and quite literally recoils from Taehyung, releasing him from his arms so Taehyung can sit up straight again and cackle at him.

He knows it’s not just about the sex. Of course he does. Taehyung isn’t stupid; he can read other people a whole lot better than he usually reads himself, only attentive when it’s not about him, but he knows that much. He is going to miss the sex with Yoongi because it’s been fucking stellar and a whole bunch of new experiences and he values that, but it’s not all. There’s something else. He knows that, and his friends know that, otherwise they wouldn’t be babying him for the rest of the day like he really did just get dumped by a boyfriend.

But Taehyung doesn’t know what else it is. Sure, he has his suspicions. He’s seen enough dramas. He guesses the most obvious answer would be that he was, is, maybe kind of sort of a bit into Yoongi and that’s why he misses acting like they’re dating so much. But that’s stupid. That doesn’t make sense; Taehyung has been broken up with before, he’s had his heart crushed before, it never felt like this.

With boys, Taehyung always flew too high and then dropped hard when it ended, hyping and obsessing over them until they broke up and he had to lock himself in his room for two days with nothing but blankets, his dog, and entire tubs of ice cream. He’d cry his eyes out over ex boyfriends, for god’s sake. He’s not crying over Yoongi. He’s okay, really, he’s just missing him.

That’s his one recurring thought.
Yoongi is still there -- he’s keeping his promise. They keep meeting up, every few days or so. They’re in contact via text too, he really is still there, and Taehyung is incredibly happy about that. But he misses him.

It’s not the same.

They shouldn’t have less to talk about now than they did before -- it’s not like they talked about fake dating or sex all the time. They talked about other stuff too, so when they meet up now, they should still be able to do just that. Be normal friends, check up on each other and hold small talk. And they try. Taehyung tries, and he knows that Yoongi tries.

But it’s not the same.

Their Boop walks go from quiet to silent to awkward, and get rarer from there. When Yoongi finally gets a TV for his living room, he invites Taehyung over to watch movies with him, and it’s nice for a bit, until they sit side by side silently over empty pizza cartons and watch a movie Taehyung doesn’t necessarily care for. Yoongi doesn’t seem too invested either and Taehyung knows fully well that a month ago, this would have been their cue to start making out, but now they can’t. And he misses more than just the naked hunger they had for each other -- he misses how they’d banter, he misses talking to him without feeling this horrible barrier between them, he misses touching him and wrapping his arms around him and feeling his hair tickle his chin. Yoongi’s mere presence seems to leave a burning trail on Taehyung’s skin as he sits next to him on his couch, and he’s so close, he’s so fucking close, and Taehyung misses him.

After the movie, Yoongi timidly suggests that if Taehyung wants to spend the night, they can share his bed. He does it with his other friends too, he says. It’s no big deal.

Taehyung sleeps on the couch. He can’t take any more of Yoongi being this close and so far away.

He doesn’t know what this is. He knows it’s not a crush and he knows it’s not his usual sort of heartbreak after his crushes go to hell. It’s something else, and he doesn’t know what it is, but he wants it to be over.

When Jungkook and Jimin finally make tangible plans with him to leave for at least a week by the end of the month, Taehyung can’t wait to get away.

“I can’t wait to get away,” Jimin says, pulls his pants off while he’s still walking through Hoseok’s living room, and then falls flat on his couch. “The weather here is killing me.”

Hoseok looks up from his choreography sheets spread out over the coffee table to marvel at his ass. “It’s not really gonna be much different in Busan, is it?”

“Forecast says it’ll be rainy,” Jimin says into Hoseok’s sofa cushion before turning his head. “I’ll take that over this stupid heat here any day. Though it might not do much for Tae’s mood.” He sighs deeply, and before Hoseok can ask, Jimin says, “How’s Yoongi been doing?”

Hoseok grimaces. Yoongi has been doing fairly well, actually, but he doesn’t like where this is going. “Okay,” he says, warily. “Why, how’s Tae been doing?”

During a few beats of silence, Jimin just looks at him and grimaces back. Then he worms around on the couch until he’s on his side; Hoseok’s gaze slips briefly to watch his thighs work around the movement, then he’s back to looking at his face. “He keeps saying he doesn’t know,” Jimin says
quietly. “I think he’s taking it harder than he thought he would.”

“Oh no,” Hoseok says softly. He puts his pen down on his choreography work and runs the hand over his mouth instead. “You don’t think he…?”

“He says he doesn’t. Tae’s convinced he’s not into Yoongi like that,” Jimin says and shifts around a little more, worry now etched into his features. Hoseok can barely take it. “But he’s… I mean, I know he doesn’t really seem like it, but Taetae is really messy and complicated when it comes to feelings.”

Hoseok blinks. “Really? You’re right, he doesn’t seem like it. I always thought he’s sort of a heart-on-your-sleeve kinda guy.”

“Yeah, I guess technically he is. But you gotta factor in that he’s fucking stupid.” When Hoseok can’t help but laugh, Jimin snorts too, and drapes a hand over his eyes with a deep sigh. Hoseok scoots around with his butt on the floor until he reaches the sofa, and Jimin’s other hand grabs for his and squeezes it. “I mean I love him, you know I do, but he’s… He’s such a smart dude, but he’s also so stupid. He doesn’t think far enough.” Jimin looks at him again just so they can exchange worried glances. “It’s like he forgets that feelings can evolve past crushes. That there’s more than that, bigger stuff. Tae always thinks it’s either crushing or nothing, and I guess it shows with how superficially he used to date all those boyfriends of his, just kept them around for the rose-colored glasses phase and then watched it crumble and disappear. He’s outgoing, you know that, but he doesn’t actually let many people in far enough to do anything more than crush on them. I guess it’s a self protection thing, God fucking knows.” Jimin waves his free hand around vaguely and then drops it back on his own forehead. “What I’m saying is, while Tae rarely develops real, deep feelings for people, the bigger problem is actually that… well, if he does, he won’t notice. Not until it’s too late.”

“Oh no,” Hoseok says again, even softer this time. Jimin nods.

“We always say he falls in love with everyone he sees, but what we mean with that is brief infatuation that always ends badly. He doesn’t really fall in love often, so he has trouble seeing it. When he and I started getting closer back then, it was me and Jungkook who pretty much had to sit him down and convince him that what he felt for me was more than your regular old crush. You can imagine what that did to my self-esteem at first.” Jimin snorts and Hoseok squeezes his hand again. “So, I… I don’t know. I guess what I’m saying is, there’s a chance he’s feeling something for Yoongi, something big, and now that their thing is over, he feels shitty about it, and he doesn’t even fully understand why.”

Hoseok has been chewing on his lower lip. He’s desperately craving a smoke, just to try and get his thoughts in order. This kind of seems like the right time to tell Jimin in on that conversation he had with Yoongi, what feels like forever ago, where Yoongi admitted to being in love, and to thinking it’s hopeless. But Yoongi is his best fucking friend and Hoseok can’t go around telling people his secrets. Jimin wouldn’t just walk out of here and spill it to the world, of course, but, still. He’d be a bad friend if he told Jimin about this, right? Or would he be a bad friend if he said nothing and possibly ruined Yoongi’s last chance for a heart-to-heart confession with Taehyung?

“Out of all of us, you know Yoongi best,” Jimin says suddenly, big pretty eyes staring at Hoseok and he can feel his stomach twist. “Do you think he has feelings for Tae?”

“No,” Hoseok says, a little too quickly, making Jimin frown. Hoseok closes his eyes. He thinks about Yoongi the last few times he saw him -- still pale, still perpetually tired, but ultimately stable. Put together. Going both to work and to bed on time, eating three meals a day. Not one time did he see him with those bloodshot puffy eyes of his that he always gets after crying. He really has been getting better. But Jimin probably already knows that something’s up, so Hoseok says, “He used to.”
Jimin groans loudly and rolls on his back, his free hand back over his eyes. "God," he grits out, "I swear, those two have taken twenty years off my lifespan." He squints at Hoseok from underneath his hand. "He doesn’t anymore? You’re sure?"

Hoseok shrugs carefully. He’s not, but this is a slippery slope to go down. "He’s well on his way out," he just says. Jimin actually literally kicks his feet at that and sends one of his pillows flying, almost knocking over a vase.

"Sorry," he says quietly. "Don’t you think we should do something?"

"What, like, play matchmaker?" Hoseok says with horror so evident in his voice, it makes Jimin flinch a bit. "Don’t you think we did enough damage when we started this whole nightmare?"

Jimin whines. "It just hurts to watch. Why are they like this?" He raises his hand again to turn his head and look at Hoseok, pleading with his eyes. Hoseok feels himself shrink. "Will you at least talk to him? Just a bit? Just feel around a little, see if there’s still a chance? I’ll be down in Busan dealing with Tae’s moody ass for a whole week, please, help me."

Briefly, Hoseok gets the fleeting thought that if Jimin were to look at and talk to him like this, he could ask him to tie a knot in his dick and get in one of those glass-floor elevators he’s so terrified of, and he’d do it immediately. He still sighs deeply, because a dick knot sounds a bit more pleasing than talking to Min Yoongi about feelings.

"Fine," he says, one hand still playing with Jimin’s fingers. "Just know that if Tae is bad with feelings, Yoongi is a biblical catastrophe."

"Yeah," Jimin says flatly, and puts the hand back over his eyes. "He looks like it."

Yoongi has been watching variety shows. He pretended that it’s relevant to his job at first, but really he’s just enjoying his new TV, and he’s kind of into watching these kids stumble all over themselves on their ways to fame. It’s cute. So he’s been sitting around at home and watching variety shows.

Hoseok, meanwhile, has been watching him.

Yoongi has noticed minutes ago, and Hoseok hasn’t let up since. He knows what this is about, really, it’s about the same thing that all of their unspoken conversations have been about for weeks. Hoseok rarely actually talks about it, but he gives him looks, and Yoongi usually just gives him looks in return. Hoseok’s worried about him, and Yoongi appreciates that on a theoretical level because he’s trying to be a good friend, but he’s also starting to feel a little pissed off. It’s not like he races through his apartment to clean up and slap on a face mask and put some used dishes in his sink to make it look like he ate something every time before Hoseok decides to drop by. Yoongi cleans up just fine on his own, takes care of himself without Hoseok checking in on him, and Hoseok should know that by now.

He’s doing better, he really is. It’s about time for Hoseok to stop looking at him like that.

With a big, dramatic roll of his eyes, Yoongi drops his head against the backrest of his couch and turns it to the side, where Hoseok is sitting next to him, to stare him down. "Just fucking say it," he says over the chatter and occasional screeching on the TV. "Come on."

But instead of saying it, Hoseok just grimaces and continues watching him like he’s trying to figure
out some sort of riddle someone left on Yoongi’s face. Yoongi has to do everything himself around here.

“You think I shouldn’t have ended the thing with Tae,” he says flatly. “There, I said it for you. You’re welcome, you ass.”

Hoseok shifts around, pulling his feet to his chest and his arms around his legs, leaning sideways against the backrest now, still looking at him with that stupid frown. “I just,” he says quietly, “can’t shake the feeling that you weren’t done with each other yet.”

For this, Yoongi just sends an incredulous glance his way, unsatisfied with how Hoseok doesn’t recoil from his death glares anymore. What the hell kind of cryptic answer was that. “We’re not,” he says, waving a hand around. “We’re still friends. How often do I have to remind you? You’re making it sound like we had a falling out or whatever. I just decided to stop lying to his parents, and to stop sleeping with someone I can’t have. You’d think my best friend could appreciate that.”

Hoseok takes a deep breath and sighs it all out, bowing his head in half a nod. “I am glad that you’re happier,” he says, then stops. Yoongi figures he probably meant to add something else, but can’t put it in words. That’s just fucking fine with him. Yoongi is happier, and that’s all that should be to it.

It’s not like it’s been easy on him. Getting used to life as nothing but Taehyung’s regular old friend has been weird and hard at times, but Yoongi still thinks it’s for the better. He misses him, yes, misses the sex and the practically-public groping, misses the pillow talk and the unnecessary handholding. And he realizes that Taehyung and he are starting to somewhat grow apart a little so he misses the easy talks and frequent cinema, café and park dates too, misses hearing Taehyung laugh and watching him ponder over his textbooks. He misses him. Fuck, he does.

But Yoongi doesn’t miss crying into his breakfast cereal. He doesn’t miss lying awake at night thinking about nothing but Taehyung, his eyes, his hair, his hands, his mouth, the way he wants the whole world to be happy. He doesn’t miss the sickening mix of emotions he’d get for every single look in Taehyung’s direction, the butterflies panicking in his stomach. He misses Taehyung, but he doesn’t miss being fucking miserable. And he has to have his priorities straight, has to take care of himself first and foremost, so he’s doing his goddamn best.

They’ll find back to each other. Yoongi wants to believe that. Maybe they’re spending less and less time with each other now, and maybe that’s really fucking scary, but it’s not like they’re dropping off the face of the Earth. They have mutual friends now. They’re connected through more than just each other, so they’ll find each other again. When they first met getting used to each other was hard, but they solved that fairly quick, at least for Yoongi’s standards. He just has to get over Taehyung first, and then they can reconnect. They’ll fall right back into it; Yoongi wants to believe in them.

And he is getting over him. Slowly but steadily, he’s getting there. Taehyung is on a trip with his friends right now and Yoongi doesn’t miss him as much as he would have maybe two weeks ago, and he almost manages not to think about Taehyung getting to know other boys there, because that’s not Yoongi’s business and he can do what and who he wants.

It’s all working out. Yoongi is glad he kept his mouth shut and just ended things before they could have gotten even more out of control.

But he seems to be the only person thinking that.

Yoongi sighs, again. Hoseok is still giving him that look. “You just think I shouldn’t have taken the
easy way out,” Yoongi says for him. “You think I should have told him.”

Hoseok shifts, looking vaguely caught in the act. “Generally when you tell people things, that makes stuff easier,” he says, and Yoongi snorts.

“Yeah, that is a very general statement, Seok.” When he reaches over to flick him on the forehead, Hoseok gives him an apologetic glance. “It’s all working out okay. Stop worrying.”

“You sure?” Hoseok says, unnecessarily rubbing his forehead. “Even now with Tae in Busan? You don’t miss him?”

*I do miss him,* Yoongi thinks, but something else catches his attention. “Oh, is that where they went? Busan?”

Hoseok’s apologetic expression changes back to alarmed so quickly Yoongi wonders if he broke any speed limits. “You didn’t even know?”

“Didn’t ask him,” Yoongi says and shrugs. Taehyung told him they were driving away for a week, Yoongi told him to have fun. He didn’t ask any questions. He’s used to asking not being necessary with Taehyung because he’d usually just tell him either way, babbling on about stuff even when it seemed like Yoongi wasn’t listening. (He always was.)

“Yeah, well, maybe you should have,” Hoseok says quietly.

Yoongi squints at him. He is used to Hoseok worrying and fussing over him and his questionable life decisions, but this one feels weird. “Why?” he says slowly. “Do you know something about him that I don’t?”

He’s not even completely sure what he’s insinuating. That Taehyung is actually into him and Hoseok knows, but Yoongi doesn’t? Ridiculous. Stupid. That Taehyung has been missing him more than he lets on? Maybe. Yoongi wants to believe that Hoseok just wants him to get his head out of his ass and be more social for once, but Hoseok just keeps looking at him with that unhappy expression and stays silent for a long time. He hesitates so much that it makes his answer so unbelievable it’s almost comical.

“No,” Hoseok says finally. He doesn’t look convinced, and Yoongi doesn’t feel convinced. “I just don’t like seeing you two grow apart. I guess Jimin’s made me into some sort of romantic or something.”

“Nah, you already were one before, you loser,” Yoongi says, making Hoseok snort.

“Only you would say romance is for losers, Yoongi. Only you.”

“No, I have whole troops of emotionally constipated assholes backing me up, actually.”

“You are so horrible. All these years, and I still can’t believe you sometimes. Oh, hey, wait, stop talking back for a second, I wanna see this.” Hoseok has the audacity to slap a hand over Yoongi’s mouth while reaching for the remote. “They’re dancing now, look!”

Yoongi doesn’t look. Yoongi pinches Hoseok’s sides until he screeches.

After that, Hoseok is kind enough to leave him be, switching to more comfortable topics smoothly while they quarrel in front of the TV. Yoongi can tell that he misses Jimin, but he’s also distinctly enjoying the easy going alone-time with his best friend again. They order fast food and laze around Yoongi’s apartment way into the evening, until both of them have to go to work. Hoseok doesn’t
bring Taehyung up again.

But he doesn’t leave Yoongi’s mind.

Days later, when he’s holed up in his steadily growing work room, he still thinks about him. There are notes scattered over his desk, mainly various edited versions of his transcript from Taehyung talking about jellies in a museum in New York. He had to make it rhyme somehow, at least a little bit, at least give it some sort of beat, a rhythm. There’s music paper with smudged pencil marks on them, and a green post-it note reminding himself of the key he wanted to use, because he’s prone to forgetting that. He’s working on something special.

He’s been crafting it ever since they came back from New York, with many breaks in between thanks to the move and all the other crap that went down, and also thanks to him stewing in that phase of wanting to cry whenever he even thought of Taehyung. But he’s better now, so he’s picking it up again. He’ll have it done soon, he’s pretty sure.

Oh, Yoongi has written songs for all his other friends before. None of them took him this long to make and none of them involved transcripts of shit they were saying while unaware that Yoongi was recording them, admittedly. But that was before, of course, before his big drought where he couldn’t write, couldn’t text, couldn’t compose. Too caught up in those sudden resurfaced memories, Yoongi couldn’t quite figure out how to get back into things, how to write lyrics that weren’t all about the same thing, that weren’t him screaming himself hoarse about abuse over and over and over again. He didn’t write because he was scared of what might come out, scared of what he might make himself read, of what he might force himself to listen to, so he didn’t do it at all.

But he’s getting back into the swing of things now, and maybe that’s thanks to his stable situation with a job, an apartment, no financial dread, forgiving friends. But maybe it’s partly thanks to Taehyung too. And maybe he wants to write him a song about jellies and what it means to be an almost immortal turtle in return. Because even if Yoongi has been trying hard to get over him, even if he’s bad at communicating most of the time, Taehyung still means a lot to him, and he’s going to try to let him know somehow.

Eventually, Yoongi takes a picture of the sound editing software open on his computer screen and sends it to Taehyung, reminding him that they had a pact and he expects to receive an evidence photo of Taehyung playing his saxophone as soon as he gets back home now. He hesitates for a few seconds, then he sends another text saying that he hopes he’s having fun in Busan.

The messages get marked as read almost instantly. Taehyung sends him a row of exclamation marks, a promise to play as soon as he’s home (who needs unpacking anyway), and a million pictures of Busan.

Yoongi smiles, and he doesn’t realize that he keeps smiling all throughout the following two hours.

Taehyung texts him back a very awkward selfie of him haphazardly holding his saxophone mouthpiece between his lips the very evening he returns to Seoul; he never knew how hard it is to take a picture of yourself when you’re holding an instrument.

Going to Busan was good; having Yoongi text him first was good; holding idle conversation about music now is good (Yoongi won’t tell him what exactly he’s working on for some reason, but Taehyung still tells him which pieces he’s practicing and how he’s slowly getting back into his sax routine). It’s all a good thing. He still doesn’t feel good, but good things are happening, and that
means he’ll be better soon.

It was a wonky belief to begin with, and it gets crushed in the cradle when he comes back home one day after sleeping over at Jimin’s and Jungkook’s, and his aunt is sitting in their living room.

He knows it’s a bad sign the second he walks in. It’s in the air. If Moonhee had dropped by for a casual visit, someone would have announced it to Taehyung. Something is up, something bad, it’s in the air and in the silence in the living room and in the looks Moonhee and his mother are wearing on their faces when Taehyung comes home, and it’s in the loud, roaring absence of his father.

“The good news, Tae,” Moonhee says before Taehyung can even open his mouth, “is that we finally found the last miserable leftovers of that asshole clan, have them located and ready to go up in flames like an anthill. The bad news is that we only got them because they found your father first.”

Blindly, and very slowly, Taehyung takes a few more steps through the room until he finds a chair and drops down on it. He feels like his knees might have given out if he had waited a second longer. He doesn’t know if he’s blinking and his vision is blurring around the edges. He can’t remember even opening the apartment door.

“Moonhee,” his mother says with that tone of gentle warning Taehyung knows from his childhood. The two women exchange a glance, then his mother looks at him and Taehyung tries to look back at her. “He’s in the hospital, sweetie. He’ll make it. They told us he will. He’s being taken care of.”

“Wh--” Taehyung starts. He inhales twice and doesn’t exhale in between, trying to process what’s being said and to sort it under good news and bad news like his aunt, but it’s all greying into a horrifying, uncomfortable mass in his head. “Why-- Why didn’t you tell me right away?”

“We wanted you to have fun with your friends for as long as you could,” his mother says gently. “And there’s nothing we can do for him right now anyway, Tae. He’s not conscious, and he won’t be for another day or two. You can go see him whenever you want, of course, but he won’t be awake. Plus, he...” Taehyung’s vision clears up enough to see the pained expression on his mother’s face, of a woman who had to see her husband in a hospital bed. “He doesn’t look good right now.”

“What happened?” Taehyung croaks.

“He was in his car and they hit him with theirs,” Moonhee says. “They got pretty banged up too. We got eyes on them and we’re ready to strike and that’ll finally be the end to this damn mess, but as long as they don’t seem to be doing anything else we’re waiting for your father to wake up so he can witness it.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says, feeling like he’s swimming in and out of the room.

“He has some contusions, a few broken ribs, and a cranial trauma,” his mother says. “That’s why it’ll still take him a bit to wake up. He’s just gonna need some time to think clear again, but he’ll make it. Okay, Tae? He’ll be alright. You can see him whenever you want, and you’ll have him back in no time.”

“Okay,” Taehyung says again. His mother gets up and drops down on the armrest of his chair instead to pull him into a hug. Taehyung feels himself tremble only now that she’s touching him, and he doesn’t know how long they stay like this, her arms around his shoulders and his own wrapped around her middle, he just knows that he’s starting to feel a little more stable again, like the world isn’t completely spinning out of control anymore.

When she excuses herself to go make tea for them all (“There’s not much else we can do.”),
Taehyung goes upstairs to his room, where Boop is curled up on his bed looking at him from big awake eyes, like she’s just been waiting for him to finally come to her. Taehyung only vaguely notices that Moonhee followed him here, he just drops face-forward into his bed and wraps both of his arms around his dog, who diligently lowers her head to lick at his hands. The bed tips and Moonhee sits down next to them, one hand on Taehyung’s shoulder blade.

“I’m really sorry,” she says, “that you have to deal with this on top of the heartache.”

Taehyung whips his head around to look up at her so fast that his neck makes a worrying noise. “What?” he says, and Moonhee smiles down at him apologetically.

“I still read you like an open book, kid. You wanna tell me what happened with him?”

Taehyung sniffles, feeling wetness burn in his eyes already, a sting in the back of his throat. He shuffles around on his bed until he can sit up, Boop’s head immediately heavy on his thighs, and Moonhee’s arm around his shoulders. “I don’t know,” he says quietly. “I mean I don’t know if I wanna, but I also … don’t know what happened, really. I’m just confused. I miss him when he’s not even gone, he’s still there and he’s so sweet to me, but it’s not… not what I want, I guess, but I don’t know--”

The tears come with a choked hiccup that should embarrass him, but Taehyung can’t bring himself to care right now, not in front of his family, anyway. He buries his face in his hands, and then Moonhee pulls him closer and he buries his face in her shoulder instead, trying to take quiet breaths through his mouth.

“I’m sorry,” he gets out, muffled against her shirt. “I don’t want to be crying over boys when dad’s in the hospital with a head trauma.”

Moonhee squeezes his shoulder. “Maybe you’re crying over both,” she says gently, and Taehyung thinks that maybe he is. “That’s quite alright; you know, sometimes big stuff has to go down to make us realize the smaller stuff, too.”

Taehyung laughs, a breathless, shrill sound, and pulls back a little to wipe at his face with the back of his hand. “I’m not realizing anything though,” he says. Moonhee grabs the tissue box from his nightstand and puts it on her lap instead. “I’m confused all the time, nothing else. I don’t know what I want or where we’re at. I feel so stupid.”

“You’re not stupid,” Moonhee says. She hands him a tissue, and over blowing his nose, Taehyung almost doesn’t hear what she says afterwards. “You’re just in love.”

Taehyung doesn’t say anything, doesn’t even react much. He holds the tissue in his hand and leans his head on her shoulder and looks down at Boop on his thigh, blinking blearily through quiet tears. He’s not… No, he can’t be. He would have noticed. He knew he wasn’t crushing on Yoongi because he can read himself just fine, so if he was in love, he’d… He would have known, right? The last time he was really, truly, in actual love it was with Jimin, and he figured that out, didn’t he?

Boop heaves a long sigh, blowing hot air against one of Taehyung’s thighs. No, he didn’t, he realizes. He didn’t figure that out back then, his friends practically had to spell it out for him and even then he found it hard to grasp, even if now, in hindsight, he knows that it was true. He was in love with Jimin, he was so, so, head over heels, undeniably in love with Jimin.

That was different, though, he thinks, it felt different. Jimin and Yoongi are so damn different and even Taehyung was different back then, but in the end, he supposes, that doesn’t change anything. Doesn’t change what he felt then and doesn’t change what he feels now, whatever the hell it may be.
He doesn’t want to give it the name his aunt used quite yet, even though it keeps resonating through his head, muffled and distant, like he’s still blowing his nose.

When his mother calls them down again, they drink tea and make dinner together, drawing up plans for who’s going to visit the hospital when. It feels better than before, calmer and organized, and even if all three of them have bloodshot eyes and shaky hands, Taehyung feels like they’ll manage. It’s a good feeling in the midst of nothing but chaos, just good enough to distract him from the fact that Yoongi ended things with him, that Yoongi walked out of their deal, and that it doesn’t make his realization, if he dares to call it one, sound very promising.

Jungkook and Jimin call him while Taehyung already had his phone in his hand to text them. Jungkook’s father told him about what happened, of course, and now his friends are in on their visiting plans, vowing to accompany Taehyung whenever he wants them to, and to distract him for the time in between. Taehyung doesn’t want to cry anymore, but Jimin tells him that they love him in his soft, gentle voice, and then he does.

His mind goes back to Yoongi when his mother drives him to the hospital for the first time that same evening. Yoongi took all the news about his family and the attack in Daegu startlingly well, and Taehyung thinks he could probably deal with this, too, if Taehyung told him. But he’s not going to, just yet. He still remembers Yoongi’s thing about car accidents, about losing the one parent he did value in one, and he still has Moonhee’s words echoing between his temples, and that’s all a bit too much. He’s going to spare Yoongi the pain, and he’s going to spare himself the pain, at least for now, he’s going to deal with this with his family and with Jimin and Jungkook and that’ll be enough and he’ll be alright.

Or maybe he’s just scared. Maybe talking to Yoongi now sounds too scary to even think about it. And maybe, once he sits down in the visitor chair and gets to hold his father’s hand, he has other things to think about anyway.
Chapter Summary

Yoongi visits the hospital. Taehyung gets drunk. Dumb decisions are made, but at least they talk to each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Yoongi almost doesn’t hear the doorbell. Initially holed up in his work room and focused on his music, he only hears it the second time around, decides to ignore it, and irritably gets up from his chair when it chimes for the third time.

There’s a sharp What? on his tongue as he rips the door open, but it doesn’t come out when he sees Jungkook looking at him like somebody died. Yoongi’s irritation immediately dissolves. “Hey,” he says.

“Hey,” says Jungkook. “Can we talk?”

This is gonna be about Taehyung, Yoongi thinks, and part of him immediately wants to say no. But he nods instead, and steps to the side, motioning for Jungkook to come in silently when Jungkook doesn’t move at first. He shuffles past Yoongi then, kicks his shoes off at least, only to stand around in his living room afterwards, looking lost like he’s never been here before.

“What’s up?” Yoongi says once he joins him, glancing towards his couch briefly because he wonders if he left something gross there and maybe that’s why Jungkook is still standing in the middle of the room. “Don’t you wanna sit?”

Jungkook is chewing on his lower lip now, gaze flickering between Yoongi and the couch. “I don’t know if,” he says, fingers fiddling with each other, “I should really be here.”

Yoongi doesn’t know what the hell that’s supposed to mean, so he just raises his brows at him. Finally, Jungkook exhales in a frustrated little sigh.

“How much have you and Tae talked in the past three days?” he asks.

“Uh,” Yoongi says. He frowns, trying to think, which is a little hard over the uneasy feeling in his stomach. “Not much. I think last time he texted he told me he was having a sleepover with you guys. That was--”

“Three days ago, yes.” Jungkook runs both hands through his hair, making it stick out from his head in places. Yoongi watches him and idly wonders when he last washed it. Not like he’s judging; it’s just a bit disorienting when Jungkook usually smells like a Lush store. “God, I figured he didn’t tell you anything. You two are a nightmare, you know that?”

Taken aback, Yoongi opens his mouth and closes it again. He can’t help but be a bit … offended? On top of still feeling disoriented, because talking to him like that is another thing that usually doesn’t sound like Jungkook, who has recently stopped pretending like he doesn’t look up to Yoongi a whole lot and just lets it show all the time. “Hey,” Yoongi says without actually sounding defensive,
still mostly just bewildered. “What the hell is going on?”

Jungkook looks at him, takes a deep breath and says, “Tae’s dad is in the hospital. He was attacked, with a car. They’re saying he’ll make it, but he hasn’t been fully conscious in two days. His body is mostly alright, it’s just the head trauma that’s messing with us.”

Yoongi reaches behind himself, knowing the living room door has to be there somewhere. His fingers feel cold and numb when they find it and he grabs it, trying not to think of his mother but also trying not to think too much about how Taehyung must be doing right now, because it makes his knees quiver.

“I know things are a bit weird between the two of you right now,” Jungkook continues, “and I’m not here to pressure you into anything. Jimin and I are there, his mom is there, even his aunt came here from Daegu. He’s not alone, he’ll be alright without you. You don’t have to do anything if you don’t wanna. I guess.” He frowns a bit at that, and Yoongi knows it’s because he can’t really think of a reason why Yoongi wouldn’t want to be there for Taehyung. He doesn’t know about his mother, but Yoongi can feel the thought slipping to the back of his head gradually; that was so long ago and he did so much to get over it, and this is right now and Taehyung is out there somewhere, and Yoongi knows exactly how he must feel. “I just think,” Jungkook says, “that he’d be happier if you were there, too. I know you two were there for each other in the past. He was with you a lot back when Jimin wasn’t talking to us. So just, if it’s possible for you in any way, maybe drop by sometime. I think he’d like that.”

Yoongi squeezes the door between his fingers and swallows. He’s mentally trying to go over his work schedule, already fully prepared to call in sick if he has to, until he figures out that he still has half the day left before he has to be anywhere. “Where is he?” he asks, his voice sounding hoarse to him. “Right now?”

“He should still be at the hospital with his dad,” Jungkook says after a quick glance towards his watch. When he looks back at Yoongi, relief mingles with the worry on his features. “You wanna go see him?”

Nodding, Yoongi already absentmindedly pats himself down, finding his phone in the back pocket of his jeans and trying to remember where he threw his wallet the last time he came home. “Which hospital?” he asks, his voice sounding hoarse to him. “Right now?”

He knows his way around hospitals in general, after all, knows the whole institution fairly well by now, but it’s been a while and he’s not sure how well he could deal with it right now. Especially when it’s not his own family he’s looking for. He’s not even sure if he should technically be allowed to visit Taehyung’s father without his family’s knowledge, so he’s hoping that if Jungkook just smuggles him in somehow, he’ll be fine.

Hushed, Jungkook tells him more about the situation while they’re on the subway. Yoongi feels a little less like he’s toppling over now, but maybe that’s just because he’s holding onto one of the metal bars in here. He can see clear and feels mostly calm, but the more Jungkook tells him, the more his stomach churns. Taehyung has been at the hospital a lot, of course. Jungkook and Jimin went there with him twice but otherwise try to get him to leave now and then to get his mind off things at least for a little while, too. Jungkook says he’s quiet a lot and cried only once, but Yoongi has never seen Taehyung cry, not a single time, and doesn’t really know how to deal with the information that it happened and he wasn’t even there to hug him.

His father, at least, has steadily been getting better, and the hospital staff seems generally pleased with his development and has high hopes. He’ll need some rehab training afterwards, but Jungkook
casually remarks that he’s already getting treated by the best this city has to offer, which doesn’t surprise Yoongi. Things are looking good, basically. Only Taehyung isn’t.

Outwardly, neither does his father. Jungkook guides Yoongi through the maze of a hospital and then lets him into the room without knocking, and without following him inside, and Yoongi’s first gaze automatically goes to the bed at the wall. He’s only ever seen Taehyung’s father lively and all smiles, dressed nicely and well-kempt. Seeing him in a hospital gown now, a still healing graze wound on his forehead, contusions on his arms, eyes a little swollen and shut, his mouth hanging open, his hair messy, a catheter bag hanging from the side of his bed, almost knocks the breath out of Yoongi.

Taehyung looks up at him from where he’s sitting on one of the visitor chairs right next to the bed, facing the door, and to Yoongi, the sight seems almost worse. Taehyung’s shoulders are slumped, his hands in his lap, empty. Yoongi knows him as someone who likes to keep his mind busy, playing with his phone, reading in textbooks whenever there’s nothing to do, but he’s just sitting there. His hair looks worse than Jungkook’s and he has dark shadows under his eyes. Yoongi spots pimples on his cheek and knows he only gets them when he’s stressed. Taehyung’s mouth twitches when he sees him, at least, and it’s not a smile, not really, but Yoongi likes to think his face lights up a little bit.

“Oh,” Taehyung says softly, when the door closes behind Yoongi. “You heard.”

“Yeah, I heard,” Yoongi says and swallows the question of why Taehyung didn’t tell him. He’s in no position to ask. It’s not what he’s here for, and Yoongi is much too guilty of this reluctance to share himself to be casting any stones. Carefully, Yoongi takes the second visitor chair and drags it over the floor a bit until it’s right next to Taehyung and he can sink down on it, eyeing him. “How you holding up?”

Taehyung shrugs, heavily like it’s a huge effort to even raise his shoulders enough for it. He looks like a lost child, Yoongi thinks, his eyes wide but clueless as he stares at the bedspread, silent. He supposes that’s enough of an answer. “How’s he holding up?” Yoongi asks instead, nodding towards Taehyung’s father. Talking about his dad’s condition might be easier than trying to put his own feelings into words.

“They’re optimistic,” Taehyung says and Yoongi thinks he can feel his insides dissolve in acid at the lack of actual optimism in his voice. “They’re saying he’s slowly waking up, we just can’t visibly tell yet. He still needs a lot of rest. How much did Jungkook tell you?” he asks then, and frowns a little. “Or Jimin. Whoever ratted me out and brought you here. My guess is Jungkook.”

Yoongi can’t help but smile a bit at that. Even in this chaos, it’s still endearing how well those three know each other. “Well, he told me what happened,” Yoongi says softly. “And he said he’s getting the best treatment available.” He watches Taehyung nod weakly as a response, nothing else. The urge to reach out and take his hand almost physically overwhelms Yoongi for a second, but he’s not sure if they’re in the right place for that. Yoongi gets the fleeting thought that it was his idiot ass who took that from them, before he asks, “Where were you when you found out?”

It takes Taehyung a moment to answer, in which Yoongi watches his back straighten and his eyes refocus. “I was just coming home from the sleepover, and aunt Moonhee was in the living room. That already meant something was wrong. But she and mom immediately sat me down and told me.” He rubs at his eyes with a knuckle and casts Yoongi a glance. “Why?”

“I always felt like that sticks with you the most,” Yoongi says and shrugs. “My memory of pretty much everything is foggy at best, but I still remember clear as day sitting on Jin’s pink bed in our ugly dorm room when my father called about mom. I still know what I was wearing and that Jin was
“I guess I do,” Yoongi says with a weak smile, and without thinking much about it, he puts his arm around Taehyung’s shoulders. Sure, it’s still different here and there; Yoongi’s relationship to his mother was better than the one to his father, but it was still strained and uncomfortable most of the time. Taehyung loves his father more than Yoongi has ever loved anyone in his family, but that doesn’t change that Yoongi knows what it feels like to sit in a hospital room and think about how bad life can fuck you up if you lose focus for one second. “If he’s already starting to wake up though, your dad is doing way better than my mother was at this point.”

Taehyung shifts a bit to look up at him, hair brushing past Yoongi’s jaw. “She was in the hospital before she died?” he asks quietly. Yoongi only now realizes that Taehyung knows very little about the whole story. His other friends were all there, and this is the one thing he didn’t tell Taehyung about during all their monstrous background talks.

“Yeah. Comatose for a few days before she gave up. She was just getting worse right from the start, though. Your dad’ll be fine.”

He still has time to think that maybe he shouldn’t make any promises like this, but then Taehyung shifts next to him and presses his forehead against Yoongi’s shoulder so hard it almost hurts, taking a breath that sounds dangerously shaky. And Yoongi realizes that if Taehyung isn’t going to be the happy, positive one this time, someone has to. He has to.

“How can you be so sure,” Taehyung says, voice scratchy with held back tears, “when your mother didn’t make it?”

Yoongi squeezes his shoulder. He’s never considered himself good at being there for people, but the answer comes to him without much thinking. “The same way you can still trust people after what happened twelve years ago,” he says gently. “Have faith that good things will happen. I believe he can make it, is all. And if you can’t, I’ll just believe twice as hard.”

He feels heat creep up his neck when Taehyung giggles against his shoulder, but he doesn’t necessarily mind. “You’re corny,” Taehyung says. He wiggles a bit, rearranging himself so he sits up straighter again, forehead gone from Yoongi’s shoulder, but still staying close enough to him so Yoongi’s arm can stay where it is. After glancing towards his father, Taehyung bites his lip and looks at him again. “Thank you for coming.”

“No problem,” Yoongi says. “And I know everyone is taking good care of you already, but if you ever wanna drop by, you know my door’s still open.”

“I know,” Taehyung hums. His weight is still heavy against Yoongi’s body, and he can feel Taehyung’s fingers play with the seam of one of the holes in his jeans. He feels warm all over now. “Hey, by the way? I haven’t told my family about, uh, us yet. I mean I will, but... Not right now, you know? Figured you should know, just in case mom walks in.”

Yoongi snorts. Some part of him had assumed as much, and not a single part of him has a problem with it. “Alright,” he just says. Taehyung turns a bit and kisses the side of his head as he mutters his thanks. It’s simple, chaste, could probably pass as wholly platonic, in some universe, but it’s enough.
Just like that, Yoongi guesses, they’re back to being fake boyfriends.

He stays until Taehyung has to leave because he promised his friends he’d leave the hospital before nightfall. Yoongi almost forgot he has work tonight, too, but luckily he can still make it in time. They part at the subway station, going in different directions, exchange a hug that’s equally bone-crushing on both sides for once, and then Yoongi goes back home to his apartment.

Somewhere along the way, he started calling it that.

Maybe it’s because the corner in the living room has a TV now and doesn’t look as empty anymore, maybe it’s the work room that finally actually looks like a work room, maybe he just got used to living here. But this place is his home now. One of his homes, he thinks, Namjoon’s words still echoing through the back of his head sometimes. That’s one of those big developments he’s been going through. He’s been getting over Taehyung, and he’s been feeling more at home.

Yoongi stands in his bathroom and stares at his toothbrush cup.

He has his own toothbrush in his hand, brushing his teeth before work as always, but he’s staring at the other damn toothbrush in that cup.

Taehyung’s toothbrush.

The one Yoongi let him use after he blew him here once, the one he’d been using ever since, every time he stayed over long enough. He’s been meaning to throw it out. Taehyung hasn’t used it in weeks, and it had an uncomfortable, domestic feel to it that Yoongi wanted to get rid of.

But he never did. It’s still there.

Yoongi thinks about Taehyung’s head on his shoulder and his own arm around his. Thinks about how good it was to be with him today, even if Taehyung was sad, everything was messy, he looked like hell just spat him out and they barely did anything with each other. How right it felt to be there for him, close to him.

He spits into the sink and closes his eyes. He can feel the presence of that stupid toothbrush, still there, taunting him, glaring. It’s a casual, tiny detail, but it’s enough.

Just like that, Yoongi realizes he’s nowhere near over Taehyung.

Only one day later, Taehyung catches himself thinking that Yoongi was right. He and his mother are sitting by the bedside quietly discussing dinner options when his father stirs and announces that he wants something with cheese in it. The words are slurred and he doesn’t actually open his eyes, but everyone seems to be very happy about it nonetheless. A nurse smiles at them as bright as the sun and says that he heard them and understood what they were talking about, and that he’s taking huge steps now.

[02:28] you: you were right

[02:28] you: dad talked to us today

[02:29] (ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: dude holy shit thats great

[02:29] (ノ◕ヮ◕)ノ*:・゚✧: what did he say
Taehyung giggles at his phone while his mother holds his father’s hand and tells him everything she can spontaneously think of.

Yoongi drops by again the same day, awkwardly eyeing his dad before greeting him. Eyes still firmly shut, he only frowns a bit, but Taehyung takes Yoongi’s hand and drags him a bit closer to the bed so they can lean in to him.

“Yoongi’s here,” he says, his heart beating heavily in his chest. “Do you remember Yoongi?”

“Of course I remember Yoongi,” his father mumbles, lips barely parting, but it’s enough to make him sound mildly offended. Next to Taehyung, Yoongi gives a shaky snort. “Yoongi the audio engineer.”

“Yeah, that’s right,” Taehyung breathes. He can tell that the whole situation is a bit too foreign for Yoongi to say anything, but he’d never hold that against him. Yoongi still stays, and that’s what counts, Taehyung thinks, and even when they sit down on the visitor chairs again, Yoongi doesn’t let go of his hand.

It’s all a bit confusing, he thinks, later that night. Jimin came over to keep him company and they’re both in bed, Jimin fast asleep, Taehyung spooning him like a big warm body pillow, staring over his shoulder and thinking about Yoongi. His presence makes Taehyung happy; he can admit that much. It means so much to him that Yoongi came to visit the hospital, that he really is still there for him even when their deal ended. He didn’t even complain about having to play his boyfriend again in case they’d run into Taehyung’s mom, but so far that hasn’t happened.

In the middle of all this chaos and grief, Taehyung is immensely thankful for Yoongi, as a presence that exists in his proximity.

And in the middle of pure appreciation for Yoongi as a person, he’s also still kind of very much in love with him. Hopelessly. In every sense of the word.

Because Yoongi doesn’t want to be his boyfriend, only agrees now as an act of friendship because Taehyung is worried and in need. Yoongi is there for him like a friend, but he doesn’t want to go on dates with him anymore, and that seems to make things pretty clear to Taehyung.

In front of him, Jimin stirs, and Taehyung grasps the opportunity to whisper, “Jimin. Jimin?”

“Go to sleep,” Jimin groans, but Taehyung just pulls him a little closer. He wonders if Jimin can feel his heart thump against his back.

“Jimin,” he breathes right into his ear. “I think I might be in love.”

Jimin sighs loudly. He pats around in the dark, eyes still closed, until his hand finds Taehyung’s and pats that, too. “Yeah,” Jimin says, “I know.”

Taehyung sort of figured. Jimin always knows everything about everyone. “Do you think he likes me too?” he whispers. Maybe Jimin knows this as well.

“The day I know what’s going on inside Yoongi’s head is the day I’ll magically grow a dick,” Jimin
grumbles. Taehyung supposes that’s a no, which is disheartening, but he giggles nonetheless.

“Are those two happenings connected? Does he have magic dick powers or something?”

“You tell me.”

“Oh, boy, he--”

“No, no, wait. I changed my mind. For the love of god, don’t tell me.” Now they’re both giggling, and Jimin pats his hand some more. “It’s, like, three in the morning, Tae. Go to sleep.”

“But--”

“Go to sleep or I’ll knock you out.”

That’s a fair argument, Taehyung supposes. He also supposes that Jimin is right and he shouldn’t let this stress him out, especially not now that he has so many other things to worry about.

He feels a bit calmer with these thoughts in his head, a bit better, making it a bit easier to fall asleep.

Still, inviting Yoongi to come to a party with them just another day later might not be his best idea.

The party itself doesn’t sound bad. It’s being thrown by one of Jimin’s classmates, one of those enormous invite everyone you know and then some, open-for-all kind of things. The sort of party you just know is going to end up overcrowded, sticky with spilled beer, ruined by smashed glassware and a burning bathroom rug at some point during the night. The building has a rooftop terrace, too, Jimin informed him, knowing how much Taehyung likes his rooftop terraces.

So it’s going to get messy and drunk and probably pretty gross, and Taehyung thinks that’s exactly what he needs now. It’ll be a welcome distraction from the past few days, but at the same time things with his father have been looking up so much now that Taehyung wouldn’t feel guilty anymore for going to one single party instead of spending every minute at his bedside. He needs to allow himself the fun, his friends agree, even his mother told him to go. So he’s going.

Texting Yoongi was something like a reflex, probably. He just felt the need to offer Yoongi a fun night out, especially knowing that it happened to fall on one of Yoongi’s free nights. He didn’t even really expect him to agree -- Yoongi, Taehyung knows by now, only likes parties when they have good music, aren’t that packed, and have as many of his friends close as possible. This one has no guarantee for good music, is going to be hopelessly full, and Taehyung and his friends are going to be the only people Yoongi knows there.

And yet, he agreed. Taehyung thinks it must be out of pity. Yoongi has seen the week he’s been having and can’t say no to him now, that must be it. And Taehyung knows it’s stupid, gearing up to get drunk in Yoongi’s direct proximity when he’s been realizing things lately, but he’s still looking forward to it. Maybe some part of him is actually fucking terrified, but he’s looking forward to it too.

He has missed spending time with Yoongi.

And if he puts a little too much effort into looking his best tonight, that’s just to make up for how messed up he’s been looking the past few days and has nothing to do with Yoongi.

“Who even throws an indoors party in fucking August?” Yoongi groans when the four of them step into the elevator. They met up outside the building and Taehyung has been staring at him ever since. Yoongi’s hair is pushed back underneath a snapback, and Taehyung’s gaze keeps going back to his forehead, his brows, not a sight he gets to see often. He assumes Yoongi wanted his hair off his forehead because of the heat. He still remembers him saying he might melt in Australia, and sure
enough, Yoongi is wearing the shortest sleeves Taehyung has ever seen on him too, and jeans that are more hole than fabric, flashing most of his cheesy white thighs.

He looks hot. The kind of hot that makes Taehyung want to get fucked in a bathroom stall, quick and filthy, hear that dirty mouth of his all while they go down on each other.

But they don’t do that anymore.

“I’m not sure if it’d be much better outdoors,” Taehyung replies with an automatic little laugh. It’s dark outside already, but the leftover heat from the day is still enough to have all of them sweating.

“True,” Yoongi says. “So we’re just fucked either way.”

“It’s always a blast to have you on board, sunshine,” Jimin says dryly. Yoongi takes the time to throw him a baffled stare before he turns towards Taehyung and Jungkook comically offended, pointing a finger at Jimin.

“He’s starting to sound like his boyfriend,” Yoongi declares. “I’d do something about that if I were you guys, before it’s too late.”

They all laugh at that, and Jimin’s ears even heat up a bit, going cutely with his dopey grin. Taehyung watches him briefly, swallows the bitter thought about how nice it must feel to be so openly in love and happy with it. Then he goes back to staring at Yoongi’s snapback.

“Oh, Jesus,” Jungkook groans this time when the elevator doors open right into the room and they’re hit with the air of a party that started without them.

The aircon is cranked all the way up, Taehyung can tell, because it’d be hell on earth in here if it wasn’t, but it’s still warm. The air is sticky from too many people breathing it, heavy with the heat both from bodies and an entertainment system working loud enough for the floor to vibrate under their feet. It’s ugly, but Taehyung is not uncomfortable, not at all. He feels right at home, even with both Jungkook and Yoongi complaining at his sides. Someone races up to them and shoves already filled plastic cups in their hands, and that shuts them up, anyway.

So one drink in, they all huddle together in one corner of the room and try to get acclimatized. Taehyung still keeps staring at Yoongi whenever he can get away with it, but the dim lights make his features blur, the shadows of the room eating half of his figure, and that makes things a little easier. They scream light-hearted conversation over the music, beats vibrating up Taehyung’s legs all the way to his spine, the songs playing through the speakers remixing the chaos in his stomach, urging him to forget the past weeks. Ignore what happened, pretend like Yoongi never told him he wants to be able to date other people, really date other people, but not him. Live in this very moment and no other, a bunch of young people at a party, and that’s all.

Two drinks in, he abandons Yoongi and Jungkook while they’re talking about EQing bass amps properly, whatever the hell that even means, and joins Jimin instead, who introduces him to the handful of classmates Taehyung didn’t know yet. Socializing comes as easy as always, and he thinks that it was a good idea to come here, to do this. Surrounded by people, talking and laughing with everyone about everything feels so normal to Taehyung that it’s soothing, like he’s finding back to himself after getting lost for a brief but horrifying moment.

Three drinks in, Jimin drags him to the dancefloor and Taehyung is all too happy to oblige. He loves him, Taehyung thinks vaguely, loves that he and Jimin are ex boyfriends and that Jimin is currently taken and that they have a bunch of history together that’s not completely uncomplicated, and yet they can dance like this, and he loves him for it. Jimin’s hands are on his hips and Taehyung’s hands
are thrown around his shoulders loosely and they sway and bounce and roll, until every pair of eyes in a ten foot radius is on them.

Four drinks in, Jungkook joins them, pulling a very unwilling looking Yoongi along on his shirt sleeve. Jungkook’s presence, Taehyung thinks, is what keeps him from crying for a solid five minutes. He always reaches this point sooner or later, the brief alcohol-induced period in which everything is sad again, when seeing the tip of Yoongi’s nose dusted purple by the colorful strobe lights up above them is enough to make his eyes feel wet because he can’t have him, he wants him so much and he can’t have him, but Jungkook is there. Jungkook bounces up and down next to him and spills beer on Taehyung’s shoe but it doesn’t matter because he kisses the side of his head and screams lyrics in his ear, and then Taehyung screams back until his throat feels hoarse and Jimin joins in and Yoongi watches them with a big grin on his face, and it’s better again, it’s good.

Five drinks in, he dances with Yoongi. He’s drunk now, he really is, and as always Yoongi doesn’t seem to be, but he’s not sober either, and he plays along well enough. Taehyung wishes he could kiss him, but he’s past that stage where he’d get hung up on that, just shrugs it off as something that happens to be impossible for now and grins at Yoongi instead, raising his arms above his head. The roll of his hips is falling out of rhythm now, his whole body thrumming and buzzing so much that he can’t quite feel the beat of the music anymore, but he knows that Yoongi doesn’t mind. Yoongi indulges and dances along with him, because at this point neither of them is anything close to sexy. It’s misshapen and dorky and Yoongi laughs and Taehyung can’t hear him over the music, but he sees it on his face, mouth open and eyes crinkling, and it’s the prettiest thing in the world right now.

When he comes back to his friends with his sixth drink in hand, Jungkook is missing and Jimin informs him that he “scored.” Yoongi still looks amused and Taehyung is kind of sad that he missed whatever went down, but then Yoongi leans over and says that he’s gonna need some fresh air before he passes the fuck out and Taehyung remembers the rooftop terrace, so all is well again.

Jimin makes up some sort of halfhearted excuse about talking to his classmates more, so he doesn’t join them. Taehyung stares after him, squinting, thinking somewhere that maybe it’s not a good idea to leave him and Yoongi to their own devices, but mostly he just thinks that this is fucking great. For once, Yoongi’s hand is warm in his own when Taehyung guides him up the stairs, and the air outside is warm and humid but still a lot better than inside and they both take huge loud breaths and laugh at each other for it afterwards, and Yoongi’s face contorts happily the way it always does when he laughs, and this is great. Taehyung is definitely in the right condition to be alone with him like this.

There’s one other group of people sitting a bit further away in a circle on the roof, talking and drinking. Taehyung throws them a short glance before dropping down on his ass and pulling Yoongi down with him, uncaring, both of them putting their drinks on the floor and forgetting all about them immediately afterwards. And for a second, Yoongi looks like he’s about to say something, and for a second, Taehyung is about to say something too. About how this is starting to feel like a throwback, about how they sat around on a rooftop once with their friends, Taehyung tipsy and Yoongi high, his head heavy on Taehyung’s thighs and shark pictures open on his phone.

But neither of them says anything.

Still, as soon as Yoongi looks comfortably seated enough, Taehyung shifts around until he can put his head on Yoongi’s lap. He has the fleeting thought that Yoongi’s legs are tiny and short and skinny and don’t necessarily look as comfortable as, for example, Jimin’s or Jungkook’s, but they still feel soft underneath his head so he forgets all about that a second later. “Hi,” Taehyung breathes, smiling up at Yoongi blinking down at him.
With a little laugh, Yoongi returns the smile. “Hey,” he says. Taehyung nods solemnly.

“You look really good in that snapback. I hope you know that.”

“Thanks.” Something moves in Taehyung’s peripheral vision, a hesitant jerk in Yoongi’s arm, then one of Yoongi’s big hands comes down to push some hair out of Taehyung’s eyes. “You’re pretty drunk. I hope you know that.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Taehyung says and laughs. “Aren’t you?”

“Not really.” Yoongi shrugs. “I’m definitely feelin’ something, but I’m not drunk yet, no.”

Taehyung hums. He vaguely recalls something about Yoongi not getting drunk often, not liking it, so he’s not going to whine at him to drink more and get on his level. But he will grin up at him and ask, “What’re you like when you’re drunk?”

“I get really loud and obnoxious at first,” Yoongi says. His hand is somewhere at the top of Taehyung’s head, and he likes it there. “And then after a while I just get sad and cuddly.”

“Awww,” Taehyung says. Yoongi rolls his eyes at him but Taehyung can tell that he’s laughing a little, too. Taehyung feels very warm and pretty nice. “I missed talking to you.”

At this, Yoongi grimaces a bit. “Sorry,” he says, but Taehyung is already waving one hand around in a dismissive gesture, hitting himself in the chest with it afterwards and not paying it any mind.

“I feel like,” he says, shifting against Yoongi’s thighs, “I’ve only been talking about sad stuff the past few days. Like, everything sucked. I wanna talk about something nice for once.”

“Okay. What do you wanna talk about?”

Taehyung makes a pensive noise before giggling into the warm summer air above them. “I know,” he says, and grins up at Yoongi. “If you were an animal, what would you be?”

Yoongi laughs at that, out loud and with his eyes closed, and Taehyung thinks he could watch that all night. “Damn,” he says, tilting his head in thought. “I don’t know. Probably a cat, I think. I’ve always kind of related to cats-- what?”

Taehyung is shaking his head slowly and intently, like Yoongi said something fundamentally wrong. Because he did. “No, you’re not a cat,” he says quietly. “You’re a platypus.”

“What? Why am I a platypus?”

“Cause they’re big mysteries,” Taehyung says, watching Yoongi’s soft face in the dimness of the night. “When white people first saw them, they thought they were being fucked with. Didn’t seem to make sense, the whole animal. Platypodes were so hard to understand at first, but in time, we managed.” There’s something in Yoongi’s eyes now, and Taehyung doesn’t have a name for it but he thinks it’s the same thing that’s pulling at his stomach now, heavy, and lingering. He smiles through it. “Also, they’re small and cute, and you don’t think they could be dangerous at first, but they have venom. Literally. They have a stinger on their foot. So nobody should mess with them.”

Luckily, Yoongi laughs a bit at that, so Taehyung feels better. He runs one hand through Taehyung’s hair briefly, watching him in silence, then he says, “What animal are you?”

“I don’t know.” Taehyung shrugs and bumps his shoulders into Yoongi’s lap. “You tell me.”
“I don’t know that much about other animals. You have all these cool details, I got no clue.”

“Then…” Taehyung hesitates at first, but the thought makes him grin, so he goes through with it. “Then do it the way you know. Tell me what kind of music I am.”

“Oh,” Yoongi says, and he falls quiet for a bit. Taehyung watches him think, come to a conclusion, think that conclusion over again, hesitate, think some more. Then he says, “You’re the dubstep remix of a smooth jazz piece.”

Taehyung falls into a fit of giggles, only subsiding slightly when Yoongi shoves his shoulder.

“Don’t laugh! I mean it. It’s things that seem very far apart, stuff you didn’t think would go well together, but now they do. And in both cases, it’s a kind of music you might have to get used to at first, but that won’t stop it from playing, and if you listen closely enough, then you’ll realize it’s still beautifully done. I thought you might just be jazz at first, but you’re so full of surprises, and there’s always something new to learn about you, always some new experience waiting around the corner, so you’re a remix.” Yoongi’s cheeks are flushed, Taehyung can tell. And at this point, there’s an embarrassed grin tugging at the corners of Yoongi’s mouth, too, but he doesn’t look away from Taehyung’s face. He just cocks a brow and drops his voice a little. “And man, when that bass drops, you’d better come prepared.”

For some reason Taehyung doesn’t dare to explore, he feels a little bit like crying. He’s still happy, too – Yoongi put time and thought into this and it honors him, and his explanation sounds cool and Taehyung really hopes he’ll still remember it in the morning. But he can also feel his throat burn with the need to turn his head and sob right into Yoongi’s ripped jeans.

He doesn’t, though.

“That’s really cool,” Taehyung says instead, hoarsely. “Thank you.”

“You’re very welcome. It was cool to think about.”

“I know, right? Jungkook is a blowfish. In case you were wondering.”

“Cool. Hoseok is that one song by Buddy Holly that sounds like someone’s jacking off the entire time.”

Taehyung laughs so hard at that he chokes, flailing around and rolling off of Yoongi’s lap to sit up and cough it out, still giggling through all of it. Yoongi pats his back uselessly, laughing too, and he keeps his hand there when they start to gradually calm down and look at each other again. Taehyung sits right in front of him now, the rooftop warm underneath him, holding himself up with one hand and staring at Yoongi’s face, the ghosts of their laugh still etched into their features. Yoongi looks ethereal, he thinks, and the corners of his mouth twitch again at the thought that he probably wouldn’t even be able to pronounce that word right in his current state.

“I’m glad you came tonight,” is what he says.

“Me too,” says Yoongi, but Taehyung isn’t really listening, and he doesn’t think that Yoongi really listened to himself, either. They’re staring at each other, two hungry figures in the dark, and when Taehyung’s tongue darts out to wet his lips, Yoongi swallows, and curls his fists against the floor. Yoongi opens his mouth like he tries to say something, but nothing comes out, and Taehyung doesn’t want to hear it anyway. He just darts forward and presses his lips to Yoongi’s.

It’s sloppy; Taehyung goes in with too much force, hitting his own lips with Yoongi’s teeth, and the movement itself is already enough to make him feel dizzy, but not in the good way. It’s not like he
cares, though. What he cares about is that Yoongi responds to him immediately, doesn’t even try to push him away, indulges the very second they first touch. His hand comes up to fist in the front of Taehyung’s shirt and just when Taehyung thinks he’s going to topple over, Yoongi starts to lower himself on his back and pulling Taehyung with him. Taehyung is not sure if that’s a good idea with how drunk he is, but maybe none of this is really a good idea, so he shrugs it off and crawls over Yoongi, pushing himself up by his forearms on the warm asphalt next to Yoongi’s head and kissing him, never stops kissing him.

Someone on the roof wolf whistles at them and from the corner of his eye, Taehyung can see Yoongi flip them off and it sends a warm rush of something over his entire body, of affection, maybe, of attraction, definitely. Yoongi shifts against the ground, and against him, and he’s only repositioning himself a little, not even really rubbing against Taehyung in any way, still only touching him by the hand in his shirt and the lips on Taehyung’s mouth, but Taehyung almost moans against them. They could probably pass this off as harmless, a drunk kiss at a party, but Taehyung wants him so much, he wants to yank his shirt down and mouth at his throat, he wants to rub his thigh in between Yoongi’s legs and he wants to feel him move underneath his fingers, and he doesn’t even fucking care that they’re out in the open and people are watching. Taehyung wants and wants and wants, and maybe it shows, maybe it shows a little too much.

One of his hands is in Yoongi’s hair now and he presses his body down seeking friction, desperate for more, for something, anything. But Yoongi’s hand lets go of his shirt and flattens against his chest instead, pushing him away from his mouth, away from him. Taehyung barely fights the whine that leaves him when he sits up on his knees.

Some part of him still had hopes that Yoongi was just going to tell him they should take this somewhere a bit more private, but they disappear when his vision clears a bit. Yoongi is looking at him wide-eyed and disheveled, lips flushed prettily, but parted in shock, like he can’t believe himself, can’t quite grasp what he was just about to do. Yoongi, too, sits up carefully now, his legs still under Taehyung’s ass, and he’s being soft and quiet, but it still feels like he punched Taehyung square in the face.

“We shouldn’t do this,” Yoongi says. Taehyung can barely hear him over the buzz between his temples. Yoongi looks up at him with a sadness that kills him, and Taehyung wants to tell him yes, yes of course we should, what the fuck else should we be doing, but when Yoongi tells you no, you listen to him. “You’re-- you’re really drunk, and you’re still in distress over your dad, this… This isn’t right.”

Taehyung doesn’t want to be thinking this, but he knows he has a point. As much as he’s been wanting Yoongi, as much as he’s been longing for him, maybe this isn’t the right time, the right place, to be doing this. He hangs his head, dizziness pricking at his scalp and pulling on his throat, and nods.

“Sorry,” he murmurs.

“No, I’m sorry,” Yoongi says. One of his hands is on Taehyung’s shoulder, squeezing gently. “I shouldn’t have given in.” While Taehyung still tries not to feel like he stabbed him in the guts, Yoongi tries searching his gaze. “Do you wanna go back downstairs? See what Jimin’s up to?”

“He’s probably socializing or whatever,” Taehyung says, and he didn’t mean to wrinkle his nose at the thought, but it makes Yoongi laugh softly, so that’s fine. “I think I… Maybe I just wanna sober up and go home.”

Yoongi hums, pulling his hand back from Taehyung’s shoulder to fish his phone out of his back pocket and check the display. “Subway’s closed,” he concludes. “Want me to call you a cab?”
“Actually,” Taehyung forces himself to look up again and clears his throat and tries a smile, “I kinda feel like just hanging out at a coffee shop for a bit, you know, at least until I can feel my fingers again and stuff. Would that be cool with you? You don’t have to. I can ask Jiminnie.”

“No, that sounds chill,” Yoongi says, and then he pats Taehyung’s thigh to make him move. “Get up, then. Careful though. We’re on a roof.”

Taehyung gets up and off of Yoongi’s lap carefully, because they’re on a roof, and Yoongi gets to his feet next to him and gingerly puts an arm around him. Taehyung knows it’s to stabilize him because he stumbled, but he leans his head on Yoongi’s shoulder anyway. In the very least, Yoongi doesn’t seem to mind. He just holds him close and slowly leads him back down the stairs, where the heat and the noise of the party hit them so hard that both of them groan into each other’s ears and laugh about it afterwards.

He’s still here at least, Taehyung thinks. Yoongi is still here. The last time they got a little too close for comfort, when Yoongi broke off their deal, it felt like they were growing apart so quickly, like they were losing each other, but maybe they’re past that. Maybe they did something stupid again but it’s not so bad this time, because Yoongi is holding onto his shoulder tightly and is still willing to spend the rest of the night alone in a coffee shop with him, and he’s still here at least.

They find Jimin in the crowd, who looks Taehyung over with a mixture of worry and amusement and thanks Yoongi for taking him somewhere quiet. Taehyung kisses Jimin on the tip of his nose and tells him good night, while one of Jimin’s classmates is already pulling on his sleeve. He looks after Taehyung and Yoongi when they leave, but Taehyung doesn’t really notice.

The elevator ride makes him nauseous and he thinks it must be visible, because Yoongi is performing an awkward middle course between stabilizing him and keeping him at arm’s length so Taehyung doesn’t fall over but also doesn’t vomit on his shoes. But Taehyung keeps his stomach contents to himself, and they’re shoulder to shoulder again when they walk out into the streets and towards the nearest sea of neon lights to find a coffee shop.

“I’ll just get lemonade with a lot of ice or something,” Taehyung mutters while Yoongi carefully maneuvers him up the stairs into a café on the first floor, only one street down from the party. “Then I’ll go home. Aunt Moonhee is a really light sleeper and I don’t wanna wake her up by stumbling home drunk, you know.”

“Yeah, I get it,” Yoongi says, parking Taehyung on a comfortable leather chair that immediately makes him feel sleepy. “If all else fails, you can just sleep over at my place. On, uh, the couch, or something.”

Taehyung smiles at him. “I don’t think that’s a good idea,” he says. “But thanks.”

Resignation pulls at Yoongi’s features as he nods, and he pulls back a little to walk up to the counter, but Taehyung grabs his shirt collar before he can leave, staring at him. The ceiling lights in here are bright, and it’s the first time he really sees him in anything that isn’t half-darkness today, and while Yoongi still looks a little bit panicked, Taehyung is staring at his cheeks.

“Holy shit,” he breathes. “You’re all freckly again.”

Yoongi huffs a laugh, quietly, and nods. “Yeah, summer usually does that to me.”

Taehyung just beams up at him. He kind of wants to say something about it, because they’re pretty and Yoongi looks cute with them, but he’s not exactly in a good condition to be forming full sentences now, so he lets Yoongi go and watches him approach the barista with his wallet in his
hands. All Taehyung knows is that Yoongi had freckles when he first saw him and they faded in the cold spring, but they’re coming back now, a dust of the lightest brown over his nose and cheeks, and for some reason, by mostly the alcohol, that makes him feel a lot better about everything. Yoongi has his freckles back, and things are gonna be alright, Taehyung thinks, reclining in this armchair and trying not to fall asleep before he comes back with his lemonade. They’re beautiful, and Taehyung loves them, and it’s gonna be okay.

*Have faith that good things will happen,* Yoongi said, and Taehyung thinks that he’s right. He has no idea what those good things are going to be exactly, but they’ll happen, and he believes in them, and he’s ready for them.

When Yoongi comes back, he has lemonade for both of them, and he doesn’t look that resigned or panicked anymore and doesn’t seem like he wants to bail anytime soon. So Taehyung sucks on an ice cube and lets himself sober up while he pulls up pictures of platypodes on his phone and zooms in to show Yoongi exactly where that stinger is and how it works. Yoongi opens YouTube on his own phone and finds the Buddy Holly song he mentioned, plays it for Taehyung until Taehyung laughs so hard that the coffee shop staff is throwing him hostile looks and they almost get thrown out.

Good things will happen, Taehyung thinks. His father talks and Yoongi has freckles and maybe he can’t have him, maybe Yoongi pushes him back when they kiss and maybe Yoongi wants to date other people, but good things will happen. One way or another, they will.

After sleeping until two p.m., eating and drinking almost everything in their kitchen and taking a good, long shower, Taehyung feels a lot less dramatic about things.

“Maybe I should just get laid,” he tells Jimin, sitting next to him uselessly in front of an empty hospital bed. Turns out his father is already getting physical therapy now, and they have to wait a few more minutes until he’s back so they can see him. Jimin was just patting Taehyung’s shoulder and offering his condolences after Taehyung told him about his failed drunk makeout attempt on Yoongi, which feels really fucking embarrassing now that he’s sober. “By someone else, I mean. The last time I had sex with someone other than Yoongi was in another damn hemisphere. Imagine that.”

“You think you can just fuck this out?” Jimin says, playing with the bed remote with a soft frown.

“Well, no, not completely, of course. I just don’t wanna let it drag me down. I mean, Yoongi’s made it pretty clear that he doesn’t wanna date me, like, realife-date me, and I don’t wanna keep dwelling on that and let it ruin my summer. I can’t fuck it out, but I can get my mind off of it at least for a bit.”

Jimin gives a long hum, contemplating. Taehyung can see that he’s not completely happy with this, but it’s not like Taehyung is completely happy with it. That’s the whole point. This is going to take him some time to get over, but in the meantime, he should be allowed to have fun with other people, right? He could do that. He’s almost completely sure that he could.

“Just don’t dive right into the next romance,” Jimin says finally. “If you wanna get laid, go get laid, but nothing more. So don’t pick anyone too cute.”

Taehyung rolls his eyes even though he’s laughing. “I’ll just pick someone in the dark, then I’ll never know if he was cute or not.”
“See, there’s a plan. I promised Hoseok to see him during his shift next week in Itaewon anyway, you can just come to the club with me. Lighting’s bad there. Bad enough so you can pick some mediocre dude and get your mind off of it.”

“Off of what?” Taehyung’s father says. A giggly looking intern pushes his wheelchair through the doorway just as Jimin finishes, and he looks more awake than ever, eyes open and on Taehyung, hands restless in his lap. Taehyung’s own eyes go wide and he jumps up from his chair for no reason other than surprise happiness, and gives his dad his biggest grin.

“Nothing,” he says.

One way or another, good things will happen.

Chapter End Notes

buddy holly - everyday

turns out the plural of platypus is not, in fact, platypi. my online dictionary really schooled me on this one.

i bet you're all super over my emotional a/n whining, but we hit one thousand subscriptions during the first days of september, and i still can't quite grasp it. that's an enormous number, and i really never thought i'd be reaching it before this fic ends. i mean fuck they're still not fucking dating and yet all of yall are so on board fhdfgkfh i can't believe u sometimes

ANYWAY. thank you
Freckles

Chapter Summary

Yoongi and Taehyung realize too late that they went to the same party.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Yoongi’s freckles, Taehyung has decided, are a charm for good luck. Ever since Taehyung spotted them (and yes, he thinks that’s a great pun), things have been exceptionally good.

Of course, he’s still uncomfortably haunted by the thought that he might be in love with Yoongi and even more uncomfortably haunted by the thought that he doesn’t have a chance. But everything else has been good. His hangover after that party they spent mostly on the roof wasn’t super bad. Yoongi brought him home and checked in with him the day after and stayed in text message contact with him even though Taehyung kissed him on that roof. They’re both just acting like that never happened, which is, if you ask Taehyung, the absolute best outcome right now. Absolute best.

On the plus side, his father has been released from the hospital. He’s still a little slower on his feet than Taehyung knows him, careful where he steps and focusing hard when holding things, but it’s all progress, and everyone thinks he’s doing great. He’ll get physical therapy at home for a while longer and then his doctors think he’ll be right back to where he was before what everybody calls the accident. Whenever he feels like it, they say, he can even go back to work.

Right now, his father’s actual company, the legal one, is still in the hands of his vice captain. During movie night with Taehyung, his mom, and aunt Moonhee, his dad said with a smile that he’s going to keep it like that until he’s completely done with physical therapy, not because he’s worried for his health, but just because he doesn’t wanna work so much. Nobody in the family had any complaints about that plan.

Things are different, of course, concerning the clan business. Taehyung’s dad is back in the picture about what happened, now fully aware of who attacked him when and where and what happened to them, and what their moves are from here. Normally, Taehyung wouldn’t care so much about this, but after scaring him away from here all the way to Daegu, only to attack him there, hurt Yoongi and his aunt and demolish the house he grew up in, and then having the balls to almost kill his father, Taehyung is a little more invested in the family business than usually.

It’s not like he’ll actually do anything, though. He doesn’t want to, and he doesn’t need to. Taehyung has always had the feeling that his parents are pretty happy with his decision to stay out of the whole kkangpae thing, especially after what happened with his sister. They don’t need him getting involved and getting himself in danger, so he hasn’t, and he won’t. He just wants to know what’s going on this time.

So far, they’re still holding off on making a move. Moonhee and Taehyung’s mother decided to keep watching them for a few weeks, just to make sure there aren’t any other genius plans (as Moonhee put it) they have up their sleeves. Jungkook keeps talking about going on a stakeout in a few days, actually. Taehyung has been thinking about joining him; stakeouts are known for being one of the chillest parts of this kind of work, where they’re really just there to watch, so maybe that’s as far as
Taehyung is willing to go for his family thing. After that, once the stakeouts are all done, they’ll be moving to attacks and probably a bunch of murders again, and once that happens, Taehyung is going to look away and pretend he doesn’t know anything about it, like he always used to.

So that’s been going fine. Yoongi’s freckles showed up and his dad came home, they made good plans for all their businesses, and a few days later, things at home go back to normal so much that aunt Moonhee is starting to pack her bags, too. She has to go back to the chickens and her part of the clan she says, and Taehyung knows that’s true, and he’s going to miss her being around so much but it’s also nice to see her leave. Because if she’s going back to her own home, that really means that the rest of the family is going steady again.

Yoongi’s freckles showed up and things went back to normal.

Of course, that also means that Taehyung’s only remaining problem now is Yoongi and how cute he looks and how hot everything he does is and how much Taehyung wishes they hadn’t broken up their stupid fake dating deal. But at least it also means that things between them went back to, well, at least close to normal, too. No dates, no basically-public makeout sessions, but at least they talk.

And if Taehyung really keeps telling himself that this is all thanks to Yoongi’s freckles, then he’s definitely not obsessed or desperate or anything.

After all, if this was a lab situation, he'd at least have probable cause to explore his very scientific theory. Good things keep on happening. Today is just proving it again.

He called Yoongi over to the penthouse without telling him why, and in hindsight, it was really worth all the suppressed giggling that tore out of him. Taehyung has been able to watch live how surprise, then disbelief made their way over Yoongi's face, and then that unique kind of happiness that can only be triggered by puppies. Yoongi is standing in the doorway to the living room, eyes trained on the writhing bundle of fur in Taehyung’s hands, and smiling like this is the best thing he's ever seen.

“We're getting another dog!” Taehyung announces, kind of unnecessarily, before crouching down and putting the puppy on the floor so he can do what he wants: sprint towards Yoongi with a series of squeaky barks.

“Hi, you tiny baby,” Yoongi replies and crouches down as well to pet him. Which doesn't work. The puppy starts gnawing at his fingers instead, but Yoongi looks just as happy about that as he glances up at Taehyung. “What's this, German shepherd?”

“Yep,” Taehyung says, grinning. The dog wags his tail so much it makes him topple over, so now he's wriggling around on his back with Yoongi's hand in his mouth. “He's just a few months old, so we're gonna train him to be another guard dog. Then Boop can retire properly like she deserves.”

“Oh right,” Yoongi says and rubs the puppy’s belly, which results in a few more barks and him getting up to scurry towards Taehyung again. He lands on his face twice in the process. He's still getting used to slippery people floor. “What does Boop think of this?”

“We think she liked him at first,” Taehyung says and gently coaxes teeth away from his pants leg. “But she got pissed off when he kept trying to get her to play with him, so she's sulking in my room now.”

“Aww, poor old lady,” Yoongi says, already moving across the room to sit on the floor with Taehyung and the dog. “You think she'll come around?”
“Oh yeah, she'll deal. She loves other dogs, she just has to get used to his energy. Plus, he's going to have to get a lot of training that'll keep him busy while she has been officially promoted to be nothing but my personal cuddle toy, so that'll help.”

Yoongi laughs. Taehyung reaches to the side to grab one of the actual chew toys they got for the baby, and slides it towards Yoongi so he can keep him occupied. He also watches Yoongi in the process, kind of automatically, watches how happy and relaxed his entire face seems just because he gets to play with a puppy. How soft and how pretty this makes him.

Fuck.

“Does he have a name yet?” Yoongi asks and successfully snaps Taehyung out of it.

“No!” he replies quickly. “My parents are letting me name him. Again.” He grins. “As you might have guessed, I was the one to name Boop.”

“Really,” Yoongi says dryly. They both laugh and for a second it feels like Taehyung's stomach is trying to escape through his mouth.

“Yeah, you'd think I'd be better at it now, but all I can think of is various bio terms. And endoplasmatic reticulum might be a funny name for a puppy, but I'm not sure if it's a smart move if we want him to actually listen, you know.” Yoongi replies to that with a hum, obviously quite immersed in letting the dog chase his chew toy. Taehyung wets his lips carefully. “I was thinking maybe you wanna help name him.”

He really doesn't know why the suggestion makes him so nervous. It's a sweet, innocent thing, he thinks. Maybe naming a puppy together sounds kind of really personal at first, but it's not like Yoongi will be adopting him, too. It's just about a name. It's something he'd ask of his other friends, too, nothing special. Why he didn't actually ask Jimin or Jungkook, he's not sure. If asked, he might say that he's trying to make sure he and Yoongi can be perfectly normal, regular friends like this, but he'd know it's not true.

Maybe he just wants to watch Yoongi's freckles as his cheeks bunch up into another smile, now that the puppy is successfully gnawing on his toy.

“Well if he's gonna be a guard dog, maybe go for something scary sounding?” Yoongi says. “I don't know. The Destroyer.” He snorts. “Annihilator.”

“Yoongi, those are names you give those giant dildos in sex shops,” Taehyung says, and Yoongi immediately puts his hands over the dog's enormous ears. They fold on his head like an envelope, and the dog futilely snaps at his arm once before returning to his toy.

“Don't say that in front of the baby.” Yoongi chides. He's clearly joking, and Taehyung wants to lean over and kiss the breath out of him.

Fuck, fuck.

“I'm so sorry,” Taehyung says, overly apologetic and with a pointless little bow just so he can see Yoongi chuckle again. “You’ll have to admit that they're weird puppy names, though.”

“Yeah, fine,” Yoongi says. He lets go of the pup’s ears again and scritches his back, watching him pensively. “Name him Kanye.”

“Kanye sounds nice,” says Taehyung's mom, walking through the living room with a cup of tea in her hand and waving at Yoongi with the other. Briefly, Taehyung remembers that he still hasn’t told
his parents about the breakup and gets the wild urge to grab Yoongi’s hand, but then his mom is
gone again. So he squints at Yoongi instead.

“Is this about me calling your dick Dicki Minaj?”

“No,” Yoongi says and rolls his eyes. “Jesus, Tae, not everything is about penises, you know.”

Maybe Taehyung really does need to get laid.

“Besides, calling it Meat Microphone was definitely the bigger offense.”

Taehyung snorts and nods towards Yoongi and the dog with his brows raised. “Don’t you wanna
cover his ears for that?”

Yoongi shrugs. “I’m starting to think he’s going to have to get used to these things real quick,” he
says and ruffles the fur on the puppy’s head, making him look up and lick Yoongi’s hand.
Apparently he already loves him. That’s just great. “Won’t you, Kanye?”

“We are not naming the puppy Kanye.”

“Why not?” says his mom again, poking her head into the living room with a shit-eating grin on her
face which Taehyung scoffs at.

“Please, mom, you don’t even know—”

“Tae, I know who Kanye West is.”

Yoongi and his mother chortle at each other. Kanye the puppy is wagging his tail against Yoongi’s
pants leg loudly. Taehyung has been defeated.

A few minutes later his dad gets the message that their new dog has been named Kanye and almost
doubles over with laughter. Yoongi looks more proud of himself than Taehyung has ever seen him,
all smiley with his back straight and his eyes crinkling and carrying Kanye around like a human baby
even when he starts chewing on his shirt. Only after a while does he put him down, and only
because he says he wants to check up on Boop now, since he doesn’t want her to feel left out.

Yoongi seems like he’s been doing better, Taehyung thinks. The effect of his freckles seems to reach
him as well, not just other people. He looks awake, well fed, healthy.

He looks good. Fuck, he’s always looked good, but he’s looking even better now, smiling and
petting dogs and cooing at Boop rolling around on Taehyung’s bed like it’s nothing. Taehyung
guesses they really are perfectly normal friends and can do perfectly normal friend things.

He just didn’t anticipate it to suck so much.

Obviously, everything would be easier if he wasn’t in love with Yoongi. He wouldn’t keep thinking
about how good he looks or how much he wants him to stay on that bed forever, he could just enjoy
their time together like a normal damn person. He could be looking good himself and having a good
time, just like Yoongi. Yoongi, who’s not in love with him.

Yoongi who broke up with him and has been looking healthier and better and still better ever since.

It’s not hard to draw your conclusions from that.

But maybe Yoongi wouldn’t be Yoongi and Taehyung wouldn’t be Taehyung if things didn’t turn
out to get more complicated later that same day.
When Yoongi leaves to get ready for work in the evening, he pushes a tiny USB drive into Taehyung’s hand just before he shuffles out of the door. “Give it a listen,” he just says, very hushed and very fast, eyes not meeting Taehyung’s. “I made a speakers mix and a headphones mix because I wasn’t sure what you prefer, so, uh, just… Yeah, just give it a listen. And let me know what you think, if you want, maybe. Bye!”

He almost barked that last syllable in that anxious breathy tone the puppy has been using now and then. Taehyung stares after him; Yoongi is already heading off towards the elevator without leaving him time to reply anything at all, walking as fast as he possibly can without breaking into a jog. Slowly, Taehyung looks down at the little piece of plastic and metal in his hand. Something quiet, careful, but distinctly warm bubbles up in his stomach.

A songwriter just gave him something personal to listen to.

After closing the door, Taehyung races up to his room, dodging Kanye on his way through the hallway and ignoring Boop’s confused glance from his bed when he all but throws himself on his desk chair to power up his computer. As soon as it’s on, he shoves the USB drive in and puts his headphones on, the good, big ones, his heart thumping in his chest.

`immortal (hdphns).mp3`
`immortal (spkrs).mp3`

Trying and failing to swallow his excitement, Taehyung clicks on the first file. His wrist actually feels shaky, all because he still remembers those last songs of his Yoongi showed him and just knows that this’ll be good, and because it still feels personal and important since Yoongi seemed so nervous about it.

All coherent thought gets wiped clean off his mind soon, though.

The song starts calm, something Taehyung almost didn’t anticipate, guitars and what has to be some sort of atmospheric sounding keyboard that reminds him of the sea for some reason. There’s soft percussion and Taehyung almost thinks he’s entirely too excited for this, until he hears an unmistakable deep breath and gets goosebumps all over.

For a few syllables he only focuses on Yoongi’s voice, the smooth deep rumble with what sounds like a smile to it, making the thing in Taehyung’s stomach bubble further up with even more warmth. But then the lyrics really hit him.

Those are all things he has said.

In some way.

He’s not sure at first, but Yoongi flawlessly drops the scientific name for immortal jellies, and Taehyung can’t doubt himself anymore. Yoongi made… Yoongi made a song out of stuff he told him, about jellies and turtles and Greenland sharks.

For a few seconds, Taehyung almost feels physically sick.

When he was younger, he would go off on rants about biology, marine wildlife, stars, dogs, saxophones, anything. And other kids would make fun of him for that, repeat his words as mockery, sing-song stuff he was really passionate about. It hurt, naturally, Taehyung always hated it, and luckily it stopped in his late high school and early college days, when people actually started to look up to him for his knowledge. But still for a beat or two, it sets off warning signs in his head, until it doesn’t anymore.
Yoongi’s not making fun of him.

There’s awe in his voice, Taehyung can hear it in every syllable, in every breath, and in the space between the words. This isn’t meant to be funny, this isn’t about Taehyung’s mild sealife obsession or the way he gets when he talks a lot. It’s about him and his stance on life. His passion.

An ode, to him.

Yoongi’s *let me know what you think* ghosts through his head briefly and Taehyung tries to come up with something to say to him. He notices that Yoongi isn’t going as fast as he did on some other tracks Taehyung listened to, so he wonders if there’s a possibility that he himself could try, too. Repeat his own words to a beat Yoongi wrote, and that’s as far as he gets concerning feedback for Yoongi, because the thought sends his head spinning again.

Is this… Is this still friendship territory? Making a song out of things Taehyung said months ago? Now that Taehyung thinks about how long ago their trip to that museum was, Yoongi must have recorded him somehow. Or he wrote it down from memory right after it happened, or something like that. That’s a lot of dedication, a lot of effort. And yes, music happens to be Yoongi’s passion and he enjoys doing it and all, but this is a very specific piece of music to be making for a… for an ex fake boyfriend with ex benefits. And a curious time to be giving it to him, when everything is over and they’re trying hard to be normal friends.

It’s not hard to draw your conclusions from *that*.

The song ends with more soft guitars fading out gently. Behind Taehyung, Boop yawns loudly.

Or maybe he’s seeing things.

Yoongi has collaborated on songs with all his other friends, right? He told Taehyung. Taehyung heard it in some of the tracks. It’s a thing he does. Yoongi isn’t really a master of verbal displays of affection, and Taehyung has always had the feeling that music helps him express that towards his friends. Maybe this is friendship territory. Maybe this feels extremely personal and special to Taehyung, while it’s just a regular, good old normal Yoongi thing to do.

Better not to jump to any conclusions, right? It’s not like this is the nineties and he made him a mixtape. It’s not like it’s a lovesong. It’s about animals with long lifespans. Taehyung shouldn’t get ahead of his stupid lovestruck self.

He clicks on Play again. This is a lovesong.

The longer he does this, the more Taehyung fluctuates. Whenever he listens to the song he's convinced he has a chance, whenever he sits in silence he wants to slap himself for being delusional. He texts Yoongi to tell him that it sounds great and that it's amazing and he's honored, because he doesn't want Yoongi to wait for feedback on his creative work, he knows how anxiety-inducing that is. But he doesn't dare write anything else. He can't just *ask* him.

He could ask his friends.

With Boop’s head heavy on his thigh, breathing a calming rhythm against his legs, that sounds like a valid and less scary possibility. Taehyung could just ask Yoongi’s friends about music he’s written for them, with them, about them, anything. He can just see what they say, and then he can rethink what this means. That's reasonable, right? Perfectly reasonable.

He promised Jimin to come to Itaewon with him anyway because Hoseok works at the club tomorrow night. Or, well, he promised himself to go because he wanted to get laid. Still kind of does.
If he's ever needed a clear head, it's now, and sex has always helped him with that, so. No harm in trying. No harm in getting laid, no harm in using the opportunity to ask Hoseok about Yoongi.

Perfectly reasonable.

Taehyung isn't usually one to shy away from asking people things. He's never had a problem with it, used to be one of those kids that annoyed their classmates by asking all kinds of questions in class, because he didn't see why he shouldn't. Still doesn't, really. He confronted his friends when he felt that there was something standing between them, always favoring decent communication over stupid fights, and sometimes even straight up asked people how they felt about him. He has always somewhat prided himself in not feeling any shame, most of the time, and that made asking things a whole lot easier.

But lately, nothing truly comes easily. And tonight, he doesn't know where to start.

Jimin has turned into some sort of minx, sprawled long over the bar with his belly on the counter, eyes on Hoseok’s every move. He's tipped so low it almost looks like he's about to fall face forward into the space behind the bar, Taehyung watching him wondering if that's the plan. Then Hoseok can swoop in and save him and hold him tight in his arms or whatever people in functional relationships do.

Fuck. Again.

Taehyung takes a swig of whatever Hoseok gave him. It tastes mostly sweet and he appreciates the gesture, just kind of wishes he had given him something with more alcohol. Maybe that'd help with his mission.

“I want another,” Jimin announces loudly, over the music. Taehyung wishes he, too, was talking about booze, but he is not. Instead of giving him another drink, Hoseok saunters over to where Jimin is half-crawling towards him, and presses another kiss to his mouth. “Fine,” he says afterwards, and gives him a loving but disapproving stare. “But now you gotta let me work a bit. Don't want everyone here to think they can just get kisses from the barkeeper, right?”

“True,” Jimin says with a happy giggle. Hoseok spares Taehyung a quick glance.

“'Sides, your best friend over there looks about ready to throw up.”

Jimin fakes a gasp, but the apologetic look he shoots Taehyung is real. “Sorry, Taetae,” he says. Taehyung just waves his hand around dismissively.

He hasn't told Jimin about his mission. Maybe that was his first mistake. If Jimin knew, he could help motivate him, help him ask his boyfriend about what kind of music Yoongi usually writes for his friends. But Jimin doesn't know -- Taehyung actually hasn't told anyone at all about the song itself. Only Boop, and only in high-pitched, whiny half sentences.

He doesn't want to do it. Taehyung doesn't like thinking it, but that's just the thing. He doesn't want to ask Yoongi about it and he doesn't want to ask Hoseok about it, and he doesn't want to tell Jimin. It's too hard; the thought that he might not get to hear what he wants to hear too crushing. All this time, all these months he's wanted nothing more than to be Yoongi's friend, and the Taehyung that sat around with him at the airport waiting for a flight to New York City in awkward silence would have been beside himself. But even considering that Yoongi does this for all his friends and the song
was just a good old seal for their friendship makes his throat burn now, his eyes prickle. God, he wants them to be friends -- of course he does. In the long run, sure. But right now he wants something else and tonight, he can't bear to give himself the disappointment of knowing he can't have it.

Jimin takes him out to the dancefloor for a while and Taehyung tries to forget, focuses only on his best friend's warm body close to his, on the looks they get, the wolf whistles. It's good for his suffering ego, definitely. Jimin laughs right into his ear and Taehyung laughs back effortlessly, hands wandering, his chest bursting with affection. He's glad to be here with him at least, this is better than sitting around at home, replaying the same song fifty times and complaining at both of his dogs. When a slower song plays, they just keep standing around and hug it out, grabbing each other's asses periodically to make the other laugh.

But eventually, Jimin returns to his boyfriend behind the bar for more drinks and kisses, and Taehyung figures out that it's easier to let other people ask questions tonight.

Someone slides up to the bar to his right and asks him how his night is going. Taehyung says it's going okay except that his best friend is dating the bartender. The guy laughs sympathetically and asks if his best friend is the one he danced with earlier. And of course he seems very relieved when Taehyung says yes and eliminates his worry that he might be taken.

He really fucking isn't.

The dude looks good; classically handsome, tall with broad shoulders, sharp cheekbones, unbelievably far from Taehyung's type. But that was kind of the plan. Hook up with someone he won't crush on. Fuck out all the pent up frustration that's been accumulating for what feels like months at this point. Then hopefully see everything a little clearer tomorrow morning and rethink it all.

He’s going to flat-out use this guy, but from the way he’s flirting with Taehyung, he’s probably trying to do the same. Taehyung is still thinking that he’s going to have to turn him down if he starts asking for phone numbers or Kakao IDs, when he’s inching closer and starting to lightly, carefully, touch Taehyung’s wrist instead. Yeah, this one’s not looking for a boyfriend. He asks for a name, nothing else, before they go back to the dancefloor together with drinks that he bought. Taehyung can roll with that, he thinks. His hands are warm on Taehyung’s hips and he’s close, but not close enough that Taehyung would want to slap him, somehow finding a polite distance in between obviously wanting him. Taehyung can definitely roll with that.

He catches Jimin’s gaze right before they disappear together. He doesn’t look too convinced, but Taehyung decides to ignore that for once. He only keeps thinking about it for a few more steps, but as soon as he’s in the bathroom with his back pressed firmly against a stall door and a hot pair of lips making their way down his body, he has other things on his mind.

Yoongi knows he’s making a mistake.

Right from the start, he knew. He should use his nights off to relax, because he loves his work, but only ever working nights does fuck up your biorhythm after a while and you need to be reasonable with your breaks. He wanted to be reasonable with his breaks. Spending his night off drunk at a party would be fucking unwise, to say the least.

But he can’t say no to his friends. Yoongi can say no to all kinds of people and things and in all
imaginable situations, he’s a big fan of saying no, he *loves* saying no. He just can’t say it when his friends need something from him. He’s tried. It doesn’t work.

So when Jin calls and tells him that Namjoon got called into work last minute and can’t go on *date night* with him now, but he’s already *all dolled up and pretty*, and asks if Yoongi wants to fill in as his *cute armpiece* for a club night in Homo Hills, Yoongi sighs so loud it hurts his throat a little and says *fine*.

He knows he’s making a mistake. The longer this goes on, the more obvious it gets.

Entering a gay club with only Kim Seokjin as your company is already a tough thing for a man’s ego to work with. The guy gets ogled by almost every single person they walk past, gay men and bi girls trying not to drool and trip all over themselves, and at some point both of them are sure that the only thing keeping everyone from throwing themselves at Jin and ask for a number, a one night stand, a chance to lick his boots, *anything*, is the dead-eyed apocalyptic stare of the smaller guy walking beside him. Yoongi *hates* being out alone with his prettiest friend. Someone buys Jin a drink and he laughs as he passes it onto Yoongi, a very unique Kim Seokjin gesture of friendship. Yoongi didn’t want to get drunk tonight, still kind of doesn’t, but he takes small sips here and there because he can’t stand to endure this sober.

“Seok works tonight,” Jin announces at some point and while Yoongi grunts a vague *I know*, he’s already being dragged towards the bar.

That's when things completely go to shit.

On their way there, looking around, Yoongi almost thought he saw Taehyung in the crowd. Almost thought he saw that crown of soft, silky brown hair moving through the masses, accompanied by someone else he doesn't know. But he figured he was just seeing things because everything that has to do with Taehyung right now is weird and difficult and it's no wonder he starts seeing doppelgangers in gay clubs. Naming his new puppy was cute and a good opportunity for Yoongi to spend time with Taehyung without having to look at his perfect face too much, but even that got exhausting after a bit. As soon as they were up in Taehyung's room Yoongi wanted nothing more than to pounce him, and the most horrifying part is that he wasn't even necessarily thinking about sex. He just wanted to cuddle up with him for a bit, with Boop too for all he cared. He just wanted to *be* with him.

And then, of course, he had to give him that stupid USB drive. The song had been sitting around all done and finished on his hard drive but Yoongi had been putting off giving it to him because it felt weird. He didn't want Taehyung to get the wrong idea. Or, well, he didn't want Taehyung to get the *right* idea and shoot him down. But when you make something for someone, at some point you just want them to fucking have it, so Yoongi bit the bullet and then hightailed the fuck out.

Taehyung's response to it was nice enough. Yoongi believes him that he genuinely likes the piece; the somewhat simple reaction to it is still a little sobering.

So Yoongi just wants to steer clear of him for a bit. Nothing dramatic; maybe two days, maybe three, nothing more. He's learned that lesson -- he can't stay away from Taehyung from too long, but he just needs a bit of time to swallow his embarrassment and get the hell over it.

Naturally, that doesn't work out.

Hoseok gets comically wide eyed when he sees them. And not the *how nice that my best friends are here* kind of wide eyed, but the *ohhh shit* kind of wide eyed. Which is an important difference Yoongi wishes he couldn't make out in the dim party lights.
From behind the counter, Hoseok waves Jin closer and hisses something into his ear, but against the thump of the music he has to hiss so loudly Yoongi still thinks he can make out the word Taehyung.

Seeing things. He's seeing things, and now he's also hearing things.

While he tries to convince himself of that, he notices Jimin hanging around at the bar, playing with a tiny paper umbrella from his drink and avoiding his gaze like he's afraid Yoongi might have gotten laser eyes since they last saw each other. Fine. So Jimin is here. It's nice that Hoseok has company from his boyfriend during work. It's not like Jimin doesn't go anywhere without Taehyung. He's not here. He's probably hanging out with Jungkook or playing with Kanye the puppy or reading comics or something. It's all good.

While Seokjin is still trying to decide what kind of drink he wants, someone else buys him one. Hoseok pushes it towards him with an apologetic smile and Jin heaves a long sigh like looking good is the biggest burden he's ever encountered. “Thanks, really, but I'm taken,” he says to the guy that's been sliding closer to them steadily.

“Yeah?” he shoots back. “Is he here, your boyfriend?”

His eyes land on Yoongi at that, which doesn't surprise Yoongi, since he's been hanging around with Jin the entire time. He calmly waits for Seokjin to refute this, but instead, Jin puts a heavy arm around his shoulders and says, “Yep. This is him.”

Diligently, Yoongi darkens his gaze some more to make the guy scram, but as soon as he's out of earshot, he elbows Jin right between the ribs so hard it makes him squeak.

“You ever try to fake date me again, I'll make you eat your own balls,” he growls. “Not doing that shit again.”

Seokjin laughs, like he completely forgot how Yoongi has been ruining his own love life the past months. “Sorry,” he says softly. Yoongi forgives him only because Namjoon isn't here, and because Jin holds out the drink he got towards him. “You want this?”

“No thanks,” Yoongi still says. His mood is spiraling, and he used to be the kind of person that would try to salvage it with alcohol, but he doesn't do that anymore. It's a bad habit he quit like cigarettes, and he's going to try to stick to mostly sodas tonight for his own good.

The three of them fall into idle conversation with each other, whenever Hoseok has time between work and isn't hogged by his boyfriend. Jimin still doesn't look at Yoongi but it's not like Yoongi is looking at him, either. Most of the time he's just staring past him, gaze randomly fixing on the bathroom doors, watching people going in and out while thinking about how the music choice for tonight is nice but it was better while he himself was DJing here.

The door swings open and Taehyung walks out. Yoongi realizes this with sober acceptance at first; of course Taehyung is here, of course he comes out of the bathroom right when Yoongi is watching it, and of course he's not alone. It only gets bad once Yoongi's mind has really taken in the picture.

He can't see that much thanks to their surroundings, but he can tell that Taehyung is still talking with the guy he exited with, both of them laughing about something he said. They look disheveled, the guy's shirt is half untucked and Taehyung's hair is a mess and Yoongi vaguely thinks, *If you're going to fuck in a public place at least don't let other people know, you amateurs.* Taehyung has that distinct fucked out expression on his face that Yoongi knows all too well, and upon realizing this, he suddenly feels many things all at once.
He's jealous. Of course he's fucking jealous, he'd give anything to feel Taehyung's warm skin underneath his fingers right now, but Yoongi isn't used to this. Yoongi doesn't get jealous. People don't belong to him and Taehyung is free to do what and who he wants, but god Yoongi's entire body aches with the need to touch him now, to hear his voice and make him laugh and make him moan, stomach flipping and flipping and flipping with want.

And he's angry. With the guy, because he dares to just do Taehyung in a sleazy club bathroom, and because that's their thing. Yoongi is the one who introduced him to bathroom fucks, and it should be him up there with him, and he's fucking livid that it's not. Most of all though, he's angry with himself.

And he's sad. He's pathetic, he thinks, hopelessly in love with someone who apparently fucks other people in public bathrooms now, the last person without a boyfriend in his friend circle because he just can't get his shit together. It's sad, he's sad and he's been feeling like shit for half the night while Taehyung has been out here making the best of his time.

Pathetic.

Just when his eyes start to hurt, Yoongi tears his gaze away. At least, he thinks, no one else seems to have noticed. He searches and finds Jin’s hand curled around the drink he got, and reaches out to grab it.

“Give me that,” he says.

The last conscious decision Yoongi will later remember himself making is dragging a laughing Jin towards the dance floor because he was in that drunk state of happy euphoria and wanted to move and scream all his energy out, but didn't want to do it alone. Most things after that are a blur. He doesn't stop drinking, that's for sure. He keeps getting more, more than he's had these past few months when he thought he was over this kind of behavior, keeps thinking he fucking needs it, just this once.

Later that night, when Yoongi's good booze mood is starting to wear off and his bad booze mood is slowly commencing, Taehyung and Jimin join them. He still notices that much. Yoongi starts to get quieter again, clingy too, holding onto Jin or Taehyung like he's at sea, which is increasingly how he feels, anyway. Taehyung takes it like a champ and Yoongi remembers wanting to kiss him but finding out that this entire face is numb and discarding the idea without moving an inch.

And he remembers, the next morning, lying in bed with a head full of hurt and regret, how it all ended.

Taehyung didn't know Yoongi was here. He had no idea. Had he known, he wouldn't have run off with that guy, wouldn't have let him blow him in a bathroom stall.

It was good, sure. Quick and filthy with a mutual understanding that this was a no-strings-attached kind of deal, exactly what he was looking for. The guy was nice. Laughed at Taehyung's jokes, wished him a nice rest of the night when they parted ways. Taehyung has no idea if it really did clear his head, but he didn't feel too bad about it, at least, until he came back to the bar sometime later after some dancing around, and Jimin and Hoseok told him.

“You think he saw me?” Taehyung whisper-shouts into Jimin’s ear, both of them staring into the same direction, now and then catching a glimpse of Yoongi’s bleached hair flying around as he hops over the dancefloor. Taehyung has never seen him this drunk. This uninhibited in a sea of people. It's
“I don’t know,” Jimin murmurs back. “First I thought he didn’t, I mean, what are the odds, right? But the longer I look at him…”

“I know,” Taehyung says quietly, wincing at the thought. He feels bad. This isn’t really a message he wanted to send to Yoongi, especially not now and especially not this explicitly. And he’s unsure what to make of the suspicion that Yoongi is getting drunk because of this, because of Taehyung fucking someone else in his direct proximity, but it doesn’t feel good.

So later, when Yoongi seems to have calmed down a bit and Taehyung and Jimin decide to keep him company, Taehyung tries to make up for it somehow. Yoongi gets clingy and looks tired, holding onto Taehyung’s arm whenever he can and staying close to him like he might fall over otherwise. He has that wariness about him now that Taehyung has seen in his father just when he was starting to make his own steps again after the accident, like he doesn’t quite trust his body, like the ground looks closer and more inviting with each passing second. So Taehyung holds onto him, too. Makes sure he doesn’t fall, feeling like this is the least he can do for him.

It’s somewhere past midnight and Taehyung feels sticky and sweaty all over, but Yoongi’s hair still distinctly tickles the side of his neck when he mushes his face against his chest and mumbles, “I wanna go home.”

“Yeah,” Taehyung croaks, the closeness almost too much to handle for him. “Yeah, I’m thinking maybe you should. I’ll, uh… Come on, let’s say goodbye to the rest, then I’ll call you a cab, okay?”

“Kay.” Yoongi says from somewhere, barely audible. Taehyung finds Jimin and Jin hunched over the bar together, giggling helplessly about something, both of their faces flushed. He smiles at the sight, despite everything. They’re cute. He’s happy that his friends and Yoongi’s friends have been getting along so well right from the start.

Whatever exactly it was that they started.

“Tae’s taking me home,” Yoongi announces, slurred but loudly, making Jin, Jimin, and Hoseok look up at them and Taehyung flush automatically. He didn’t think… He thought he was really just going to call him a cab. But Yoongi still leans heavily on his side and now that Taehyung thinks a little more about it, he’s not sure if Yoongi could get his own apartment door open and himself to bed safely, or even pay the cab driver correctly.

Taehyung himself is still mostly sober. In comparison. He’s tipsy, or something; the whole Yoongi thing sobered him up pretty much, but he can still feel some of it in his system. Point is, he’s definitely sober enough to make sure Yoongi gets home safely. And maybe he owes him that, too. So he does. Taehyung takes him outside and almost laughs at how both of them take big gulps of fresh air immediately. In the steady stream of cars now that public transport has shut down for the night, he easily waves over a cab and puts Yoongi on the back seat like he’s made of glass. Yoongi groans loudly and throws himself against the back rest with his eyes closed and his head tilted back.

Dutifully ignoring Yoongi’s exposed throat and hoarse little noises, Taehyung climbs in next to him and gives the driver Yoongi’s address. He’ll just… He’ll just sleep on Yoongi’s couch or call another cab home afterwards, or something. He just has to get Yoongi up there first.

At the first turn, Yoongi plops to his side and puts his head on Taehyung’s shoulder again. He’s warm and heavy and smells like sweat and beer and his shirt looks damp, and it’s kind of a gross combination but Taehyung suspects that he himself doesn’t look or smell any better. He fights the
urge to put an arm around Yoongi and just lets him doze on his shoulder, staring at the street, hoping that this’ll be over soon and that this’ll last forever all at the same time.

When the cab slows to a halt, Yoongi wakes up again. The driver asks which one of them is paying and Taehyung says he’ll do it and Yoongi drawls, “He’s rich, you know.” Taehyung pats his thigh carefully and pays up.

He can feel the cab driver’s eyes on them as he maneuvers Yoongi out of the car. Taehyung doesn’t know where Yoongi even takes the strength for it, but he has an iron grip around his arm with both of his hands, gaze fixed firmly on the ground. Taehyung hopes they can just make it to the elevator side by side like this, and Yoongi seems to think so too for a few steps, before he halts again and looks at his feet like it’s the first time he’s seeing them.

“I can’t feel my legs anymore,” he announces. Taehyung presses his lips into a defeated smile.

“Piggyback?”

“Don’t drop me,” Yoongi mumbles while gingerly putting his hands on Taehyung’s shoulders. He looks doubtful about this, and he makes a stifled noise in the back of his throat when Taehyung hoists him up on his back and Taehyung fears for a second he’s going to throw up right over his shoulder, but nothing happens. They make it into the elevator and up without anyone throwing up, and Yoongi even keeps his legs locked safely around Taehyung’s middle when Taehyung has to let go of him with one arm to punch in his apartment code.

“You’re a hero,” Yoongi mutters into the side of his neck, lips barely parting. Taehyung has goosebumps all over while he trudges through Yoongi’s apartment, keeping quiet and pushing the bedroom door open carefully with one foot.

Getting him into bed is messy and Taehyung almost drops on top of him back-first when he tries to put Yoongi on the mattress. Yoongi realizes a little late that he needs to unlock his legs from around him, then he lets them drop to the floor heavily and just stays like that, feet still on the ground, only his back lying across the bed, eyes already closed. Taehyung gives him an exasperated look before leaning down to wrap his hands around his ankles.

They feel cold and delicate in his palms but Taehyung tries to discard the thought, lifting Yoongi’s legs and pulling him around gently until his head touches his pillow. He is reminded again of the fact that he himself isn’t completely sober when it takes him a few tries to get Yoongi’s shoes open and off, then he just drops them on the floor and regards Yoongi helplessly.

No, he can’t leave him like this. He’ll feel bad.

Wordlessly, only listening to Yoongi’s even breaths, Taehyung works the blanket free from underneath Yoongi’s heavy body, bunches it up at his feet and then leans up again to work on the button of his jeans with clumsy fingers. When Yoongi frowns and makes an unsure noise, Taehyung shoots him a worried glance.

“I’m only taking your pants off so you’re not uncomfortable,” he clarifies, and Yoongi’s frown smooths out and he nods.

“Okay,” he just says, voice small. He must be at least half asleep.

Finally, Taehyung manages and pulls his jeans off and to the floor. He takes the blanket and pulls it up all the way to Yoongi’s shoulders, figuring that if he gets too hot in the night he can just kick it off, but it’s better to start out warm, maybe. Hopefully. Yoongi sinks a little deeper into the mattress,
looking comfortable now, so that’s good enough for him. Pointlessly, Taehyung adjusts the blanket one last time, looks him over with a vague, uncomfortable pull in his chest, then he turns and leaves for the door.

In the doorway, he halts once more, smiling softly at one of Yoongi’s pleased sighs. “Sleep well,” he says, thinking that Yoongi probably doesn’t even hear him anymore.

“Good night, Taehyung,” Yoongi says softly. “I love you.”

Taehyung freezes.

He stands still in the doorway, one hand hovering in mid-air on its way to the handle to pull the door shut, unmoving. With wide eyes, he stares into the darkness of Yoongi’s bedroom, lips parting in slow motion, something icy cold running down his back in shivers.

Briefly, he tries to convince himself that he misheard, that his ears are playing tricks on him, but he doesn’t believe it for even a second. Maybe he didn’t mean me, is his next attempt, but Yoongi’s quiet, sleepy drunk voice still rings through his head clear as day.

Good night, Taehyung, I love you.

His name.

He said his name. He knew exactly who he was talking to. Who he was saying it to.

Taehyung feels like the entire world is standing still. The whole planet came to a sudden halt, and if it doesn’t pick up movement again anytime soon, they’re all going to freeze to death, and he’s going to do it right here, standing in Yoongi’s apartment, watching his motionless figure lie still underneath his thin summer blanket.

Part of him wants to move, wants to surge forward and tackle Yoongi right there on his bed, shake him awake, slap him awake if he has to, just to get clarity. Force him to wake up, to sober up, to fucking explain himself to him. Force him to say it again. To open his eyes and look at his face and tell him again. He wants to yell at him, scream, anything to get him conscious, but Yoongi looks fast asleep now, his head turned to the side a little, his face relaxed, the whole body blissfully unaware of what just happened.

Of what is, perhaps, still happening.

But he can’t. He can’t do anything. He can’t just wake him back up when Yoongi was drunk off his ass five minutes ago, he needs sleep and this will just… This will just have to wait until the morning, then, won’t it? The thought seems crushing and unreal, the mere concept of morning and the coming day like something in the far future, something that’ll never come, impossible to wait for. But he has to. He has no other choice.

Slowly, carefully, Taehyung starts moving again, like he’s the only one who can subtly tilt the world back onto its axis and has to make sure he’s doing it right. He leaves the door cracked and starts to make his way through the apartment, though stopping halfway to sit down on the armrest of Yoongi’s couch, feeling like he has to take a break already. He feels his feet heavily on the floor, feels the pressure of his shoes on them, feels his hands clasping together in his lap, feels his shirt sticking to his back.

Hears the words echoing through his head.

I love you.
He loves him.

Taehyung wants to laugh; he feels stupid now, all of a sudden, thinking back on how much he struggled with this. Telling himself over and over again that he was seeing things; even now, some part of him tries to tell him that people say this to their friends too, that it doesn’t have to mean anything special. But Yoongi has never said it to him before, and he’s never heard him say it to anyone else either, and it is something special.

Yoongi loves him.

For a second, Taehyung really does consider staying here, crashing on his couch, so he’ll be here when Yoongi wakes up, so they can… Well, so they can do whatever comes next. There has to be something. Anything, there has to be a life after this, and a good one, too. He could just stay here and wait.

But the longer he sits here with an armrest pressing into his ass, the more it feels like the walls of Yoongi’s apartment are closing in on him, like this place is getting smaller and smaller with each second Taehyung spends unmoving. As if he has to make up for the time he spent standing in a doorway staring at a bed, now he wants to jump up and race down the street, feels like he can’t sit still any longer, like he has to do something, he has to.

Taehyung gets up like the couch tried to bite him and crosses the rest of the apartment. Out in the hallway, he looks around like he’s never been here before, disoriented, like his brain forgot that there are large (very large) parts of the world that don’t look like Yoongi’s apartment. He starts off in the wrong direction before he finds his way towards the elevator, shifting around on his feet waiting for it, fingers locking and unlocking his phone.

He has to say something, right? He knows them. He knows Yoongi, he knows himself. They haven’t really made themselves known for their stellar communication skills. If nobody says anything, nothing will happen.

[02:17] you: let me know when you’re awake, ok?

That looks fine. Looks alright. Taehyung stares at it all the way down in the elevator, then almost walks into a wall on his way out. Maybe it’s not fine, maybe it looks too serious. He doesn’t want Yoongi to think he messed up or something. That’ll just make him not want to text him back. He can’t have that. He needs Yoongi to text him back. He needs it.

[02:19] you: :)

Okay. That’s as far as he gets for now, really. It’s the middle of the night, he’s only texting, and he’s still a little bit drunk. Yoongi will… Yoongi will get the picture. Hopefully. And if he won’t, Taehyung will just pester him again later. He’s not going to just let this go. Not this time.

When the cab driver asks where to take him, Taehyung almost leans forward and says Min Yoongi said he loves me instead of telling him his address. He plays with his phone in his hands the entire drive, bouncing his knees, staring out the window with wide eyes, replaying those words in his head over and over and over again. He never wants to forget the sound of them. He needs them to stay in there between his ears forever.

Kanye the puppy greets him with loud squeaky barks when he unlocks the apartment door, so Taehyung shushes him quickly, not wanting to wake his parents. Then he picks him up from the floor and presses his face directly into his soft fur.
“Good night, Taehyung, I love you,” he repeats quietly, getting a mouthful of hair and a confused kick from a struggling hind leg. The words feel good on his tongue, *I love you.*

I love you.

“I love you,” he tells Kanye because, well, he does, as he puts him down in his little puppy basket again. He looks far too awake to sleep now and Taehyung feels the same, an overexcited child waiting for the good stuff to happen.

Still, once he makes it upstairs, drops all his clothes on the floor of his room and collapses face-forward on his bed, tiredness washes over him like the sea. His feet dangling off the bed, his face squashed against his pillows, Taehyung is out like a light, Yoongi’s sleepy, gravelly voice still rumbling in his ears.

Chapter End Notes

♥

(2019 addendum: i wrote this way before kanye came out as a maga hat wearing trainwreck, so, i'm sorry. replace the puppy name with any artist you like who isn't garbage from a toilet. maybe the puppy's name should be travis mcelroy.)
Yoongi gets an intervention, Taehyung gets distracted.

 Yoongi hates his fucking life.

Before yesterday, he thought he was over this; getting smashed and waking up hating his life. But apparently he’s not.

Because he’s awake and he hates his fucking life.

He doesn’t remember everything. Just the really horrible stuff. The second he opened his eyes he felt like throwing up, and he wasn’t sure why yet, but he was very aware that something absolutely terrifying had happened.

Yoongi hasn’t moved ever since. He’s still on his back in his bed, wearing socks that feel crusty from sweat, yesterday’s boxers, and a shirt that smells like a packed party in late summer. His A/C is whirring softly which means that it has to be past nine in the morning because it works on a timer, that’s all he knows. He hasn’t checked the time yet. His phone is in a pocket of his jeans, and his jeans are on the floor at the foot of the bed.

Because that’s where Taehyung put them after he pulled them off.

No, rewind, rewind.

It all started with Jin calling him his armpiece. Yoongi remembers the way virtually everyone in that club was ogling Jin. Then, blanks. Something about Hoseok being nervous around him, which only now leads Yoongi to the realization that the fucker knew. Then Taehyung outside that bathroom door. Yoongi doesn’t remember where he himself was or why he was looking, has no idea what his friends were doing or why nobody stopped or at least fucking warned him. He only remembers Taehyung, Taehyung with his sex hair and sex smile, Taehyung laughing and smiling at this random guy.

He doesn’t even fully remember what he felt. It just makes him vaguely sick now, but that might just be the hangover.
It looked like a one night stand, at least. Not like they were exchanging numbers or anything. They weren’t even touching when Yoongi saw them.

But that’s not what mattered last night.

He sort of remembers getting hammered, from there. It’s all kind of a blur. There was yelling and dancing, like always when Yoongi gets drunk enough. And there was Jimin, which was new. And then at some point, there was Taehyung again, but with him this time. Yoongi remembers wanting to kiss him but somehow still not being drunk enough to actually try. He remembers a warm body much too close to his and he remembers wanting to cry in the middle of a gay club because Taehyung was so close and so out of reach.

Yoongi doesn’t know how he got home. All his memory gives him is a brief glimpse of almost throwing up because Taehyung hoisted him up on his back outside the apartment building. No idea how he got there, or up here.

But the rest he remembers. From there on out. Taehyung pulling his clothes off, then assuring Yoongi that he’s not trying to fuck him, just to make him comfortable. He even remembers the almost unbearably warm rush of affection surging through him at that. Remembers being tucked in. Taehyung telling him to sleep well.

Yoongi squeezes his burning eyes shut.

Fuck, what was he thinking getting this drunk when he knew Taehyung was nearby? What else did he think could come out of this?

Yoongi guesses he didn’t care. That sounds like him. He guesses it hurt too much, was too much to deal with sober, and now this is what he gets. Now it’s the next morning and he’s so hungover he can taste vomit at the back of his throat, and he confessed.

He confessed.

His phone vibrates loudly against the floor and Yoongi pries his eyes open again. Fuck no. He’s not going to get that. He kicks his blanket off and drags his tired, aching body out of bed, but he pointedly steps over his jeans and shoes on the floor and ignores whatever text someone just sent him. He’s not here, or he’s still asleep, or something. He’s not ready for this.

And mostly he really needs to piss.

When he comes back to the bathroom, Yoongi feels about three pounds lighter, so he does fish his phone out of his pants and takes it with him when he climbs back into bed.

Two unread messages from Taehyung, from two a.m. this morning.

Absolutely fucking not.

The newer texts are from Jin though, so Yoongi warily opens those.

[11:38] roommate: dude I am so sorry about yesterday I feel really bad about just losing sight of you

[11:39] roommate: you're okay though right?? Tae took you home?

[11:45] you: yes tae took me home
you: don't worry about it man its my own fault for getting shitfaced

roommate: :( still

roommate: you doing alright? Have you had breakfast?

you: im still in bed

roommate: dammit yoongi can you please just answer my questions about if you're okay

Yoongi sighs and rolls on his side, clutching his phone with both of his hands. He hasn't changed Jin's contact name in well over four years. Maybe he should take his own hint and remember that he can talk to this guy about things.

you: not really i guess

you: i told taehyung i love him

roommate: :OOO

roommate: REALLY??

roommate: good for you!

you: no

you: no not good for me

you: first of all i was blackout drunk

roommate: ok I mean yeah I guess that's not the best way but

you: second he doesn't love me back

It's quiet for at least a minute, in which Yoongi stays curled up on his side and squints at his phone more and more, realizing something.

roommate: are you uh

roommate: 100% sure about that

you: hey wait a second

you: the last thing i told you about me and tae was that our relationship was fake and we broke up

you: and now i tell you i love him and all you have to say is good for you??

you: has hoseok already told you i have feelings for tae because i will fucking slaughter him

roommate: yoongi.

roommate: dude. Man

roommate: my good pal mandude

you: stop it

[11:54] roommate: you are so OBVIOUS with how smitten you are with the kid. Hoseok didn’t tell me anything. Didn’t have to

[11:54] roommate: NICE TO KNOW YOU TOLD HIM AND NOT ME THOUGH

[11:54] you: SHUHT UP

[11:54] roommate: ugh anyway you two literally started your weird thing on Valentine’s day

[11:55] roommate: you didn’t stand a chance


[11:55] you: my point is i did something idiotic and now im hungover and want to dig a hole and die in it so thats how my day is going

[11:55] roommate: well hey back up you haven’t told me how he reacted

[11:55] you: yeah uh i dont know

[11:56] you: i passed out right afterwards and im pretty sure he left

[11:56] you: fuck i hope he did. i didnt see him on my way to take a piss at least

[11:56] roommate: I really love how graceful we all are

[11:57] roommate: listen this does sound subpar if I’m gonna be honest with you and I still feel bad for abandoning you last night so I’m just gonna come over

[11:58] you: hows that gonna help me


Well, there’s no arguing with that. Yoongi will probably very much like Jin’s hangover food, as he always has, and he knows there’s no point in telling him not to come either. He sits up in his bed to put on some pants, but then he changes his mind. Seokjin has seen him naked before. Actually, Seokjin has seen him in some very gross and very compromising situations thanks to their living arrangements during their start of college. He won’t mind seeing him in boxers. He’ll deal. Yoongi does stumble out of bed to wash up a bit and find fresh clothes, just not too many of them. He brushes his teeth and pointedly ignores Taehyung’s guest toothbrush which he still hasn’t thrown out, then he pours himself a glass of water and leaves it on the coffee table so he can throw himself on the couch instead. Standing up still very much hurts his tender head and he’s not sure anymore why he agreed to human interaction when he could have told Jin to go fuck himself.

The keypad beeps and the apartment door opens and Yoongi realizes that showing his love through giving his friends his key code means he couldn’t have stopped this either way. “Hi, honey,” Jin’s voice chimes through the living room, “I brought the kids.”

“What?” Yoongi says, staring at the backrest of the couch in mild panic because these days kids could very well mean Taehyung and his friends. And he wouldn't even put it past Seokjin to fuck him over like that, present him to Taehyung half naked and hungover after last night's debacle. But Yoongi relaxes once he hears Hoseok laugh from the hallway.
“I’m your boyfriend now, don’t do that,” Namjoon says from somewhere.

“Do you get jealous when I call Yoongi honey?”

“No, I just don’t want you to be my dad. You can call Yoongi what you want.”

“Nice to see you assholes,” Yoongi calls over from where he’s curled up with a pillow pressed to his stomach, not actually seeing any of them. “Unannounced and everything. I’d tell you to come in and make yourself at home, but you’re already doing that, so.”

“Honey’s in a mood,” Hoseok says and easily catches Yoongi’s foot flailing through the air in a weak attempt to kick him as soon as he comes into view. “How you doing?” he asks then, gently setting his foot down again and sitting on the soft armrest.

“Bad,” Yoongi says immediately. Vaguely, he sees Seokjin and Namjoon move in his peripheral vision, and when he turns around, Jin is putting a plastic bag on his couch table, already smelling like breakfast. Yoongi sits up and takes a deep breath. “Better.”

That makes Jin smile, which in turn makes everyone else smile. Hoseok slides completely onto the couch, while Namjoon and Jin settle down on the floor around the table. For a good few seconds, Yoongi is content just opening the bag and inspecting its insides, slowly getting himself used to the idea of actually putting food in a mouth that still tastes mostly like ass. Once he has the first Tupperware container open and in his hands, he spares his friends a brief glance and speaks up.

“How much has Jin told you? And don’t say nothing, I know he couldn’t keep his mouth shut.”

“He said you had a little slip-up with Tae while drunk,” Namjoon says softly.

“Hm,” Yoongi says, chewing gingerly on a piece of cucumber.

“Also, I couldn’t keep my mouth shut because you can’t open it,” Jin says pointedly. Yoongi isn’t looking at him, but he can feel the stare on himself. “So if you’re not telling them the rest, I am.”

“Is this going to be some sort of intervention?” Yoongi asks, looking up in hopes to see them take it as a joke and laugh, but they’re looking pretty serious. Well, Jin and Hoseok are looking mostly tired, but also kind of serious.

“Just tell us what’s going on,” Namjoon says. “First this whole fake dating deal which you said you ended because you wanted to be able to see other people? But now you’re not seeing anyone, you go into clubs and literally the only person you see there is Taehyung?”

“Okay, you weren’t even there,” Yoongi says into his cucumber. “And also I only went to Seok’s stupid club because your boyfriend didn’t want to go alone.”

“Hey, don’t make this my fault,” Seokjin says and Yoongi squints at him.

“You were being pretty apologetic in your texts earlier, though.”

“Yoongi,” Hoseok says to his left, and Yoongi deflates almost immediately. Yeah, maybe he wouldn’t have gotten drunk if Jin hadn’t taken him there, or if someone had babysat him. But he’s a grown man, most of the time, sort of, and maybe this was bound to happen at some point.

Yoongi heaves a sigh. “Taehyung brought me home and put me to bed and when he told me goodnight, I kind of, um, accidentally said I love you.”
“Oh,” says Namjoon. Hoseok is eerily silent. Seokjin suddenly looks like he’s watching a puppy video on YouTube.

“That’s how it went down? Aw, that’s so cute.”

Yoongi quickly puts food in his mouth only so he doesn’t throw it at Jin. “Will you stop acting like this is a good thing?” he hisses.

“Will you stop acting like it’s the end of the world?”

“He doesn’t like me back!”

“You don’t know that!”

“But,” Namjoon says before Yoongi can throw his eloquent I do reply at Jin, “you do love him?”

Yoongi swallows and looks down at the baby blue Tupperware container on his lap. “Yeah,” he says quietly, his voice hoarse and beat. “Yeah, I do.” He looks up and finds none of his friends, not even Namjoon, looking surprised, so he looks back down with a frown and fiddles with his fingers. “I’ve known for a while, but I just don’t… don’t think he likes me back in that way. And I know what you’re about to say, that we’re close and stuff, but I’ve been over this with Hoseok, okay? Tae treats me like he treats all his friends, it’s nothing special.”

“He told Hoseok before he told us,” Jin says to Namjoon matter-of-factly, so Yoongi does pick up a big piece of cucumber now and flings it right at his head.

“Ow! Don’t waste good food, dammit, were you raised in the jungle?”

“Can you two be nice to each other for two minutes?” Namjoon says, watching in mild horror as Seokjin picks the piece of cucumber off the floor and bites into it. He shakes his head, like he’s trying to get rid of the mental image, then looks back at Yoongi. “So what’s the plan now?”

“Well, originally my plan was to stay in bed and hate myself,” Yoongi says, sounding crankier than planned, “but then you guys decided to drop by.”

“Has Tae reacted yet?” Hoseok says softly. “In any way? At all?”

Yoongi fishes another plastic container out of the bag on the coffee table instead of looking at anyone. “He left last night. And he texted me while I was asleep, but I haven’t read them yet.”

“What the fuck,” Jin says. “Read it! You gotta do some damage control, and the first step would be to check if there’s even any damage to begin with.”

“Of course there’s damage,” Yoongi mutters, but he does reach for his phone with one hand and unlocks it. Hesitantly, he hovers his thumb over the notification for Taehyung’s texts. If he opens this they’ll get marked as read and if Taehyung happens to check and Yoongi has read but not replied that’s gonna look bad. He doesn’t want to look bad.

On the other hand, he’s not exactly looking good right now either, so maybe it can’t get much worse. Yoongi opens his chat with Taehyung.

“So?” says Namjoon.

“Let me know when you’re awake,” Yoongi reads. “And a smiley face.”

“Maybe he’s just laughing at me.”

Jin rolls his eyes. “Come on, Yoongi, it’s Tae. Now you’re just going out of your way to make this worse than it is.”

“Fine, but what now? What do I say to him?”

“Just own up to it,” Namjoon says softly. “As Jin said, it’s Tae. You two are friends. I mean, what’s the worst case scenario here?”

“I could die,” Yoongi says loudly, but Namjoon is already rolling his eyes and talking over him.

“He doesn’t like you back and wants space or something, but let’s be real, Taehyung could probably stay away from you for about five days. You guys will figure something out. And that’s all if he really doesn’t like you back, which I still think is just your pessimism talking.”

“Yeah, man,” Jin says. “Tae’s your biggest fan. And that’s coming from, you know, your actual best friends.”

Yoongi still stares at his phone, shaking his head. “No but, the thing is, he’s everyone’s biggest fan,” he says, quietly now, because he’s sick of explaining his. He’s explained it to Hoseok once and he’s explained it to himself countless times, over and over in his head. “I know he likes me, but he never fell for me that way, it just looked like that because of our deal, he’s way past--”

“Taehyung is in love with you!” Hoseok blurts out, so loudly they all jump in their seats. Yoongi looks up to blink at him irritatedly, and Hoseok looks back like he’s been sitting on this outburst ever since he came in through the door. “Oh my god, Yoongi, he fucking is, do you ever listen to yourself when you talk?”

Seokjin snickers quietly. Yoongi wets his lips and stares at Hoseok. “You don’t know that,” he says slowly, then almost recoils off the couch because for a split second Hoseok looks like he’s about to strangle him.

“I do! I literally fucking do. Wanna know why?”

“Yeah,” Yoongi says. Hoseok crosses his arms.

“Jimin thinks so. In fact, Jimin is extremely sure that Taehyung is in love with you, you absolute shithead.”

Faintly, Yoongi thinks he can hear Namjoon gasp over the cogs turning in his tired head. “That’s,” he says dumbly, “That’s not proof.”

“It might as well be.” Hoseok snorts. “We’re talking about Taehyung, man. If Jimin says something about him, it’s true. He’s in love with you.”

Yoongi looks at his black phone screen. “You and Jimin have,” he says, his mouth suddenly dry, “talked about this?”

“It’s been coming up here and there,” Hoseok says.

“And he’s sure?”

“Very.”

“And you’re sure?”
“Very.”

“Yoongi,” Jin says, soft and gently this time, like he can feel how Yoongi’s head is spinning. “Text him. Just tell him to come here and talk to you, that’ll be enough. You’ll figure the rest out in person. But you need to text him first.”

Yoongi looks at them, his round of friends all staring at him expectantly, all coming over to his place to support and talk sense into him. Then he looks around his place, because that’s really what it is now. His place. His longing for a home has gotten quieter over time, these past few months. He hasn’t forgotten what Namjoon said, only a few feet from here in his bedroom. A home can be, and should be, many places, and once Yoongi just sat back and let this come to him, it all felt easier, slipped into place.

Home is here, home is his bed and his work room and his bathtub, home is an apartment where all of his friends know his key code and can drop by whenever they want. Home is sitting in his living room with the three people who have been meaning the world to him for years, without whom he never would have made it this far. Home is the radio station and home is Seoul subway carts, and home is Jin’s hangover food in baby blue Tupperware boxes.

He belongs here. It’s okay. He doesn’t have to keep running, doesn’t have to flee and try to find something new, something better, try to fix himself by leaving. He belongs.

So is this it? Is he ready for this? Face Taehyung and face the facts, jump headfirst into cold water because what Hoseok said sounds good, but ultimately he still has no idea how it’ll turn out.

But he’ll tell Taehyung what he feels for him, again, he’ll let him know that he meant what he said even if it was in a drunk haze. He’ll open himself up and invite him to be a home. And is he ready for that? Let home be a person, another person, one more time?

He has this to fall back to, all of this, everyone and everything in here. He won’t be lost if it doesn’t work out, and that’s better for him and better for Taehyung all at the same time. So maybe he is ready. Maybe everything has been coming together part for part, step by step, and now he’s ready to at least try. At least open his mouth and grant himself the chance for something good.

Yoongi’s throat clicks loudly when he swallows. He looks back at his phone and lights up the screen, and his thumbs tap on it quietly.

im up. we should talk? come over when you have time

“Did you send?” Hoseok asks into the silence of his living room, and then fabric rustles when all his three friends lean in to peek at his phone. “You better send. We’re not leaving until I physically see you hit send.”

“Alright, alright,” Yoongi says. He inhales deeply, closes his still tired eyes, and presses his thumb down on the send button.

Several hours before that, Taehyung’s father pulls him aside.

Taehyung had a mean headache when he woke up, and he smelled kind of funny, but a painkiller and a shower later he had that taken care of. His body didn’t remember much about last night after that, but his mind sure did.
He hasn’t been able to think about it too much, because the morning started with the news that he and Jungkook were finally going on their stakeout mission today. And soon. Like, really soon. So Taehyung had to have quick breakfast and throw on some clothes, and now Jungkook and his parents are here with a bunch of other business friends of their parents, and everyone is running around putting together equipment and giving them lectures about what to do.

Like a stakeout is that hard. They’ll just sit down across the street and watch the guys through a telescope, Taehyung really doubts they’ll be able to do much wrong.

But his father pulls him aside and sits him down in the kitchen, away from all the noise and commotion, and Taehyung immediately gets the feeling that this isn’t primarily about the stakeout.

“Tae, I wanted to talk to you before you leave,” he says, and Taehyung raises his brows at him. Slowly, his father sinks down on the second kitchen chair, his fingers drumming on the little table they sometimes eat at when they don’t have the time for elaborate family dinners, and watches him. Then he huffs out a laugh. “God, I think I was less nervous when you went diving with sharks.”

“Well, sharks don’t deliberately kill people, unlike mobsters,” Taehyung says immediately, “and you’d have to be pretty stupid to get--”

“Not helping,” his dad says, and they both laugh. “No, I mean, I’m sure you’ll be fine. Rationally, I know you will. And it’s stupid, but you’re my son and I get scared sometimes, and I did just get my head scrambled by these guys, so I just have to… I have to get something out on the table before you go.”

Taehyung blinks and sits up a little straighter. This sounds serious. With the avalanche of bad news they’ve been getting lately, he’s kind of terrified to hear whatever this is, but his father seems to be trying hard to pull it out of his throat, so he figures he’s just going to have to take whatever’s coming.

“Your mom isn’t here right now, but please know that I’m speaking for both of us. She and I have been talking about this so much, and we really need to tell you,” his father says, and then he looks at Taehyung and gives him a slight smile. “We’re sorry for how we handled your coming out.”

Taehyung opens his mouth and closes it again. He is still blinking, confused, about to ask to elaborate, but his dad is already smiling a bit wider, more apologetically too, and continues.

“Back then, we didn’t know much. And I guess both of us kind of panicked and got scared for your future, but we know now that that was stupid. We shouldn’t have put pressure on you like that to make you introduce us to your boyfriend, you should have been able to decide that on your own time, and for that we’re sorry. And I’m so glad that you have Yoongi, but we also shouldn’t have implied that you’d need a partner to be happy in the first place, and for that we’re sorry too. And we’re especially sorry for ever being blind enough to, even for a second, think that you of all people might not find someone who loves you.”

“Dad,” Taehyung says quickly, before he can go on, something burning in his throat. He’s touched, almost overwhelmingly so, and some voice in the back of his head keeps urging him to cut in and tell him that Yoongi isn’t actually his boyfriend, but maybe this is not the time. Taehyung appreciates the apology, with all his heart, and his dad probably needs to get it out too, and, well. After last night, maybe he doesn’t want to go around telling people that the Yoongi thing was fake. After last night, it kind of doesn’t feel very fake anymore. But that’s another story.

Taehyung clears his throat and puts his hand on his father’s arm and smiles back at him. “Dad, thank you,” he says quietly. “That, um. That really means a lot to me. I mean, I knew back then and I still know that you just wanted my best, and overall you took it pretty well I think, but, still. It did kinda
freak me out a bit. So thank you. And mom too.”

His dad shakes his head. “Please, you don’t have to thank us. We just want you to be comfortable, and you know that we love you no matter what. Alright?”

“Allright,” Taehyung says, almost laughing now with how much he’s smiling. “I know, dad.”

“Good,” his dad says. He pats Taehyung’s hand for a second, then he chuckles at himself and looks out the window. “Back then, it just seemed so distant, because we, uh, thought we didn’t know any other gay people. But we…” He pauses, just to chuckle again. “Your friends,” he says slowly, “They’re all gay, aren’t they?”

Taehyung laughs, out loud, actually slaps his free hand over his mouth and continues giggling into his palm. Fuck. His father is laughing along with him now but Taehyung tries to cool it a bit, takes a few deeper breaths and lowers his hand again, grinning at him. “Yeah,” he says happily. “Yeah, dad. They’re all gay. Honestly, you have no idea just how gay they are.”

“Yeah, we kinda figured that out now, I think,” his father mumbles with another embarrassed laugh. And the mental image of his parents lying awake at night next to each other, discussing quietly if maybe Jimin could be gay, is enough to send Taehyung over the edge and he cracks up again.

They keep sitting at the little kitchen table and giggling at each other until it’s time for Taehyung to go.

As soon as all the noise is gone, as soon as it’s only him and Jungkook in a small, almost empty apartment across the street from the window they’re supposed to be watching, as soon as all is settled and quiet, Taehyung hears Yoongi’s voice between his temples again.

I love you.

Good night, Taehyung, I

“How was the party?” Jungkook asks, already chewing on one of the cookies they got from his mom in case they get hungry later. He’s not looking at Taehyung, peering through the telescope in front of the window instead, but Taehyung still flushes head to toe.

“Uhh, good,” he says and clears his throat twice. Jungkook leans back and throws him a bemused look and Taehyung’s face just feels hotter. “What? Don’t look at me like that. It was good. Where were you, anyway?”

“Sorry, I don’t have to watch Jimin sprawling over the bar to woo his boyfriend all the time,” Jungkook says dryly, but with a fond smile that betrays him. He goes back to watching the building on the other side of the street, and Taehyung does too, finding that it makes talking easier. And, well, it’s also kind of what they came here to do.

“Are you jealous?” Taehyung sing-songs, not meaning a word. “Because the two of them are sooo in love?”

“I’ll have you know I was on a date last night,” Jungkook says. “And it was nice. First base and everything.”

“What’s first base? I can never remember.”
“Me neither, I just like saying it. We made out, though.”

“That is nice. I didn’t even know you were dating someone.”

“Yeah,” Jungkook says slowly and shifts on his camping chair, “It’s been going for a while but I didn’t wanna say anything, because you were kind of, you know. Caught up in your whole thing.”

Taehyung leans back at that and squints at Jungkook. He could have said something. Of course he could have, Taehyung would have been happy for him. He definitely wasn’t bitter about Jimin being so happily in love with Hoseok just because he and Yoongi were… Oh. Okay, maybe he was. Maybe Jungkook has a point. Either way, his squinting doesn’t do anything, because Jungkook is still staring through the telescope, probably more to avoid Taehyung’s eyes than to do actual work.

“So?” Taehyung says. “Who is it? Come on, you can’t just tease me like that and not tell me anything.”

Jungkook hums pensively and shifts in his seat again, and Taehyung wonders if this is embarrassing him for some reason. “You know Yugyeom, right? From my classes?”

“Oh yeah, I remember him!” Taehyung says. He’s met the kid a few times when Jungkook took him to parties or other gatherings with his classmates. And he liked him, and he liked how much Jungkook seemed to like him. “So it’s him? That’s cute, he’s cute.”

“Yeah,” Jungkook says, still staring outside unmoving. “It’s him. And then also Mingyu. I don’t know if you know him, too. The, uh, really tall one my age who works the register at that corner store outside the South entrance to campus sometimes.”

Taehyung is silent for a good few seconds, in which Jungkook looks like a photograph of himself, that’s how still he keeps. “I, uh,” he says, blinking in confusion again. “I think I know who you mean, yeah? So that’s… Then… Wait, then who were you with last night?”

“Yugyeom.”

“Okay. And then Mingyu is…” Something clicks in Taehyung’s head, and he almost slaps himself for being so slow. “Ohh, I get it, you’re dating both of them. Right? Are they dating each other, too?”

“They weren’t at first,” Jungkook says, and Taehyung can see how his back relaxes slowly. And he’s grinning at his telescope. “But I think they’re getting there, actually. It’s cute.”

“Awww,” Taehyung says. “I bet you’re all cute. You have to introduce me to Mingyu, then! I don’t even want to know how many energy drinks I’ve bought from him without knowing that he’s one of my best friend’s boyfriends!”

“Okay, we’re not boyfriends,” Jungkook says quickly, his neck flushing visibly. “Yet. But, uh, I will. Introduce you two. If you want. It’s been going really well with both of them, so, maybe it’s time they get more acquainted with my friends anyway.”

Taehyung coos at him again, because it’s adorable how his baby best friend is making friends and dating them, then he giggles. “You know, before we left, I just talked to my dad about how gay all my friends are.”

“You what?” Jungkook laughs, looking up briefly just to shoot Taehyung his giggly expression.

“Yeah, he apologized for how he and mom reacted when I came out to them back in February,
because they didn’t know any gay people, but they know better now, apparently. Maybe they’re developing a gaydar.”

“Just wait until they find out that I’m poly and Jimin is trans,” Jungkook deadpans, and they’re both laughing again.

“I think that’s still gonna take them a while.”

“D’you think they’d be cool with it?”

“Yeah, I mean, I do, but I also think we’d have to sit them down and make a PowerPoint presentation about it first because otherwise they just wouldn’t know what’s going on.”

Jungkook giggles again, high-pitched and with quaking shoulders. “That’s weirdly adorable. I love your parents. Okay, but back up, he really apologized to you?”

Taehyung tells him about the full apology. Jungkook almost seems more touched than he felt himself, but they both act like they didn’t notice by staring through their telescopes. There’s starting to be actual movement in the apartment on the other side, which is a good sign. If they’re busy preparing a delivery today that means their snitch told them the truth, if Taehyung understood that correctly, and it also means that they have them pinned in the right spot and are good to launch one last counter attack and end this once and for all. *Now or never*, as his mom said. That’ll be the part where Taehyung’s gonna look away again.

But for now, he’s looking right at them. He and Jungkook keep chatting away about this and that, blindly reaching for more cookies now and then, and that makes all of this seem a bit less surreal. Taehyung’s actually kind of comfortable, keeps thinking that it’s nice to spend time with Jungkook all chill and calm like this. He almost forgets about the other thing, the thing about last night, until they’re halfway into their shift and his phone vibrates in his pants.

Taehyung pulls back from the telescope and fishes the thing out of his pocket, then freezes when he sees Yoongi’s name on his lockscreen.

[01:12] (ノ´ヮ´)ノ*:・゚✧ : im up. we should talk? come over when you have time

Okay. Okay, fuck. Fuck, *okay*. Is that good? Taehyung wants to assume that it’s good, but he’s not completely sure. Yoongi does have that horrible habit of making his texts unreadable emotion-wise, and usually Taehyung is good at seeing through them anyway, but this is more difficult. This is a whole other level. This could change *everything*.

From the corner of his eye, he sees Jungkook pull back and look at him right when Taehyung feels panic climb up his throat. “What is it?” Jungkook says. “You okay?”

“Oh, it’s, uh,” Taehyung says, still staring dumbly at his phone screen, thumb tapping on it to bring Yoongi’s message back when the screen goes dark. “It’s Yoongi. He was there, too, last night.”

That sounds like the world’s weirdest understatement. Jungkook reluctantly goes back to his telescope, because somebody has to.

“Yeah? Man, you could have told me, maybe then I would have come.”

“You’d ditch your date for Yoongi but not for me and Jimin?” Taehyung says, managing a playfully offended tone, but it’s cracking around the edges. He clears his throat. “I didn’t know he was there at first. We just, um, sort of bumped into each other at some point.”
“Yeah?” Jungkook says again, and Taehyung can hear the grin in his voice. “The way you always bump into each other? Bump into each other right up to your prostate?”

“Kookie!” Taehyung laughs, a nervous snicker. He’s holding his phone so tightly he’s scared it might break. “No, not like that. We just danced a bit, but… He, uh, he got really hammered and wanted me to take him home at the end, so I called us a cab and I gave him a piggyback right up to his bed and all, and… And then I put him to bed and I told him to sleep well and then Yoongi said, Good night, Taehyung, I love you.”

Jungkook falls off his chair.

“Oh my god, are you okay?” Taehyung says immediately, rising to his feet to help him up, but Jungkook is already scrambling back into the camping chair with eyes like saucers.

“He said what?” Jungkook sputters, one hand holding the telescope, but not looking through it, staring at Taehyung instead. “He told you he loves you? Literally, he said that? Yoongi confessed?”

“Y-Yeah, kind of,” Taehyung says, sitting back down and taking it upon himself to spare a nervous glance through the telescope now. They’re putting stuff in boxes, that’s good. That’s probably drugs. That’s good. “I mean, well, not kind of. He literally said I love you. To me. He said my name and then he said he loves me.”

“Holy shit,” Jungkook says and Taehyung makes another one of those choked, nervous giggles. “Tae, what the fuck! That’s huge. What did you say?”

“Uh,” Taehyung says and feels his entire body grow uncomfortably hot. “Nothing. He was so drunk, and like, half asleep already, and I’m pretty sure he passed out right afterwards. I thought about staying at his place until morning but I got too antsy, so… I just texted him when I left, that’s all. Just told him to let me know when he’s awake.”

“Wait, so then that was him right now? What the fuck are you doing talking to me? Answer him!” Jungkook waves his hands around wildly next to Taehyung, then he hears them drop into his lap. “Or, hang on. What did he reply?”

“He wrote that he’s awake and that we should talk and that I should come over when I have time,” Taehyung says. His voice comes out calm, but he can feel his breath quiver in his lungs. The people in the other building are taping the boxes shut with packing tape. At least that part is going like they predicted it would.

“Okay,” Jungkook says quickly. “Okay, I mean, that doesn’t sound too bad, right? If he was just going to try and deny it all or take it back, I doubt he’d invite you over. Actually, if you ask me, this kinda sounds like he wants to confirm it.”

“What if he doesn’t, though?” Taehyung says quietly.

“Taehyung!” Jungkook snaps and Taehyung flinches. “Fuck that noise. I can’t believe you’re even still here. Go, talk to him! I’ll stay here. We don’t get anything done as a team anyway, even if it’s definitely the most fun stakeout I’ve ever done. But dammit, Tae. Go to him. He wants you there, so go to him.”

Taehyung finally leans back and turns towards Jungkook, and it’s weirdly comforting that Jungkook, too, seems wide-eyed and shaken by all this. “You think he does love me?” Taehyung asks quietly.

“Honestly?” Jungkook says. Taehyung’s stomach knots together for a second, like there’s still a chance he’ll say no. “I think you two are sort of made for each other in a really, really weird messy
way. I think he’s probably been loving you ever since he first saw you at the airport, and I think you love him too, and I think you know that. So go, and tell him.” He snorts. “Who knows what stupid shenanigans he and you would get up to next if you don’t get your shit together today. It’s now or never, man.”

When Taehyun rises from his camping chair he feels like he’s floating into space instead. “Okay,” he can hear himself say. “Okay, alright. You’re right. You… Can you tell dad that something came up, if he asks? I’m not sure I could talk to him right now without, like… screeching something about Yoongi.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’ll tell him. It’ll be fine.” Jungkook just makes dismissive motions with his hands at first, then he leaps up again and pulls Taehyung into a quick, but tight hug. “Fuck, finally. This is good, okay? I’m happy for you. I know you’re nervous, but this is a good thing. And now go.”

Taehyung goes.

It’s a pretty long journey, to Yoongi’s apartment all the way across town. The stifling late summer heat wraps around Taehyung like a blanket and he feels like he’s drenched in sweat once he gets on the subway, which is shockingly cool in contrast. It’s also packed with people and Taehyung feels weird in there, almost othered. He’s going to Yoongi’s place because Yoongi said he loves him. He’s going to Yoongi’s place to tell him that he loves him, too. He can’t help but feel like there’s some sort of new part of his life beginning, right in front of his eyes, and it feels strange to just stand around between strangers who have no idea what’s going on with him. No idea that he fell in love with someone, someone so special, someone so beautiful inside and out it still knocks the breath out of him sometimes.

Taehyung is switching subway lines when Jungkook texts him. He says he was on the phone with their dads and they’re already content with what they saw during the few hours they spent up there. Taehyung doesn’t have to feel bad for leaving and everything is going according to plan and good things are happening. Good things are here for him.

The second subway isn’t as crowded and Taehyung realizes he should maybe give Yoongi some sort of warning that he’s dropping by. They’ve been going anything but smoothly, pretty much ever since they got to know each other (it still feels like yesterday), but Taehyung needs this to go over as well as it can.

[02:07] you: ill be over in 10

His message gets marked as read instantly.

Taehyung holds his phone in his sweaty palm and gets off the subway. Heat punches him in the face. He finds his way to Yoongi’s apartment almost blindly, shifts around on his feet at every red light, feeling hot and damp and nervous and like his life is about to change. He has the almost overwhelming urge to move, almost jogs down the last street, but he contains himself. He probably already smells like a hot summer day, he doesn’t want to show up on Yoongi’s doorstep looking like he ran here.

The apartment building is cool and Taehyung feels downright feverish now. The elevator dings so loudly he flinches, and for a good five seconds he has no idea what Yoongi’s key code was. He thinks about ringing the doorbell, either way, wanting to prepare Yoongi for… for whatever the hell is about to happen, but he doesn’t think he can bring himself to. As soon as it comes back to him, Taehyung punches in the key code with shaky fingers.

The lock clicks open. Taehyung pushes his phone into the back pocket of his shorts and opens the
He sees the blaze of daylight from the windows falling into the hallway and illuminating Yoongi’s bleached hair like a halo before he fully realizes that Yoongi is right there, standing in the doorway to the living room. He’s been waiting for him.
Taehyung doesn’t look real. He looks like a dream someone else had, like a phenomenon that comes to people in their sleep, or their fever dreams. His skin, tan again from the past few months, glistens with sweat in the most ridiculous places, making him look like he’s glowing. There’s a lighter patch on both of his ankles, just above the sneakers he’s wearing, from a day where he just happened to decide on socks and got tan lines from it. His long legs go upward in the slightest curve and end in a red pair of shorts, not the same ones he wore when Yoongi saw him for the first time through a grainy webcam picture, but damn similar ones. He got a bit broader over the past few months, Yoongi thinks, like he still had some growing up to do, and now his shirt hangs off his chest and his shoulders in a way so indescribably perfect it just makes him look like a painting. Sweat is sticking some of his hair to his forehead, but the rest of it is a soft brown cloud around his head, sticking up from the back of it and falling into his eyes all at the same time. For a second or two, Yoongi only has eyes for that mole on the tip of his nose. Like someone put it there with a brush, precise, overeager. Making him look unreal. Like something, someone, people invent when they’re lonely. Kim Taehyung, wishful thinking.

But he’s real. His chest heaves very gently with the breaths he’s taking, and one hand fumbles around behind him until he manages to close Yoongi’s apartment door. He stands with his back to it, facing Yoongi, several feet away from him in the hallway to the living room. Daylight is seeping in through a window in the room behind Yoongi and warming his back, but he feels cold shivers run down his spine in waves. The apartment is completely silent, save for their breath. Then Taehyung swallows loudly.

“Did you mean it?” he says. He’s looking directly at Yoongi, and Yoongi isn’t looking away. Taehyung’s voice sounds like he hasn’t used it in three years. “What you said last night. And don’t say you can’t remember. Did you mean it?”

If anything, Yoongi thinks, he can’t remember everything else he ever said in his life. He only knows what he said last night, only knows those three words, no others, no phrases, nothing. If someone were to greet him on the street, he thinks, he wouldn’t know what to say.

Yoongi, too, swallows audibly. His fingers feel shaky, even though they aren’t, a sign of nervosity that’s been with him all his life, only visible to him. “Say it back first,” he forces out, his voice feeble in his throat. Some part of him is still scared. Still needs to know he’s not about to be disappointed, needs proof, safety. He wants to hear it from Taehyung. He has to.

Of course, rationally, they both realize that Yoongi’s answer practically equals a Yes, considering it’s far from a No. A smile ghosts over Taehyung’s face, a flush creeping high on his cheeks, then he straightens his back, like his body needs to be upright and functional for this, in its best shape.

“I,” he starts, then he stops and Yoongi feels his heart sink. But Taehyung smiles again, huffs a laugh
at himself, and his shoulders droop again, unable to keep up this posture. Really, they’ve been messy this whole time. There’s no point in trying to keep his back straight now. Taehyung crosses half of the hallway, and Yoongi automatically comes towards him too, so there’s less than two feet between them now. Taehyung’s arms twitch, like he wants to reach out, but he doesn’t for now, just looks at Yoongi with that slightly resigned smile.

They both beat their stupidness, Yoongi thinks. It’s over.

“I love you too,” Taehyung says to him. The words seep into his skin and heat up the entire place. “I do. I love you, Yoongi. I love you,” his voice breaks at the end, a sliver of uncertainty falling from his lips, so he presses them together and looks at Yoongi. He’s pleading with his eyes. Yoongi almost can’t take it. “Now you.”

“I love you,” Yoongi whispers immediately. Next thing he knows, his body flings itself forward, his hands grabbing Taehyung’s dark shirt collar, pulling him down, but not kissing him just yet. “I love you,” he says again, louder this time. “I should have said it way earlier. I didn’t think you’d…” But he stops himself, because that seems hardly relevant now. Taehyung’s words still resonate through his entire body, his skin tingling, his chest a bonfire in the winter, and who cares what he thought before this. Who cares who he was two minutes ago. “Doesn’t matter,” Yoongi mumbles. He presses his lips to Taehyung’s and doesn’t even pull back when he adds, “I love you.”

Taehyung laughs, giggles right against his lips, and starts walking them backwards. Blindly, he kicks his shoes off, then maneuvers them into the living room like he knows the place by heart, like this is home to him too, not just to Yoongi.

“Where we goin’?” Yoongi mutters, his lips still attached to Taehyung’s, barely moving, the mere touch enough for now. Especially since he doesn’t want to start this (this? Whatever it is they’re starting) by falling over.

“Couch,” Taehyung mutters back. “I want you,” he pushes a peck to Yoongi’s lips between words, “as close as possible. So sit on me, maybe.”

Now Yoongi laughs, the sound leaving him like he was wearing weighted armor and finally shook it off, making him feel like he’s floating on his feet. “How could I resist that,” he says, but then Taehyung is already sinking backwards onto Yoongi’s couch and pulling him down with him. Yoongi’s hands fly to his shoulders to steady himself, then he straddles Taehyung’s lap, and for a split second, he’s blown away by how non-sexual it feels. He’s still only in boxers, and they are close, as close as possible without smothering each other, just as Taehyung ordered, but they’re not feeling each other up or grinding against each other like they used to. They’re just here, close, and warm.

“I can’t believe we didn’t figure this out sooner,” Taehyung says, his lips already back on Yoongi’s. Yoongi guesses talking through kisses is a thing they do now. He’s not complaining. Especially not when Taehyung laughs into his mouth again and it feels like he’s breathing life into him instead. “I can’t believe we didn’t know? I think everyone knew. I think they all did, except for us. That’s kind of embarrassing.”

“Yeah, well,” Yoongi says, hands slipping up to the hot, almost scalding, sides of Taehyung’s neck, “we’re pretty stupid.”

“Amen,” Taehyung says first, but then he’s giggling again. “You wrote a song for me. Why didn’t I know? I was so hung up on our fake thing ending, I didn’t realize anything else. But,” at this, he pulls back finally, their kiss breaking, and looks at Yoongi with huge eyes like he really just realized it a second ago, “you’re in love with me. That’s so cute.” Yoongi rolls his eyes but he smiles at him,
running a hand through Taehyung’s soft, slightly sweaty hair. “Why me?” Taehyung asks.

Yoongi feels his neck flush. All cards on the table, he thinks. He wants to worm out of this, part of him does, but worming out of talking about feely things is what gave him months of unnecessary heartache, apparently. All cards on the table.

“That biology lecture I went to with you,” he says, watching Taehyung as Taehyung watches him. “That was… I don’t know. I can’t explain it; I don’t think I should be able to. But it’s when I realized. Everything was so you, you were being so you, it just… You know. Punched me in the face then. Why you?” Yoongi repeats, shrugging helplessly, giving a resigned smile. “Who else?”

But Taehyung’s face falls. “Yoongi,” he says, frowning as one of his hands fists in the bottom hem of Yoongi’s shirt. “That was in April.”

“Yeah,” Yoongi croaks, his neck burning up. “Told you I should have said something earlier.”

“No, no, it’s just,” Taehyung watches his fingers toy with the fabric, biting his lip, “you’ve known for so long. I only started to realize after you fake-broke up with me. Or… Real-broke up the fake… Well, you know what I mean. That’s how long it took me to realize. Because I missed you so much. I missed us.”

“I know,” Yoongi says softly. Then he huffs a laugh. “You try to fake-date someone you’re in love with.”

Taehyung looks back up at him at that, the grin on his face making him look as bright as the sun. “How about I real-date someone I’m in love with?”

Yoongi’s heart leaps into his throat. He feels stupid for it immediately afterwards, because they both just admitted to loving each other, of course they’d go on dates. But it still makes something in his chest flutter like he just got asked out on a high school yard. “Really?” he says and raises his brows at him. “Actual, reallife dates? You think we can just do that?”

Taehyung makes a pensive noise, tilts his head. “I mean,” he says slowly, “we’d still fuck in public bathrooms, right?”

“Oh,” Yoongi’s voice drops and he leans in again, enjoying the way Taehyung’s gaze follows his lips, “you have no idea what you’re in for, Kim Taehyung. The real fun has only just begun. Who knows, maybe you’ll finally get that cinema back-row blowjob I promised half a year ago.”

“Sweet,” Taehyung breathes. He tilts his head back until it leans against the backrest of the couch, staring up at him. “So,” he says, “boyfriends?”

Yoongi grins. He runs his hand through Taehyung’s hair again, almost like he can’t stop, like he has to feel the soft strands between his fingers to remind himself that this is real. That he really is about to say what he’s about to say.

“Boyfriends.”

Taehyung smiles, so wide it takes up half his face. He raises his head up again and breaches the small distance between them to press another kiss to Yoongi’s lips, deeper now, like another declaration of love, just silent this time. His hands are big and warm on Yoongi’s sides now, clinging to his shirt again when Yoongi pulls back the tiniest bit.

“I can’t believe you wormed out of this whole thing without ever having to tell your parents that we faked it,” he says. Taehyung laughs and kisses the corner of his mouth.
“You know what the best part is? According to our story, our fake first anniversary should be coming up. So if we tell my parents that our anniversary is today, we wouldn’t even technically be lying. They’d just happen to think that we’ve been dating for a year longer than we really are.”

“I’m dating a criminal genius,” Yoongi says dryly, even if it sends a spark down his back. Dating. They’re going to go on actual fucking dates.

“Born and raised,” says Taehyung with an exaggerated eyebrow wiggle. Then he bites his lip. “Speaking of. Kookie and I went on that stakeout this morning, and our fathers seem pretty content with what we saw. As in, like, they’re ready to strike. This is the part I don’t have much to do with, because I don’t wanna, but things are looking good. The whole thing’s gonna be over really soon. Just, uh,” he flushes suddenly, hands skittering under Yoongi’s shirt with nervous fingers, “just thought you might wanna stay updated.”

Yoongi smiles down at him. He’s amazed at how even Taehyung’s hands underneath his shirt still don’t feel sexual, how it’s all about them being as close as they can, eliminating even the smallest distance between them, be it nothing more than a layer of fabric. And he’s amazed at how much he wants to know about Taehyung, no matter what part of his life they’re talking about.

“I do wanna stay updated,” he says.

Taehyung grins at that, fingertips drumming against Yoongi’s sides lightly. “I’ve never,” he says and laughs, “been with someone, who, you know. Who knew.”

“Well,” Yoongi says and shifts on his lap, slipping a few inches closer. “You’re the only one who really knows how my father ended up in that nursing home, too.”

“Really?” Taehyung says immediately, staring up at him with wide eyes. “Not even Hoseok…?”

“Just you. Hoseok knows what he did, but not what I did.”

Taehyung seems impressed by that, if not straight up amazed. He stares at Yoongi for a few seconds, until it gets almost uncomfortable, then he looks down again with a sheepish smile, his thumbs rubbing small circles over Yoongi’s stomach. He huffs a few breaths of laughter, then he leans forward and kisses Yoongi’s chin. “I guess we do fit together pretty well,” he says softly.

“We’d better,” Yoongi mutters and Taehyung laughs. He kisses his jaw, then his throat, his hands climbing higher underneath Yoongi’s shirt. Okay, maybe this does start to feel a little sexual. And maybe that’s perfectly fine now, that they’ve gotten the most important stuff off their chests. Yoongi leans into the touch of his hands a bit, grinning ever so slightly as Taehyung notices. “You’re gonna get me hard if you keep this up, you know.”

“Oh, good, it’s working,” Taehyung says against his shirt collar. “I was this close to going for your thighs instead.”

“Save it for later,” Yoongi says, peeking past Taehyung for a second to eye his couch. Then he slowly starts to detach himself from (his boyfriend) Taehyung, cocking his head. “Maybe we should just take this to my bed. We didn’t buy that thing for nothing.”

“You mean,” Taehyung says, smirking as he clammers off the couch after Yoongi, “you didn’t buy a bed specifically with a headboard you can handcuff people to for nothing?”

Yoongi’s breath leaves him in a slightly too affected laugh. He takes Taehyung’s wrist, even if they’re practically next to each other and Taehyung would surely find his way on his own, but Yoongi doesn’t care. He needs to touch him still, feels like he has to be connected to him whatever
they’re doing now, wherever they’re going, just to remind himself. That he’s here and he’s real and they made it, and Taehyung’s skin is smooth and warm in Yoongi’s palm, and they’re together.

“You know what’s great?” Taehyung says conversationally before freeing his wrist and shoving Yoongi on his bed instead. Yoongi barely suppresses a yelp when he lands on his back, and Taehyung is on him immediately, hands and knees on either side of him, hair falling into his eyes, smiling at Yoongi like he just found some sort of secret treasure in him. “A lot of things between us aren’t really gonna change. Our friends already know each other, my parents already think we’re a couple. Well, I might start sending you even more sea life pics now. But mostly I’m talking about how we say we need to talk to each other, and instead we end up fucking.”

“Hey, we did talk,” Yoongi says and starts pulling at Taehyung’s shirt. “You told me you love me and I said we’re stupid.”

“That’s a curious way to put it for someone who’s been in love with me for months,” Taehyung says. He leans up on his knees and pulls his shirt off over his head, and for a few seconds, Yoongi thinks he could get hard just from this. The way his skin looks in the midday light, the way all his little moles sprinkle over his chest and arms like constellations of stars, the way his muscles move underneath his weirdly arranged tan lines (his left side looks like he was wearing a tank top, the right side more like a T-shirt), the way his body does anything at all. Everything he does sends sparks through Yoongi’s body, every small movement mindblowing and unreal, and it’s true, he’s been feeling like this for months, but it was usually accompanied by a hopeless sense of longing, the painful feeling of watching and wanting something you can’t reach.

And that’s over now. Yoongi can reach. He does reach out, running one hand up Taehyung’s torso until he reaches his shoulder, then grabbing both of them and flipping their position around, pushing Taehyung back into the mattress and straddling him again. All the terrible longing is history now, and what’s left is excitement, affection and attraction mingling into something bigger, almost knocking the breath out of him now that he really does sit on Taehyung’s crotch and feels his body heat press up against him.

“I wanna revisit something else we talked about,” Yoongi says, watching Taehyung’s face while his fingers trace his ribs blindly. He’s right, he thinks, a lot of things won’t change. His hands still know Taehyung’s body by heart. His skin greets him like he’s coming home. “It has to do with headboards and handcuffs.”

Taehyung gives him a grin, raunchy with entirely too much eyebrow movement, while he runs his flat palms up Yoongi’s naked thighs. “Well, I mean, it’s a possibility we could entertain, right?” he says, fingertips worrying the waistband now. “There’s that, and then there’s also that cinema blowjob I was promised, and I believe last time you also said something about letting me fuck you through our clothes. We have so much to discover now.”

“Hmm,” Yoongi drawls out, wrapping his hands around Taehyung’s wrists to pull them away from his thighs. He leans up, guiding Taehyung’s arms along with him and then pins them to the mattress above his head, just to try it out, just to see how it looks on him. “It didn’t really feel like we weren’t open to discovering new things before, though?”

“Yeah, I know, but,” Taehyung says, shrugging a little, letting Yoongi manhandle him with nothing but almost unsettlingly stable eye contact, “that still felt different. I mean, it was really good, but what we have now, that’s… more intimate, you know? Better for tying people up. But maybe that’s just my own personal opinion.”

“Tying people up is a good thing to have an opinion on,” Yoongi comments before leaning down and pressing a kiss to Taehyung’s lips. “And you’re right. I think. Feels better now.”
“I think a lot of things are gonna feel better now,” Taehyung says softly, but Yoongi is already leaning back up and looking him over.

Taehyung’s arms are straining just a little bit, not actually pushing against Yoongi’s grip, only tense with the unnatural position, but it looks good. Of course it looks fucking good, everything Taehyung does looks good. His back is arching the tiniest bit, in Yoongi’s direction, and his chest looks like a damn dream, like an invitation for Yoongi to lean down again, bury his teeth in his skin, leave it patchy with blooming marks all over, leave an imprint of his bite, of his fingernails, remind them both that he was here and they’re real and they’re so, so close.

But Yoongi releases his wrists again soon enough, trailing his fingertips down Taehyung’s arms and chest instead. He’ll shelve the idea for some other time, he’s not opposed to it, but right now he already knows he’d miss Taehyung’s hands on him too much to cuff them away somewhere. Yoongi needs to be touched, needs to feel him -- Taehyung mentioning their last time with each other reminded him that he hasn’t slept with anyone since. Once again it’s been weeks, he feels starved, and he wants him.

But he also realizes that it’s different for Taehyung. Taehyung has had sex in the time between now and their breakup. Last night seems like some sort of faraway nightmare to Yoongi, like something that happened years ago, but the memory still sends a rush of uncomfortable sickness up his throat.

“Hey, uh,” Yoongi says, messing with the waistband of Taehyung’s shorts, not to pull them down, but just so he has something to look at. “I-- this is probably a weird time to bring that up, but…” He sighs and changes his mind, so his fingers still and he does look up into Taehyung’s face again. “That guy last night--”

“I don’t even know his name,” Taehyung says immediately. His hands are on Yoongi’s thighs again but they’re resting, not doing anything. They’re talking. It’s good. “A one-time thing. And, um, the only one since we met, just in case you were wondering. I was…” Taehyung laughs softly and groans at himself, barely audible. “I was trying to get over you.”

The sickness is gone again. Unbelievably to himself, Yoongi has to fight back a laugh instead. “You fucked a random guy to get over me,” he says, “and then afterwards you spent the rest of the night with me, helped me get home, and then I told you that I love you?”

Taehyung does not fight back the laugh but just lets it out in a giggle. “Previously,” he says with an exaggerated TV announcer voice, “on Kim Taehyung’s Weird Ass Life.”

“Man, we are stupid,” Yoongi sighs. Then he takes his shirt off.

“Yeah,” Taehyung says, seeming very distracted now by Yoongi’s bare chest, eyes trailing from his neck down. “It was just a blowjob, by the way,” he adds, and then his face flushes, like he doesn’t know why he felt like Yoongi should know that.

But Yoongi grins, taking Taehyung’s hands again and placing them on his sides, where he immediately digs fingertips into Yoongi’s back. “Well, that’s good,” he says casually. “Then I can be sure it wasn’t better than with me.”

“Oh, Yoongi,” Taehyung says, and Yoongi thinks, detachedly, that he could listen to him say his name all day. “You’re in a whole different ballpark.”

“That’s funny,” Yoongi says, masking how the compliment travels down his back in a warm shiver by leaning down and scraping his teeth over Taehyung’s sternum, “because it’s about balls.”
Taehyung snorts out an ugly giggle and swats at the back of his head, but his hand curls around the nape of Yoongi’s neck immediately afterwards. “I hate you,” he says so softly it sounds like another love confession.

Yoongi just grins as he almost flattens himself against Taehyung, inching lower with every touch of his teeth against his skin. Once Taehyung realizes where this is going there’s an audible hitch in his breath and Yoongi drinks it all up. His hands are roaming, from Taehyung’s hip bones up his sides and he loves every twitch of muscle, every patch of goosebumps, every reaction that lets him know that he’s doing this, and Taehyung is enjoying himself, because that’s the effect Yoongi has on him. He brings his hands down again, brushing over Taehyung’s nipples first and his hip bones second until he gets a grip on his shorts to pop them open and yank them down swiftly.

Somewhere, like a distant fog, he remembers the headache he woke up with this morning. But if Jin’s hangover breakfast didn’t fully cure him, hearing Taehyung say I love you really sobered him up the rest of the way, he thinks. He has no room for headaches or sickness now. He has room for this.

He’d probably slap himself for the cheesy thought if his hands weren’t full with Taehyung’s dick. This is a mixture he’s going to have to get used to, Yoongi thinks, his head all warm and happy about them being close while he’s quite literally going down on him, but it’s not like it’s a bad thing. Feeling irrevocably happy while wrapping his lips about someone’s (his boyfriend’s) cock is definitely a nice combination.

Above him Taehyung moans, a weak oh fuck slipping from his lips, hands scrabbling for purchase as Yoongi lowers his head on him. His nails scrape over Yoongi’s shoulder blades first, skitter over his neck until they grab two fistfuls of his hair and they both groan. “I can’t believe I’m dating you,” Taehyung gets out, barely above a whisper, and Yoongi almost laughs, but he has his mouth full. Taehyung’s thighs twitch to the sides of his head and Yoongi presses his tongue up against the underside of his cock and Taehyung’s own giggle gets drowned out by his whine. “And I can’t believe I said that out loud while you’re blowing me. We’re gonna be the most obnoxious couple--shit.”

Maybe it’s just because Taehyung called them a couple, but Yoongi swallows around him and that shuts him up. He’s quick to render him speechless now, raising himself up until he only has his lips wrapped tightly around the head of Taehyung’s cock, tongue swirling. He’s not trying to get him to cum fast, after all, just to rile him up, so the hand on his shaft to help with what his lips can’t reach for now is too loose, too slow, to really do anything other than make Taehyung whimper.

He tugs on Yoongi’s hair occasionally, his name tumbling from his lips in hushed whines, heels digging into the mattress so hard Yoongi can feel it dip a little. With the tip of his tongue, almost delicately, Yoongi works that sensitive spot right underneath the head and Taehyung lets out something close to a sob, his hands quivering in his hair for a second.


Yoongi pulls off with an unnecessarily loud pop and looks at him. “Please what?” he asks, but instead of holding still to wait for Taehyung’s answer, he goes down on him again, pulling his hand back this time to take him in whole.

Ironically, it’s Taehyung who chokes. One of his hands leaves Yoongi’s hair and he can hear it slap to his mouth a second later, then Taehyung moans into it, muffled. “If,” he says, then he must pull his hand away again because Yoongi hears him swallow down a huge breath. “I-If you don’t fuck me now, I’m gonna break up with you.”
Yoongi resurfaces just to laugh. “You’re horrible,” he says, a hoarse edge to his voice now. Before Taehyung is even done putting on an apologetic face, Yoongi crawls over him again to kiss the corner of his lips. And to press his own clothed hips down against Taehyung’s rock hard cock. “Ride me,” Yoongi breathes past Taehyung’s gasp, “like the first time.”

It feels like Taehyung’s whole body softens gradually against him, except for the hard-on still pressing hotly against Yoongi. But his face looks like Yoongi turned into a newborn puppy or something, and his hands are now gentle on the back of his head, fingertips drawing soft circles on his scalp. “Wow, I had no idea how corny you are,” he says, and starts moving immediately after.

“This is only just the beginning,” Yoongi announces while he’s being moved around, Taehyung pushing him on his back and scooting down the mattress just a little so he can pull his boxers off and drop them on the floor. “You have no idea what I’m capable of.”

Taehyung giggles at his exaggerated movie villain voice as he crawls back over him and Yoongi loves that it’s happening like this. Some part of him has been trying to suggest that having sex immediately after confessing isn’t exactly the classiest way to go about it, but Yoongi doesn’t care, doesn’t want to. They’re making each other feel good, and what’s way more important, they’re making each other laugh with almost every stupid little sentence they say, and that’s what matters. Yoongi is grinning with his dick hard and leaking on his stomach and his boyfriend pressing his long, warm legs to his sides, and there’s no better way to spend today.

Slowly, Taehyung rolls his hips down against Yoongi’s, grinding his ass against his cock and Yoongi groans, fingers twitching before they dig into his naked thighs, but that’s all he gets. Taehyung raises himself up again and at first Yoongi thinks it’s payback for the teasing he did earlier, until he watches Taehyung shift awkwardly so he can lean to the side and yank Yoongi’s bedside drawer open.

“Where’s your lube?” he mutters, a frantic tone to his voice already. Yoongi doesn’t say anything because it should be in there somewhere, he just keeps lying on his back and listening to Taehyung shove away pencils and tissue packets and notebooks until he makes a loud triumphant noise. Next thing Yoongi knows, there’s a cool condom wrapper on his naked stomach and Taehyung is nodding towards it while already spreading lube on his fingers. “You put that on, I’ll take care of my ass.”

Yoongi laughs. Again. He complies of course, tearing open the packet very slowly while he watches Taehyung arch his back to reach around himself. “I’m glad we already have such an efficient division of labor, babe,” he quips, going for a dry tone but ending up unsure if he managed because he’s so distracted.

Taehyung closes his eyes with a quiet moan. “Fuck, you can’t just call me that,” he murmurs, face contorting briefly when Yoongi assumes he pushes his fingers in. “Warn a guy.”

“Oh, is that something you’re into?” Yoongi says softly. He rolls the condom on and then props himself up on his elbows, watching Taehyung work himself open, rolling his hips back against his hand, head tilted back, mouth hanging open. “Want me to call you babe and tie you to my headboard? I’ll keep that all in mind, if you want.”

Cracking an eye open to look down at him, Taehyung exhalès loudly along with a single, long roll of his whole upper body. “Is that what those notebooks in your drawer are for?”

“They’re for lyrics,” Yoongi says, stroking himself idly with one hand, the other one running up Taehyung’s chest, hot and firm underneath his palm. “So, yeah. Basically they’re for sex ideas. I think that’s mostly interchangeable in my case.”
“Well,” Taehyung breathes, bringing one lube-slicked hand to his front again and pulling Yoongi’s hand away from his cock to use his own, lubing it up with the residue between his fingers. Then he shifts on the mattress, positions himself, locks eyes with Yoongi, and starts sinking down on him.

“Write about this.”

Oh, he definitely will, is the last coherent thought that crosses Yoongi’s mind. Taehyung is hot and tight around him, and suddenly his entire body is straining with the effort of not gripping his hips and slamming himself up, bury himself to the hilt in one quick thrust. Yoongi digs his fingertips into Taehyung’s thighs again instead, watches them, watches the muscles strain underneath his skin and watches how that skin turns almost white beneath where he’s grabbing him so hard. His gaze goes up, weak tan lines from all his ridiculous shorts, then his cock flushed dark and curving upwards against his abdomen, a dark patch of wiry pubic hair, that little bit of a happy trail that drives Yoongi fucking crazy every time Taehyung’s shirts ride up enough. Taehyung’s hips are almost touching his own now and Yoongi watches how the scar on his side moves with the rest of his body, and he thinks that he loves it.

He doesn’t love how it got there, but it is there now, and he loves it. He loves every part of him, and that includes the scar, it includes the other scars, the ones on his knees from his childhood, the smaller ones on his arms he got from animal bites or stingers, it includes every stupid tan line and every mole, even the stress pimples he’ll get in a few months when midterms will be happening. There’s not an inch of him he doesn’t love.

Taehyung bottoms out and Yoongi snaps out of it, pulled back into reality by a moan from his own throat. He almost expects Taehyung to poke fun at him again for being corny because Yoongi is sure he’s been watching Taehyung like he’s the most beautiful thing in the whole wide world (which, you know, if you were to ask Yoongi right now…). But as he looks up into Taehyung’s face, he realizes Taehyung looks at him the same way, the softness in his eyes echoing the whirl of warmth in Yoongi’s chest. And even after they’ve said it back and forth so much, even after Taehyung has very literally and openly told him that he loves him back, that look still almost makes Yoongi tear up. How he managed to tell himself for so long that it doesn’t exist, that what he feels for Taehyung won’t be reciprocated, that Taehyung looks at everyone like this, like this, Yoongi doesn’t know. The affection in every single one of Taehyung’s features right now is meant for him, and only him.

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Yoongi doesn’t have to say anything. Taehyung stills his hips to stay seated on his lap for a bit, only leans down his upper body to put his elbows on the pillow to each side of Yoongi’s head, and presses their lips together for a silent kiss. It turns out anything but chaste, but it’s not exactly wild either. If Yoongi had to pick a word for it, he’d probably call it sensual, lips sliding together slow but urgent, one of Taehyung’s hands in his hair, Yoongi’s nails in his back. Neither of them is really grabbing hard, no scratching and no tugging, they’re just holding on, just trying to feel each other, to hold each other close, push them together until not even they will be sure anymore where Taehyung ends and where Yoongi begins.

Then, Taehyung starts moving. Without breaking the kiss he raises his hips up slowly, gyrating them off of Yoongi’s cock until only the head stays in, and a moan rips from Yoongi’s lips right into his mouth. Taehyung slams himself down with a sort of whimper Yoongi has never heard from him before, and only now does he realize that Taehyung isn’t holding back anymore, ready to let Yoongi hear every noise he’s capable of making, strip himself bare.

All cards on the table.

The kiss breaks on its own but Taehyung stays with his head dipped low, breaths mingling warmly as he sets a pace that’s not enough for either of them. Yoongi lets him have it for now, stays still on his back to give Taehyung time to adjust, eyes always trained on his face, watching Taehyung’s hair
fall down into the space between them, his long lashes, the small mole somewhere between them, the one on his nose, the one on his lips, parted and flushed. Automatically, Yoongi’s hands start to roam, unable to keep still when the rest of his body does. He traces the little bumps of Taehyung’s spine with his fingertips, his other hand sliding down to cup his ass, and it’s when he squeezes that Taehyung pushes himself up further on his hands to take a deeper breath.

While Yoongi keeps his hands where they are, Taehyung changes both the angle and the pace, bouncing down on his cock with more fervor now, his brows furrowed in concentration. Yoongi watches him with the slightest of smiles on his lips, because he knows what he’s trying to do, and he can tell it’s not working. Taehyung huffs quietly, hands fisting in the pillows, hips coming down so hard now it’s making Yoongi’s blood boil, then he releases a frustrated little whine and Yoongi’s hands fly to his sides to grab him.

He thrusts into him once, sharp and angled, pushing him down in the same motion and Taehyung flinches, moaning so loudly Yoongi thinks his neighbors are starting to get a good idea of his current activities. “Thank you, fuck,” Taehyung says hoarsely, and Yoongi doesn’t say anything, just grins and pulls out again to piston himself back against his prostate and pull another one of those moans out of him.

Taehyung’s elbows give out under him for this one but he doesn’t seem to mind. Yoongi is quick to find the right angle again and that just might be all they care about right now, so Taehyung stays where he is, folded almost in half with his head right next to Yoongi’s, breath blowing hot air against the side of his neck. Pushing his heels against the mattress, Yoongi keeps burying himself in him, gravelly groans and grunts rolling from his throat along with the sound from skin slapping against skin now. His hands roam up again; Taehyung is pushing himself against him with perfect rhythm so Yoongi doesn’t need to hold his sides anymore, hands free to once more explore the rest of him.

His back is a single broad expanse of smooth skin underneath Yoongi’s fingertips, and as soon as he moves them over working muscles, the curves of his ribs, his shoulder blades, Taehyung stirs, too. His lips are dry and hot on Yoongi’s skin, kissing their way from the side of his neck over to his Adam’s apple, where he drags his tongue down to the dip between his collarbones in a wet stripe. Yoongi chokes back a whine and then realizes that he doesn’t know why he should do that, so he releases it from his lungs, throaty and uninhibited.

They’re still moving against each other, like one single body writhing on Yoongi’s bed sheets. Yoongi snaps his hips up in quick, sharp thrusts and Taehyung’s whines vibrate against his ribcage where he’s pressing his lips, ass coming down to meet Yoongi with rapidly decreasing precision. Taehyung sucks the skin over Yoongi’s ribs into his mouth to leave a mark, so Yoongi rakes his nails up his back, both of them moaning in bliss at how it speeds up their rhythms.

Yoongi’s skin slips out of Taehyung’s mouth with a wet noise. “Shit,” he murmurs, haphazardly shifting his weight around on top of him. “Shit, shit.”

A little belatedly, Yoongi understands why Taehyung is swearing. He’s managed to put his weight on only one of his elbows so he can move his other arm between them, wrapping a hand around himself. Taehyung’s eyes flutter shut and his breath hitches in his throat, and Yoongi remembers that first time in Taehyung’s bed, remembers how he let him get himself off because Yoongi just wanted to lean back and watch, marvel at this boy he barely knew then.

He still wouldn’t mind leaning back and watching Taehyung jerk himself off, really. But there’s something else now, the urge to please, the urge to make Taehyung feel as good as possible, so Yoongi tears one of his hands away from Taehyung’s back and reaches for his wrist. He pulls it off of Taehyung’s cock and wraps his own hand around it, his palm swiping over the head quickly to
collect a fat bead of precum and rub it down his hard, hot length, and this time it’s Taehyung who doubles over.

It still takes him a few strokes to cum, but his moans are already starting to go from loud to breathless, hands fistling in Yoongi’s pillowcase so urgently he thinks he might rip it. And after another well angled thrust combined with a sharp tug of Yoongi’s hand, Yoongi can feel him cum over his fingers in thick, warm ropes. He fucks him through it, keeps bouncing Taehyung on his hips and keeps his hand where it is until Taehyung starts shifting and whining, all four limbs scrabbling for purchase so he can pull himself out from between Yoongi’s fingers.

“Jesus,” he rasps. Parts of his fringe are matted to his forehead with sweat once he raises his head, but he’s looking at Yoongi with a grin filthy enough that it would probably make his knees buckle if he wasn’t lying down. “What’d I say the first time? *Come on, you know you wanna*?”

“Somethin’ like that,” Yoongi murmurs, even though he remembers perfectly for some reason. He grins back at Taehyung, unashamedly wiping his cum-covered hand on his thigh (Taehyung doesn’t even flinch which somehow makes it even nastier), then he grabs his hips on both sides and pushes himself off the mattress to flip them again. He slips out of Taehyung in the process and Taehyung winces, but before Yoongi can even open his mouth to ask him if this is really okay, Taehyung is already wrapping his legs around Yoongi’s middle and locking them behind his back, pushing him right back against his ass.

As Yoongi slides back in, he leans down in the space between them, palms sliding over Taehyung’s long, long legs until he has to hold himself up on the mattress. He won’t last long, he already knows, but he’ll find time to kiss Taehyung anyway. While their lips slide against each other once more, Taehyung clings to Yoongi’s shoulder with one hand, the other one rubbing gentle circles into his lower back almost absentmindedly, like he’s encouraging Yoongi to keep going, keep moving, keep kissing him.

And Yoongi is rendering himself breathless with the way he’s thrusting into Taehyung, hips slamming forward in quick, heavy jerks now, and still keeping his lips firmly attached to Taehyung’s. They’re both moaning into each other’s mouths and Yoongi feels lightheaded, dizzy almost, when Taehyung pulls back to bite at his bottom lip and simultaneously cants his hips up to meet him, and that sends him over the edge. With a feeble, broken groan, Yoongi buries himself to the hilt, his body flat against Taehyung’s, breathing raggedly against the side of his neck as climax washes over him in waves.

He resurfaces into consciousness when Taehyung gently rolls him on his side, making his now flaccid dick slip out of him in the process. Yoongi blinks his eyes open to catch Taehyung smiling at him like he’s a particularly endearing octopus specimen, and Yoongi hopes that his whole body is still warm and flushed enough to not show how that affects him. He smiles back at him though, before he reaches down and plucks his condom off to flick it into the vague direction of the trash.

“We should shower together later,” Taehyung purrs before Yoongi can worry about what to say now. “We’re all sticky.”

“Knowing us, I’m not sure we’ll be less sticky afterwards,” Yoongi says and plops back on his side to look at his boyfriend, all fucked out and sweaty. “But I’m not completely opposed. I just have work tonight, so we can’t stay forever.”

Taehyung’s eyes go wide. “I’ll come with you!”

“You sure?” Yoongi says. The A/C is blowing cool air over his tired body and normally, he’d hate it, but he does feel like he needs to cool down. Also, it gives him an excuse to shimmy closer to
Taehyung, who’s still as warm as a furnace. “You’ll get bored sooner or later.”

“I never get bored of your radio voice,” Taehyung says and wiggles his eyebrows, one of his hands sliding up Yoongi’s side and leaving goosebumps in its wake. “Sometimes I imagine you dirty talking me with it.”

“Tae!” Yoongi says, fake-scandalized, slaps Taehyung’s chest and watches him giggle with a grin of his own. “That’s my job you’re talking about here. Unbelievable.”

Taehyung just smiles at him happily, then leans up and kisses his cheek. “I’m on dog-walking duty tonight, so I can’t stay your whole shift anyway. Just a little bit, is that okay with you?”

“Yeah, that’s great,” Yoongi says softly, and leans in to return the peck to the cheek, but Taehyung doesn’t let him. He dives in instead, pressing more kisses to Yoongi’s cheeks, going from one side over his nose to the other until he has Yoongi swimming in a sea of highly embarrassing giggly noises. Taehyung pushes his hands against Yoongi’s shoulders to roll him on his back and just continues, and Yoongi swats at his arm in vain.

“What-- What are you doing, oh my god.”

“I’m kissing your freckles,” Taehyung says matter-of-factly, working his way up Yoongi’s cheekbones towards the few scattered marks he has on his temple. “I thought that was obvious.”

“Holy hell, you’re corny.”

“Yeah, I guess. Just look at it as an excuse for you to kiss all my beauty marks at some point,” Taehyung says and pulls back just to give him a shit-eating grin. “Don’t even try to deny that that’s something you wanna do.”

Well.

He’s not wrong.

It’s still light and warm outside when they leave the apartment to get to Yoongi’s workplace. Yoongi has never really been one for very public displays of affection -- public sex, yes, displays of affection when he’s among his friends, yes -- but holding Taehyung’s hand on their way to the subway feels fine. Good, and right.

Right before they go down the stairs to the station, Yoongi’s phone vibrates in his pants and he pulls it out with his free hand.

[08:27] roommate: um hello excuse me? How the fuck did it go???

Yoongi laughs quietly, but instead of an actual reply, he tells Taehyung to stop for a second, and to hold on tight, and then he snaps a picture of their intertwined hands and sends it to Seokjin. That’s enough of an answer, he reckons.

[08:28] roommate: Awwww! I’m happy for you guys but I also just threw up in my mouth a little bit
[08:28] roommate: so that’s the sort of pair you’re gonna be huh
[08:29] you: its gonna be a tough ride my friend
Taehyung stays at the station with him for two hours, then he goes back home to his dogs. Yoongi continues his shift with a growing pile of pictures sent his way, and a smile so persistent his cheeks start hurting around midnight. Taehyung texts him good night half an hour later, and Yoongi has never been more thankful to work in radio instead of TV, so nobody can see him make the quickest kissy face at his phone.

Sure, it’s excessive now, everything is new and exciting and the thrilling realization that he’s being loved in return is still very fresh in Yoongi’s chest. Sure, they’ll tone it down at some point, probably, maybe. But that’s fine, that’s natural. Yoongi isn’t worried. Sitting in his booth at work, announcing the weather to fellow sleepless residents of the city he calls his home, he finds that he really is not worried at all.

Around noon the next day, he wakes up to his phone flashing with messages from all of his friends, Namjoon and Hoseok asking to be filled in on what happened yesterday, Jin saying something about finally making a YouTube video with Taehyung. But he opens Taehyung’s message first.

[09:46] : hey boyfriend. wanna meet up later? first non-fake real first date??
[09:46] : megabox gangnam? back-row tickets, my treat?
[09:46] : :)
[09:47] : (i love you!!)

Yoongi huffs a laugh into his pillow as he rolls on his side to type out a reply.

[12:11] you: (i love you too)

It’s going to be a good day.

Chapter End Notes

this took me way longer than i thought it would, because some part of me just didn't want to write it. endings are hard.

but hey, you deserved a big load of taegi being disgusting and in love. thank you to everyone who’s been patient with me. ♥ i’ll see you guys next week for the epilogue.

("i love you" count: 10)
Epilogue - Home is where we are.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

A squeal rips through the apartment. Yoongi thinks it was Kanye at first -- he and Taehyung sound hauntingly similar at times -- but once his mind combines the ringing of their doorbell and the inhumane sound from the hallway, he knows better. Taehyung barrels into the bedroom with a small package in his hands, then comes to a halt so comically quickly Yoongi can practically hear the screeching noises in his head.

“Aunt Moonhee’s package came,” Taehyung says and beams at him. Yoongi smiles back and scoots towards the edge of the bed, away from the pens and lyric notebooks scattered over the bedspread from his little writing session.


Carefully, Taehyung puts the package down on the small stack of empty cardboard boxes in a corner of the room. They still haven’t gotten around to cleaning everything up ever since Taehyung moved in here, but they’re getting there. Now and then, their friends drop by to “help” and just end up in a big sleepover in the living room instead, and Taehyung’s empty boxes stay where they are. It’s alright, though. No rush.

It’s spring again; if someone had asked Yoongi a year ago, he would have said he’d never move in with someone this quickly. Then again, a year ago, he didn’t exactly want to move in with anyone at all. He was happy to be out of Hoseok’s hair.

But a lot of things have changed ever since Yoongi’s father died almost one and a half years ago (looking back he thinks that was what really started it all, and he loves it. The old man owed him plenty of nice things, and in the end Yoongi got them as soon as he disappeared). Turns out dating Taehyung is actually a lot like fake-dating Taehyung, so it often feels like they’ve been together longer than they really have. Not that Taehyung’s parents know anything about that. Taehyung and Yoongi both figure they could technically tell them the truth with nothing to fear but a few good laughs, but they’ve been keeping up the scam, just for shits and giggles. Because that’s the kind of fun they get up to as a couple, apparently.

Also, Taehyung will be going back to Australia for a month this summer, and Yoongi wants to be more like him sometimes, brave and unafraid of risks. So Taehyung goes diving in the ocean, and Yoongi lets him move into his apartment. His therapist thinks it’s a good compromise.

On his knees on the bed, Yoongi rearranges his things on the shelf next to it, pushing Shinichi and Kumamon a little closer together. They’ve gotten another new friend, because Taehyung took Agata the dead shark baby with him when he moved. Their living room also has a bunch of anime posters now, and they had to get two new shelves for all of Taehyung’s books and comics. Ever since Taehyung even put his saxophone into the workroom, it really does feel like a completely shared place.

Yoongi pushes Agata’s and Shinichi’s jars so close together that they’re touching, then he pushes his book collection on the other side of the shelf a bit further away, too. “D’you think this’ll do?” he asks.

“Stop it, Kanye,” Taehyung says instead of an answer. Yoongi looks to the side to see the shepherd
puppy, currently stuck in the awkward puberty phase of his growth spurt, drop a piece of packaging styrofoam to the floor ruefully.

Yeah, they also have a dog now.

Boop is still around, but she doesn’t live with them. Her fur is starting to grey in more and more places and even Yoongi can tell that she’s starting to forget things like where she put her toys or her food, but she’s still a very happy big dog. Still, they all agreed that they wouldn’t put her through the stress of moving to a new apartment at her age and suddenly having to live without Taehyung’s parents. She’s still with them, and Taehyung walks her multiple times a week, usually with Yoongi and Kanye.

But Kanye lives here, while he’s still being trained by one of Taehyung’s dad’s specialists to be a watchdog (not that Taehyung needs one right now -- kkangpae issues have been blissfully quiet), and then by Taehyung to just be a regular dog that doesn’t eat styrofoam off the floor. Originally, Yoongi said they’d train him together, but he has recently found out that he’s unable to say no to puppies. Sometimes he lets Kanye sleep on their bed and Taehyung has to scold them both.

(Truthfully, Yoongi would never ever admit it to anyone, but he sometimes gets a very hot, very wild feeling in the pit of his guts when he watches Taehyung train his dog.)

Finally, Taehyung comes over to check out the space Yoongi made. “Yeah, that should work,” he says, and gently places the jar he got in the mail between a book and Agata the shark baby. “Look, it got here perfectly safe. I love it. Isn’t it pretty?”

“It’s very pretty,” Yoongi says, completely automatically reaching for Taehyung’s now free hand. They have learned to indulge each other long ago, somewhere between Taehyung asking him to explain technical music terms and Yoongi agreeing that baby spiders are just as adorable as kittens. So yes, he really honestly thinks that the human heart Taehyung has been keeping in a jar in Daegu until his aunt sent it to them is pretty, and that it looks good in their bedroom.

Taehyung turns towards him, thumb stroking the back of Yoongi’s hand softly where he’s holding it, and grins at him. It’s wide, all teeth, making his eyes crinkle, so Yoongi knows he’s about to get hit with a stupid joke.

“Home is where the heart is,” says Taehyung.

Yoongi looks at the shelf, then back at him. He cocks an eyebrow. “In a jar?”

With a loud sigh, Taehyung slaps his free hand across Yoongi’s chest, leaving no sting at all. “You have no sense for romance!” he says loudly, but he’s already giggling by the time he finishes the accusation. They sink into the mattress laughing, half by Yoongi pulling them and half by Taehyung pushing them, and their lips find each other blindly.

“Sorry,” Yoongi mutters softly into the kiss, but Taehyung shakes his head with a grin and presses a little closer.

A second later, the mattress tips with a loud creak and Kanye is next to them, wagging his tail wildly, sniffing both of them and trying to get in on the action, wet nose nudging both of their faces until Taehyung rolls off of Yoongi with a resigned laugh. Kanye paws at Taehyung across Yoongi’s chest, but Yoongi just turns his back to the dog and kisses Taehyung again, both of them lying on their sides now.

“Aren’t you gonna tell him to get off the bed?” Yoongi says after pulling back a little, grinning at
Taehyung. But Taehyung just raises his brows at him.

“You do it. Pull your weight for once, mister.”

“I can’t,” Yoongi says with his best pout. Taehyung shrugs against the mattress.

“Then I guess he’ll stay. It’s your turn to wash the sheets, by the way.”

Yoongi rolls his eyes, but Taehyung is already diving in for another kiss. Meanwhile, Kanye is pressing his entire face against the back of Yoongi’s head, sniffing his hair and begging for attention, so one of Yoongi’s hands blindly reaches back and scratches his side. But of course, that’s not enough for the puppy and he rather takes it as an invitation to get between them, clambering over Yoongi’s body to try and squeeze into the space between him and Taehyung, making Taehyung almost slip off the bed with a yelp and Yoongi cackle against a sudden mouthful of fur.

After some more laughing and shifting around, all three of them are spread out on the bed again, Taehyung resting his head on Yoongi’s outstretched arm and Kanye pushing his face into Taehyung’s chest. Taehyung scratches the puppy’s ears with one hand and hold’s Yoongi’s free hand with the other, smiling stupidly, his face still a bit flushed from the tumult.

Quietly, Taehyung says, “Home is where we are.”

Yoongi smiles. Closing his eyes, his raises Taehyung’s hand to his lips and presses a kiss to it, then he nods.

Taehyung is right, he thinks. The dog’s tail is wagging gently against his thighs, and Taehyung’s hand is warm in his.

This is home.

Chapter End Notes

for months, i have been trying to decide what to do with my ending note. i even debated writing a longer tumblr post and linking it here because i thought i had so much to say. but i'll try to keep it brief.

it's been a long time since i finished something big, and this is by far the longest piece i have ever written. it has taught me many things -- to wear my heart on my sleeve, to finish what i start, to never give up, to believe in my writing. in a way, it has taught me to cope, and it has taught me this:

i am not alone, and neither are you.

no matter what you've been through, you're still here and i am so, so proud of you, and you are not alone.

thank you to everyone who reads this. yes, that includes the quiet ones. i want to thank all of you.

thank you, agata, for always hyping me through this, and for everything else, too.

and thank you, kai. for letting me love you and for loving me back. makes writing romance a piece of cake.

everyone, i'll probably see you guys around. wthi is done but i am not. ♥
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