It's Just Kissing, Not Rocket Science
by Ragi

Summary

Jimin is in some desperate need to learn how to be sexy so he can stop all his boyfriends from cheating on him, and he can't think of a better teacher than Kim Namjoon, a notorious heartbreaker and the owner of the biggest gay bar in Korea.

Notes

Ah yes, starting another fic now that Don't Think, Don't Speak, Just Smile for Me is coming to an end! Just wanted to have some light-hearted romcom fun following the hurricane of angst I threw at everyone's face with my first one! XD
Imagine everyone in their War of Hormones era (esp Namjoon) for this one!
Find me on ragific on tumblr for other updates and whatnot :)

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Kim Namjoon is not having a good day.

He leans back against the chair and groans when his tense shoulders protest the movement. He crosses his long legs in front of him and presses his palms against his temples, willing the headache to go away. Namjoon swears that he can still hear the other man's shrill voice ringing in his head. Closing his eyes, Namjoon tries to grab some shut eye in a feeble attempt to keep himself from throwing something against a wall, but his bad day becomes worse when someone barges straight into his office. It's Hoseok.

"You better have a damn good reason for just barging in like that," Namjoon all but bears his teeth threateningly as he growls at the intrusion.

Hoseok only laughs, because the little shit is never intimidated by Namjoon (which is quite a feat considering just about everyone feared Namjoon one way or another). "Maybe. But either way, I thought you might want to know about the little drama going downstairs," he answers flippantly, his lips stretched into an amused smile.

Namjoon groans and gets off the chair in a single, swift movement. His brows furrow slightly at the small speck of dust on his otherwise pristine suit and he brushes it off delicately before letting Hoseok lead him outside. His entire body can feel the heavy bass ringing through the building as soon as he's out the door. He walks up to the glass wall and glances down, hands still shoved into his pockets. He can already make out the small group of people gathered towards the center of the bar.

"If it's a drunken brawl, why isn't Jungkook dealing with it?" Namjoon asks in annoyance, referring to their resident bouncer.

"'Cause it's not a brawl," Hoseok answers with an amused twinkle in his eyes, standing next to his boss.

"Then what the hell is it. I don't have time for this shit." "You seemed to have all the time in the world taking a little nap in your little office," the other man counters with a cheeky grin and shrugs when Namjoon shoots him a pointed look. "Fine, fine. Seems like one of them was caught cheating and it's like...I don't even know what to call it. But two of them were yelling at each other and then the kid started balling his eyes out. Now everyone's just watching him."

"When you say kid, you better not mean an actual kid. I don't need this establishment getting busted by the police," Namjoon hisses out, glaring at the smaller man. Hoseok laughs and then shakes his head.

"You know we card everyone. I'm sure he's legal, but man, he looks like a little kid nonetheless." "Why did you even call me out? You could've taken care of this on your own."

"But what's more attention grabbing than you making an appearance?" the smiling man says with a sly grin with a wink. Namjoon wants to strangle the other man but instead chooses to just get this
done and over with, because he really needs to return to the safe confines of his office without Hoseok on his ass about it.

Namjoon stands upright, straightens his jacket and swiftly makes his way towards the staircase leading to the bar. He sees Jungkook standing awkwardly next to the crowd of people and Seokjin watching from behind the bar, an empty glass hanging loosely in his hands. Namjoon, with one hand in his pocket and another brushing back his platinum blond hair back, approaches the crowd. One of the people spots him and then slaps the person next to him, all the while pointing not so indiscreetly at the bar owner.

In a blink of an eye, everyone has their eyes on Kim Namjoon, the notorious owner of the gay bar Bulletproof and also the infamous heartbreak that every gay man in Seoul has their eyes on. He's dressed to perfection as always, standing tall and proud in his stature with the fabric of the expensive black suit covering every contours and lines of the beautiful body. Namjoon clicks his tongue, moving his pouty lips in the process, and a few of the gay men watching him all gasp while clutching at their hearts.

People part like the Red Sea when Namjoon slowly walks to the center of whatever the hell is happening. Namjoon spots a small man crouched on the floor, still sniffling and wiping furiously at his eyes with his tiny hands. He can't get a clear look at the man, but Hoseok had been right about the individual being a kid. He was small. Obviously much smaller than Namjoon, with a mop of brown hair that looks like a mess. Namjoon sighs. He doesn't have the patience or the energy to deal with another run of the mill gay man crying in his bar because he's heartbroken. If he had a penny for every time a poor schmuck cried over a botched relationship or a bitch fight, he'd have another bar built under his name.

"If you gentlemen can just enjoy yourselves for the night while I handle this," Namjoon says smoothly, even managing to turn a corner of his lips upwards, and in a flurry, everyone's off to do their own thing, all the while remaining hyperaware of Namjoon's presence.

"I think your night's over," Namjoon says gruffly as he stands in front of the still crying man. "I'll take you outside," he continues, slowly growing frustrated that the man isn't making any effort to get up. He gives Jungkook a look, which has the bouncer rushing towards them with a puzzled frown.

"Bring him to my office," Namjoon commands before making his way back to the staircase, ignoring all the look of adoration thrown his way. It's safe to say that a lot of the bar's success stems from his reputation. Namjoon was a man of confidence, looks and sensuality that had other men groveling at his feet already. Naturally, Namjoon engaged in flings with some of the finest men in Seoul who come to this bar, but he didn't stick around with any of them. A relationship was a waste of his time for someone as in-demand as Namjoon.

Namjoon waits, tapping his fingers against the wooden desk in front of him and then looks up in annoyance when his door opens again, revealing Jungkook standing with the man in question still sniffling. Luckily, he's not rubbing furiously against his eyes anymore, because Namjoon was starting to think that the man was going to pop his cornea doing that.

He gives Jungkook a curt nod, which is a motion for Jungkook to return to the floor. The bouncer lets the two be and closes the door as he leaves the room.

"Whatever your issue is, get over it. There's literally at least hundred more of them downstairs to pick from. Just get another one and don't start crying in the middle of my bar. It's bad for business,"
Namjoon begins harshly, ignoring the way the man in front of him seemed to be more interested in his own shoes than his voice.

"...But he said he loved me..." the man lets out pitifully, his voice quivering as if he's ready for round 2 of crying himself a river. Namjoon will not tolerate that sort of shit within his office.

"Well then you're an idiot for believing it."

"No I'm not!" the man finally looks up, and Namjoon's almost taken aback by how young the man in front of him looks. He's starting to suspect a fake ID but doesn't want to bother with that issue on top of everything else. "We were in love!"

Namjoon scoffs and lets out a not-so-elegant grunt as he shifts his body on the chair he's on. "Look I don't know what happened, and frankly I don't care, but if you're one of those people who believe in finding love at this bar, it's time you start rethinking things," Namjoon continues coldly. He wasn't aware that there were still people who believed in love and all that sappy shit. People came to his bar for a reason. To get drunk and find a fresh face to fuck.

"What do you know about this place!" the smaller man yells angrily, wiping at his eyes again, and Namjoon can't believe this guy.

"I would like to think I know the place quite well, since I own the place," Namjoon retorts with a roll of his eyes.

"....You own this place?"

Namjoon narrows his eyes and searches the other man's expression. Everyone knows who he is and what he looks like. There's no way that this "kid" in front of him is seriously looking around the office with his eyes wide open as if he's just realizing where he is, all without knowing who he's even speaking to.

"If you're quite finished, I'd appreciate if you'd leave. And a word of advice. Don't come back unless you're just looking for a good fuck," Namjoon finishes with a sarcastic smile, flashing his dimples in the process. The man, looking like he wants to cry again, shoots him a dirty look before running out of the room.

Namjoon is so done with this bullshit.

A week passes by. It's Friday night again, which means the bar is booming with people all wanting to take someone home. Namjoon watches from the second floor again, this time dressed in a white shirt and black slacks, and his hair a styled mess.

"We're ready to close shop!" Hoseok hollers a few hours later as he enters the second floor after his patrol of the bar. People have already all left, leaving Seokjin and Taehyung to finish up with cleaning. He can also spot Yoongi, their resident DJ, walking across the floor with his trademark scowl on his face. Namjoon thanks Hoseok for the hard work as he retreats back to his office. All he
wants is to go home and just relax on his couch for a little bit before letting sleep take over.

Namjoon is always the last to leave the building, after finishing up computer work and doing last minute checkup, and today's no exception. He stretches his arms above his head before making sure his wallet, phone and car keys are in his pocket before making his way back to the floor. He switches the master light off and heads out the building. After making sure that his doors are locked, he turns around and almost screams like a little girl when he sees a person standing mere inches from him. It's the crying man again, and Namjoon has to fight the urge to punch the smaller man squarely in the face. Fucking hell.

"We're closed," Namjoon mutters instead, willing his heart to calm down as he takes a careful glance at the other man to make sure he's not holding some kind of a weapon.

"I-I need to talk to you!" the smaller man blurts out, leaving Namjoon wondering if this guy's for real.

"Yeah, well I don't, so if you'll excuse me-"

"I'm not wrong!"

Namjoon sighs. He's not even sure where this man is going with this, but he can't bring himself to care.

"Yeah sure, congratulations, now go home."

"I'm not wrong about believing in love," the man says with such conviction that Namjoon's forced to stop and stare. Oh, so this was what this entire ordeal was about. However, he can't fathom why anyone would wait about for a whole week and then return to the scene at ass o'clock in the morning just to say something that stupid. Does this man not have better things to do?

"Sure," Namjoon says curtly and tries to push past the smaller man, but the man's a lot stronger than he looks.

"But....but I need your help," the man says timidly, biting his lips.

Namjoon really, really wants to go home.

"Why. With what," he grits out, making a mental note to make sure to tell everyone tomorrow that this weirdo is blacklisted from his bar. Forever.

"I...I need to learn how to get...guys..."

"You seemed to have zero problem getting one," the bar owner replies sarcastically, crossing his arms across his chest.

"And apparently you can get any guy you want," the much smaller man continues seemingly unfazed by Namjoon's expression.

"What's your point. You want me to find someone for you?"

"No! I just want you to teach me how to do it."
"You want me to teach you how to get a guy," Namjoon repeats, not impressed. The smaller man, however nods eagerly in front of him, his eyes almost twinkling in anticipation. "And why the fuck would I do that."

"Because I'll die a virgin if you don't!"

Namjoon fights the urge to laugh. Of all the possible responses, Namjoon definitely had not been expecting this one. He finds the situation ridiculous for a number of reasons. First is, who the hell does this kid think he is to make that kind of a demand, and two, this guy's a virgin? So they do exist after all.

"And why should I be responsible for making sure you don't die a virgin."

"...Please?"

"How old even are you anyway?"

"22."

"Bullshit."

The smaller man huffs in annoyance and digs through his pocket for his wallet. From there, he whips out his ID and pushes it forwards towards Namjoon's face. The bar owner scans the numbers and then frowns, taking it out of the small man's grasp.

"Where did you get this fake ID?

"It's not fake!"

"Uh huh, sure. I'm keeping this," Namjoon says as he shoves the plastic into his jacket pocket.

"Hey give it back! That's my ID! I need that!"

"That's what you get for trying to fake card your way into my bar."

"It's not fake! Give it back!"

Namjoon sighs and then hands the man his card, but not before reading the name off of it.

"Park Jimin," he reads the name out loud and watches as Jimin snatches the card out of his fingers. "Go home, Park Jimin."

"Come on, please? Can you teach me how to get guys? I heard you're like pro at it," Jimin continues to plead, almost bouncing up and down as he does so. Namjoon closes his eyes at the familiar tingling sensation of a migraine looming just around the corner.

"Look, I don't need to teach anyone anything, alright? If you're trying to pay me, I don't need your money, as you can clearly see."

"I uh...I can work for free! If you promise to teach me!"

"Why do you want to learn so badly anyway?"

"I have my reasons."

"Well, unless you tell me what they are, I'm going to walk away."
"Fine! Fine...I uh...all my relationships sort of ended with my boyfriends cheating on me, cause I wasn't sexy enough."

Namjoon wants to laugh so badly, but he doesn't for the sake of the poor soul standing in front of him. Jimin looks as if he's having his gay mid-life crisis and looking every part the sad little puppy drenched in rain. Now, Namjoon might come off looking like a glorious asshole who breaks hearts each day of the calendar minus Christmas, but the reality was, he wasn't at all an asshole. He never led anyone on wrongly. They all knew what they were getting into when they signed up for one night with Kim Namjoon, but rumors had gotten out of hand and turned him into a rather cold man who's goal in life is to fuck, both literally and figuratively, with all gay men in Seoul.

Namjoon, who had been in so much control over so many guys, finds a semblance of pity as he watches Jimin fidgeting nervously before him. He can't really imagine what it'd be like to feel so unattractive that he has to look for help for a stranger, and the thought quickly thaws some of the ice between them. He takes a good look at Jimin. He's cute. The kid is definitely cute with his expressive eyes and full lips. Sure, he's on the shorter side and looks to be made of more fluff than muscles, but he can work with that.

"Fine," Namjoon lets out after much consideration. He knows he's going to regret this real soon. "Fine, I'll help you."
Namjoon had half-expected Jimin to not come but is surprised to find the smaller man in the doorway of his lavish apartment. He's dressed simply. A pair of black jeans and a grey hoodie that all but swamps his already small figure. His hair looks to be freshly washed, a few strands standing out messily, and his eyes disappear into crescents as he lets out a "hello!" that is perhaps too chirpy for the bar owner's liking.

"You know, you have way too much trust in people," Namjoon says as he leans against the doorframe with his arms crossed in front of him. Jimin blinks and cocks his head to the side, looking every bit a confused puppy. "I tell you to come to a random address and you just march right in without question. What if I was a serial killer or a rapist?"

"Oh...I didn't really give that a thought," Jimin muses with a frown. "Well...are you?"

"Even if I was a serial killer, why would I admit it?"

"OK, that's really confusing."

"Nevermind," Namjoon mumbles and lets the smaller man inside his apartment. Jimin happily walks in and looks around the spacious living, oohing and ahhing at every decor as he walks around like a tourist. Namjoon shakes his head as he plops on the couch and rolls up his white shirt sleeves. "Will you cut that out and just sit?"

"Oh! I brought cake. I didn't know what you're into so I got like a bunch of different ones," Jimin explains as he places the box he's been holding onto the coffee table. Namjoon raises a delicate eyebrow. This is probably the first time anyone's brought cake to his apartment. Men have brought expensive drinks, sex toys, even whips and chains depending on what they were into, but never cake.

"You brought cake."

"Yeah. Do you want them now or should I put them in the fridge?"

"Fridge is fine," Namjoon murmurs and takes the box to the kitchen. He returns to the living room to find Jimin staring at his big flat screen TV. "Alright, since you're here, let's just get started."

"Oh, OK, just a second." Jimin puts a finger up and then rummages through his bag to take out a small notepad and a pen. And the notepad has a few gold heart-shaped stickers on it. Namjoon can't believe this shit. He hasn't seen a stickered stationary since graduating middle school (he swears that some of the girls got high off stickers).
"Did you bring an actual notepad to take notes?" Namjoon asks in disbelief, yet Jimin nods enthusiastically as he flips to a blank page.

"I'm ready!"

Namjoon opens his mouth but then just shakes his head instead. "OK then...I'm just going to ask you some questions. Just fyi, taking notes like that isn't sexy."

"Yeah, but I'm learning, not trying to seduce a guy."

"Fine. First question, how many men have you been with. Romantically, as you'd like to call it," Namjoon asks and places emphasis on the word "romantic," knowing that it's going to get on the smaller man's nerves. Jimin shoots him a dirty look, but the taller man ignores it.

"Four..ish."

"Four..ish. Right. Sure. And you're saying you've never had sex with any of them."

Jimin nods ruefully. Namjoon crosses one leg over the other while scanning Jimin. He knows for a fact that it doesn't take too much for a gay man to find a partner if he needs one. There were a lot of horny men in their 20s at the bar, and while Jimin isn't exactly a stunner, he's got a cute charm anyone looking for a twink would be all over, with some alcohol in his system. So what really was the problem?

"Are you top of bottom?" Namjoon questions, wondering if Jimin is surprisingly a top that's having a hard time finding a willing bottom. He knows from experience that a lot of the times, it's difficult to tell who's strictly top or strictly bottom based on looks alone, so perhaps this small guy in front of him may be a top that throws people off?

"Um...I'm not sure."

"What do you mean you're not sure?"

"I haven't really thought about it! I mean...I freak out when I start making out and they try to take my clothes off."

Namjoon groans. This is a lot worse than he had anticipated. Why. Just why did he agree to do this. Park Jimin is a fucking train-wreck.

"Do you even want to have sex?"

"Of course I do!"

"Well that's...good, I guess. So you haven't decided if you're top of bottom. Hope you know you can be both if you want."

"I know."

"Alright. Next, what are your sexual fantasies?"

"M-my s-sexual fantasies?"

"Let's work on you not stuttering the word sexual first," Namjoon mutters with a roll of his eyes. He's really going to have to look into the possibility of a fake ID. Jimin speaks like a teenager, and Namjoon doesn't consider underaged sex very sexy.
"I was just caught off guard!"

"Sure. So what are your fantasies? Do you want to be tied up? Do you want a man to handle you so roughly that you find yourself bruised up in the morning? Daddy kinks? Dress up? Or are you a dom and in need of a sub that will bend to all your every will?" Namjoon lists off without so much as a change in his expression, all the while Jimin stares with his mouth agape.

"Are those actual things people do?" Jimin asks timidly, suddenly scribbling notes down. Namjoon doesn't think he ever wants to read whatever is on that notepad...but he suspects that there's a lot of Jimin HEART and some douche's name written all over the pages.

"Do you not watch porn?"

"Of course I do!"

"And which ones helped you get off the quickest?"

"Umm....I don't know. I only watch the pretty tame ones...What about you? What kind do you watch?"

"I don't really mind and I'm willing to try anything as it doesn't involve blood."

"Blood? Why would there be- Oh God, like cutting fingers off and stuff?" Jimin whispers hoarsely, his eyes wide in shock and his lips tightly in fear. Namjoon drops his head, having just had it with this weird kid.

"We're talking about porn, not fucking snuff films. Some people like to use whips, and sometimes people get really excited."

"Oh....that's good..."

"Right...OK, I want you to give me the best sultry stare you can manage. Pretend that I'm the target of your affection."

"But you're not..."

"Just pretend. A lot of what I do is acting as well. It's being able to convey your sexual confidence through the way you look at the other person. The way you touch and speak. So show me your best sexy stare."

Jimin stares at him with his lips pursed into a thin line. Namjoon waits impatiently for the smaller man to just get over himself and do it. Time goes by, and there's not an ounce of change in the smaller man's expression.

"Just do it."

"I AM doing it!"

Namjoon's palm immediately finds his forehead. Jimin's sultry look is as arousing as watching paint drying, which is concerning considering Namjoon had just promised to turn the kid into a sex kitten.

"That's your sexy stare? Oh good god..."

"Well, why don't you show me an example then!"
"You're right. I might as well show you the deal and maybe you'll have a better idea what you're supposed to be doing."

"OK, OK, cool, so what do I do now?"

"Stop talking and look at me."

"Okay, I'm looking at you."

"I said, stop talking."

Jimin shut his mouth immediately and then swallows visibly when Namjoon leans towards him, his eyes fixed onto his. The bored look is wiped clean off of the tall man's features and is now replaced with a dangerous glint that is both frightening and inviting. The black orbs are deep and intense, staring into his souls and touching him in places he did not know possible. Namjoon licks the corner of his lips and leans forward even more so that their noses are almost touching. His breath is hot on Jimin's lips, and Jimin shuts his eyes tightly at the intensity of it all.

"Look at me." Namjoon's voice is low and husky, and Jimin's eyes snap up when he feels Namjoon's long, slender fingers entangled in his hair. Jimin gasps and holds his breath when Namjoon slowly pushes his body down and crawls on top of him, eventually trapping him effectively between his legs and arms.

"Now, tell me what you want," Namjoon whispers against Jimin's ears, his pouty lips brushing against the sensitive skin and sending shivers down Jimin's body. Then, in a blink of an eye, Namjoon is sitting upright on the couch, the bored expression back on his face. "That's the gist of it," he says with a stretch of his legs and watches as Jimin fumbles to pull himself into a sitting position again.

"H-how did you do all that!" Jimin questions, still trying to recover.

"Confidence helps, which I see that you have none of."

"What! I'm very confident of who I am, thank you very much."

"I'm talking about sexual confidence. Knowing you can make someone scream your name. Knowing you can fuck someone into the mattress or ride their dick like a pro and have them begging for more. That kind of confidence."

"That's...graphic."

"And you need to stop doing that. You should be able to talk about these things without acting like a 12 year old. Jesus, are you writing this down?"

"Well, I don't want to forget anything..."

"Anyway...we need to work on your confidence first. I can already tell you're one of those people who can't change in lockers rooms in front of other people."

"How did you-"

"Like I said. I can tell."

"How do I fix that though?" Jimin asks sincerely, leaning forward with his eyes wide and attentive. Namjoon sighs. It's a good question and he thinks hard about the answer.
"It might help if you think you're good at what you do. Which is sex, in this case."

"That goes right back to my original problem. I don't know if I'm good at sex. I can't even kiss without freaking out."

"What is your deal anyway? Did your first kiss end up horribly or something? Too much tongue? Or did someone tell you you're a shitty kisser?"

"Well...no, not exactly that...I just freak out because I keep thinking, am I doing this right? What if the other person doesn't like it? Am I using enough tongue?" Jimin lists off, suddenly looking to be in panic, and Namjoon feels the familiar sudden pang of sympathy as he takes in the way the smaller man looks genuinely scared and nervous. He doesn't get why though. Kissing is great. He loves kissing people, because no kisses are the same. Some are gentle enough and leaves him smiling, while others make him growl with fiery passion and slam the other man against the nearest wall in the heat of the moment. Everyone should enjoy kissing for what it is, not freak out about it like Jimin.

"It's not rocket science. It's just kissing," Namjoon interrupts, effectively stopping Jimin from coming up with more reasons.

"Well how do I know if I'm good or bad at it?" Jimin asks with a small frown, a finger subconsciously traveling to his lips.

"Fuckin' hell...kiss me. Right now. I'll tell you straight up, no bullshit, how good or bad you are," Namjoon offers, figuring that there's no way around it. Plus, it's just kissing, it's not that big of a deal, and if Jimin can learn from it, then fine. If Jimin can gain some confidence from it, even better then.

"You want me to kiss you? Like for real? On the lips?"

"No I want a little peck on the cheek because I need some loving. What the hell do you think I'm asking you to do? It's not that big of a deal, just kiss me like you'd kiss your boyfriend." Even as Namjoon says those words, a very small part of him can't help but wonder if Jimin's a horrible kisser. Is he going to regret this?

Jimin stares at Namjoon as if he's waiting for the taller man to say 'just kidding!' and move on, but when none comes, Jimin nervously scoots over to the bigger man. He's never even played with the idea of kissing a near stranger. Call him a prude, call him old-fashioned, but he always went on at least three real dates before even contemplating kissing, and now this bar owner is sitting in front of him, waiting silently for him to initiate a kiss.

Jimin takes this opportunity to study the other man's face. He had done his research, and Namjoon indeed was as handsome as everyone said he was. His features weren't perfect in the conventional sense, but with the smoldering eyes, high nose and full lips and a mop of platinum blond hair that successfully added an air of mystery to his already tantalizing aura, Jimin sees why people would fall head over heels for the man.

And for some reason, that makes him even more nervous, because he's sure that Namjoon must've kissed so many people talented with their tongues.

"I really don't have all day," Namjoon grits out, annoyed at the way the smaller man is just studying his face now.

"Oh. Right. Here we go. I'm going to kiss you. Like on the lips-

"It's really not sexy to talk so much before kissing."
"Right..." Jimin swallows visibly and leans forward, his lips ghosting over the other man's. His throat feels dry, his palms sweaty against the fabric of his jeans. He shuts his eyes tightly and closes the distance between the two, testing the waters. He half expects Namjoon to pull back, but the man remains still, waiting for Jimin to move. Namjoon waits. And waits. And then waits some more.

"If I wasn't clear enough, I meant kissing, with tongue and everything, not just pressing your lips against mine while holding your breath," Namjoon mutters as he pulls back and rolls his eyes.

"I got nervous!"

"And the point of this is for you to get over it. Again," Namjoon says and closes his eyes. Jimin scratches the back of his neck nervously before leaning forward again, and this time, he begins moving his lips slowly and uncertainly, except he's now just opening and closing his mouth and repeatedly gaping like a fish. And fish are not sexy.

"You've kissed before, right?" Namjoon asks with an impressive scowl, feeling like Jimin's lying about the whole ordeal. Jimin groans as he hides his face in his hands.

"Yes, I've kissed! But I never was the one to lead!"

"OK fine, this time, I'm going to kiss you. Let's see how you take it," Namjoon says, and it's the only warning Jimin gets before Namjoon's kissing him, his strong lean right arm wrapped around his waist and their bodies flush against one another. The kiss isn't forceful, but it's strong and demanding, sending Jimin's mind to a hazy state floating between a dream-like trance and one which has him feeling as if he's falling down into a lightless pit. Namjoon's mouth is hot, with a hint of mint and a sweet aftertaste, and it makes Jimin dizzy with a foreign sensation he can't quite pinpoint.

"That's how you kiss," Namjoon says as he pulls back, his voice rough and husky, and Jimin subconsciously brushes his fingertips against his now swollen lips.

"You're like...good at this," Jimin says and then winces when Namjoon barks out a laughter. He is now realizing what a dumb thing that was for him to say.

"I know I'm good. But we're here to talk about you. OK, clearly, you don't know how to kiss, because you just sort of remained still and took everything."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"Yeah, unless you're trying to convey the message of 'I don't want your dick as much as you think I do' the answer is yes, it's a bad thing."

"Are you trying to be mean on purpose..."

"No, I'm being honest with you. That's what you wanted, right?"

"...Yes..."

"Again, not the end of the world. Stop looking so sad. I'm not saying you have to lead, but at least react a little so I know you're into it."

"O-okay...how do I do it though?"

"For starters, it helps to move your tongue a little bit too. The key here isn't to shove your tongue down someone's throat out of enthusiasm. It's too tease and to give the other person a peek into what you're capable in bed. Let's try again. This time, I'll go a bit easier, but I expect you to reciprocate
"Okay. I think I got this."

"...Sure..." Namjoon lets out with a sigh before leaning forward and kissing Jimin. This time, true to his words, the kiss is lighter, his tongue moving languidly and his lips more inviting. Jimin does his best to move as well, and while the movements start sporadic and not at all pleasant to Namjoon at first, Jimin eventually relaxes into the kiss. Namjoon doesn't miss the change and tangles his fingers inside Jimin's hair, encouraging the smaller man. When they do pull apart, Jimin is staring up at Namjoon expectantly, his eyes hooded and his lips red.

"That was good. Definite improvement. Just a bit more practice and I think you'll get the hang of it."

"Really? You think so?" Jimin perks up, beaming at the compliment, and Namjoon has to fight the urge to laugh. The bar owner doesn't think he's ever had to compliment a man for his kissing and doesn't think anyone else besides Jimin would be this happy over a particularly positive comment on the specific matter.

"Why would I lie?"

"You have a point..." Jimin mumbles to himself and then smiles again, his eyes disappearing into crescents. "I'm so glad. Thank you! You're really good at teaching this stuff."

"Yeah well, that's all I have the time for today," Namjoon says lazily, slumping against the couch. He needs to be back at the bar soon.

"Oh, are you heading to the bar? I'll go with you."

"I don't think you're ready to pick up guys yet."

"No, I told you I'll work there for free! Remember? I can't make drinks, but I'm pretty good at cleaning and stuff. I can help with maybe...I dunno, stocking things or cleaning up."

"....You were serious."

"Of course I was being serious."

"....Fine. Whatever. Stay here and don't touch anything while I go change."

"Yessir!"

They enter the bar together, and immediately Jungkook, Seokjin and Taehyung spot them coming into the building. Seokjin frowns at the face that looks all too familiar. He doesn't think it's any of Namjoon's flings. Namjoon had a type. Tall, model-like frame with sculpted features and a killer jawline, and that man standing next to him did not fit the bill in any way.

"Where's Hoseok and Yoongi?" Namjoon asks, looking around the currently empty floor.

"Hoseok's upstairs. Yoongi went to get something real quick," Seokjin answers, wiping at a martini glass with a curious look at the smaller man, who is now fidgeting nervously with his feet.
"I guess I'll explain to them later. This is Park Jimin. He'll be working with you guys and helping with cleanups."

"Have we met?" Seokjin asks with a polite smile, setting the now dry glass down.

"Wait! You're the guy that got dumped last week, right? The one that was crying?" Taehyung blurts out, and Seokjin digs his elbow into the younger man to effectively shut him up. Jimin hangs his head low, face burning with embarrassment. He shouldn't have had any drink that day. He got so emotional about finding out about his boyfriend cheating on him, he just lost it.

"Please excuse Taehyung, he's like this, but I swear he'll grow on you," the bartender says with a smile and shoots Taehyung a pointed look. "I'm Seokjin by the way. We're both bartenders."

"I'm Jungkook. The bouncer."

Just then Hoseok descends the staircase, his lips stretched into a smile as always.

"Who's this?"

"New employee. Going to help with stocking and cleaning," Namjoon answers and Hoseok eyes Jimin with raised eyebrows as recognition flashes across his features.

"Well, hello, I'm Jung Hoseok. Sort of the manager around here. If you see a short man with pink hair, that's Yoongi, our DJ. Now, why don't I give you a little tour of the place?"
"Alright, so first things first, we all have to wear white shirt and black slacks and this red band on our wrists to show that we work here. Otherwise, people will hit on your aggressively, especially when they're drunk, and Jungkook already has a lot on his plate to begin with," Hoseok explains as he flashes the red band on his wrist. "I'll get you one tomorrow when you begin officially. Now, we do not provide the actual uniform, but we do give you money so you go get an outfit on your own. Remember. White shirt, black slacks. Doesn't have to be anything fancy or expensive."

Jimin nods towards Hoseok, making a mental note to go shopping before his shift tomorrow.

"Just a few things you should keep in mind if you're going to work here. You'll mostly be working with Taehyung and Seokjin, since they manage the bar. They'll tell you if they need anything, but you'll mostly help out with stocking up on drinks and snacks, as well as picking up empty glass from around the bar. My advice to you is to listen to Seokjin. Taehyung can get...a bit creative when he's excited so you stick and listen to Seokjin if you want to stay out of trouble," Hoseok continues as they make their way towards the backroom, where the manager quickly explains where most of the important things are.

"Now, Jungkook is the bouncer. He's a bit quiet, but that's cause he's shy. Once he warms up to you, he'll be like a giant puppy. As for Yoongi, as long as you don't mess with his music, song selection or bother him when he's taking a nap, you should be fine," Hoseok explains once they're back out onto the floor. "A few rules. One, never take drinks from anyone. It's for safety. Two, when anyone gives you trouble, you find Jungkook to handle it. Don't ever underestimate the strength and stupidity of horny, drunk men. Three, don't fall for our boss."

"Huh?" Jimin asks dumbly, looking up with his mouth open.

"Our boss man. You've probably already heard of his reputation, and well, you can't continue to work here if you fall for him."

"....But I don't like him that way."

"You say that now, but you'll be surprised at how many people we had to fire because they tried to get into boss man's pants."

"No thanks, and you really don't have to be worried about that," Jimin answers with a roll of his eyes and huffs when Hoseok barks out a laughter.

"Well then, let's get started!"

Jimin is sure that Namjoon had picked out each and every one of his employees quite deliberately, because there's no other way that such a group of hot gay men would all be working in the same place. Jimin soon feels self-conscious as he works alongside Seokjin and Taehyung, who have to be two of the best looking people he's ever laid eyes on. Seokjin is tall and beautiful, with broad shoulders that are manly and pretty eyes and full lips that are the exact opposite. Seokjin is clearly a hit with a lot of the patrons of the bar, and it's easy to see that many of them come to talk to Seokjin under the pretense of needing more drinks.
Taehyung is as talented with his drink as he is handsome. With strong eyebrows, defined features and an air of boyish charm, complete with his inventive drinks, Taehyung is just as popular as Seokjin. Then there's the bouncer, who looks like he should be on TV, not dragging drunk brawlers out of the bar. Lastly is Hoseok who has a smile that cures diseases, and his friendly demeanor is clearly favored by many frequent visitors to the bar. Jimin's only seen Yoongi and has yet to talk to him, and yes he's surprised to find that the man really does have pastel pink hair, but from what he can see, Yoongi is insanely attractive with his mysterious and standoffish manners.

Jimin quickly learns that all of them are gay and not at all ashamed of it. In fact, Taehyung is frequently seen making lewd gestures and dry humping Jungkook, who runs away shouting at Taehyung to leave him the fuck alone, while Hoseok blatantly and outrageously flirts with Yoongi when the DJ is taking a break. Jimin can't tell if any of them are serious, because he swears he's also seen Hoseok grope Jungkook and laughing about it, while Seokjin and Taehyung grind up against each other when the music gets turnt.

Namjoon comes down to the floor a couple of times throughout the night, his long legs carrying him with an air of authority. Jimin takes note of how people watch Namjoon in awe and study every one of his moves. So the rumors were true afterall. Namjoon really was the target of everyone's lust and affection.

Jimin jumps when he feels a rather strong squeeze on his ass and turns around to find a grinning Taehyung.

"Checkin' the boss out already?" Taehyung asks mischievously, draping his body over Jimin's.

"No! I mean...I'm just surprised that everyone's so...into him..."

"Are you really surprised though? The man's Kim Namjoon. He was born to break gay men's hearts everywhere."

"Oh....are you...?"

"Oh, no. He doesn't sleep with any of his employees, and I think we're the only ones who haven't tried. Probably the reason why we're still working here like at least a hundred others quit. Boss man is fine as hell, but I have a specific type."

"Oh, like what?"

"Mmm, you'll have to find that out for yourself. What about you? See anything you like?"

"Umm..I'm not sure. I haven't really thought about it."

"Wow, between the six of us, you haven't found your type? I'm shocked. Maybe you're just not into good-looking men," Taehyung teases with a boxy grin.

Jimin deadpans and then rolls his eyes.

"I'm kidding! Loosen up a little! But he really is something, isn't he?" Taehyung muses, playing with his own lips.

"Who?"

"The boss man."

"I gues he's a good-looking guy..."
Taehyung lulls his head and barks out a laughter. "Oh, if you think his charm is about his looks, you haven't seen anything yet. Hey if you don't mind me asking, why were you crying like that last week? We've all seen criers, but that was the first time someone legit balled their eyes out." Jimin winces at the question and wonders if they are ever going to let that go.

"Uh...my boyfriend cheated on me...."

"...That's it?"

"What do you mean that's it!"

"You just find a hotter guy and suck face with him and show him what he's missing out on. Simple," Taehyung explains nonchalantly, as if it's the most obvious solution to the particular problem, and Jimin can't help but think that maybe he's hearing things. "I can help you with that, if you want."

"...What?"

"Next time your dumbass ex comes around, I'll make out with you and it'll be the hottest thing ever. Or you can ask Seokjin hyung to do it. But I think I'll be better at putting on a show."

"...Are you being serious right now?"

"Yup. We sort of do that for each other and it's worked out fine so far. We take care of our own, little one, so let us know when our service is needed," Taehyung explains with a boxy grin and then yelps when Namjoon, out of nowhere, smacks Taehyung on the head with a roll of papers he's holding.

"Isn't your breaktime over?" Namjoon asks with mock stern voice as Taehyung shrugs dramatically and grins.

"I was just telling Jimin here that I'm all for making out with him if his ex shows up again. Did you know his ex cheated on him and that's why he was crying?"

Jimin is starting to see that Taehyung has zero filter. Namjoon only snorts in response.

"Sure. Now go back to work before Seokjin makes you."

"Aye aye, boss man!"

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"You're going to regret it if you fall asleep with your neck like that."

Yoongi scowls and looks up to find Hoseok watching him, a playful smile on his lips.

"Don't care," Yoongi mumbles and closes his eyes again. It's break time, which means he's allowed to do whatever he wants, and he's completely content with sleeping in some corner of the bar, away from everyone else (including Hoseok).

"Come on Yoongi, I'll ask Namjoon to let you use his room while he patrols the bar for a bit."
"Too tired," the smaller man answers lowly, pulling himself more tightly into a fetal position.

"Don't make me carry you."

"You can't carry me."

"Is that a challenge?"

"Goddamn it Jung Hoseok, fine! Fine! God, you're annoying," he continues to mutter under his breath, finally getting out of the corner and letting Hoseok pulling him into a standing position. Yoongi drags his feet behind him as Hoseok wraps an arm around his waist to steady him.

"Yeah but you love me," Hoseok counters with a click of his tongue and pulls Yoongi in closer to provide more support. "You know, I'm sure Namjoon will give you a few days off if you ask." he suggests, thinking that perhaps a few days off might help Yoongi not fall asleep everywhere.

"I'm fine," Yoongi mutters, and Hoseok drops the subject with a soft sigh. They eventually make it to Namjoon's office, where the bar owner is typing away at the laptop in front of him.

"When will you learn to knock?" Namjoon says with an exasperated sigh and then frowns when he sees Yoongi.

"Hey boss, wanna patrol the floor for a bit?" Hoseok asks with an exaggerated grin, which has Namjoon closing his laptop with a roll of his eyes and getting off the chair.

"You know where the foldup bed is," Namjoon mutters before exiting the room, knowing that Hoseok, the little shit, will probably find other creative ways to annoy him if he doesn't give into the demand. While Hoseok likes to go around taking care of everyone, including the bar's owner, it's not that hard to see that Hoseok is especially keen on keeping an eye on the DJ. No one says anything about it though, figuring that Hoseok will do something about it if he actually has feelings for the smaller man.

"Do you not sleep in the morning?" Hoseok asks as Yoongi crawls onto the fold-up.

"I do...but sometimes it gets too loud around the apartment," Yoongi mumbles under his breath and then scowls, remembering his neighbor's insane child who thinks screaming for a whole hour is his idea of fun. Yoongi's told them on a number of occasions to please keep it down, and it's gotten to the point where he's wondering if there's a polite way to say "shut your fucking kid the fuck up before I fucking murder all of you."

"Oh. Do I have to go punch someone for you?"

"Sure, if you're willing to punch a 6 year old, go for it."

"A 6 year old? Good lord, that's what you're dealing with?"

"Yeah, and the mother is batshit crazy. Told her to keep it down, the little fucker screams louder. I need to move to a new apartment. Anyway, I'm going to get some sleep. Go away," Yoongi mutters, waving his hand around lazily. Hoseok smiles and pats Yoongi on the head before leaving the room, ignoring the loud growl that comes from the lying figure.
"Shouldn't we celebrate Jimin joining us?" Seokjin suggests with a grin as soon as he sees Namjoon approaching the bar. The blond man rolls his eyes and leans against the counter, ignoring the way everyone's eyes are on him again.

"Isn't that just your way of saying, let's get shitfaced?" Namjoon questions with a raised eyebrow and vaguely motions for a glass of water which Taehyung delivers.

"Maybe. But the kid is working so hard, we should make him feel welcomed," Seokjin argues, pointing at Jimin with his chin. Seokjin turns around to find Jimin juggling a mountain of empty glasses in one hand while furiously wiping away at one of the tables.

".....Yeah, I guess we can close shop and grab a few drinks. Been a while anyway."

"Excellent!"

"But I better not see Taehyung dry humping anyone again. Especially Jungkook. I swear he's going to file for a sexual harassment lawsuit soon," the bar owner continues and grimaces, remembering the last time Taehyung got drunk and thought it was the best idea in the world to hump each and every one of them. Including the owner himself, who had to scream for help to get him off, because the kid was a lot stronger than he looked.

"Oh please, we all know Tae's harmless. But what about you?"

"What about me what?"

"Just a bit surprised that you'd bring Jimin to work with you, considering how much you hate criers in your own bar," Seokjin answers slyly, wiping a glass dry. Namjoon recognizes the look but pretends to not see it, because it's Seokjin he's talking to.

"He asked and I said yes."

"Really now? Interesting."

"I know what you're thinking, and I can guarantee it's not that."

"And what was I thinking?"

Namjoon shoots the man a pointed look as his response and sighs when Seokjin only laughs at him.

The evening comes to an end, and everyone's gathered on the floor to celebrate the new addition to the bar. Seokjin and Taehyung whip out bottles after bottles to set on the counter. Hoseok brings out snacks from the back, while Jungkook makes sure that all the doors are closed and locked. Yoongi creates a playlist for the little gathering, while Namjoon watches how Jimin's beaming in the middle of it all. Jimin looks absolutely ecstatic to witness a welcome party for himself, and while Namjoon would normally tell his employees to not drink too much, he lets everyone be.

Yoongi, being the lightweight he is, finishes a bottle of beer and starts giggling like a little girl while going around trying to cuddle people. Taehyung makes a face and runs away when Yoongi approaches him, while Seokjin pushes the smaller man off of him. Hoseok is the only one who lets the DJ basically drape himself over him, and Hoseok doesn't even look ashamed when Taehyung smirks at him knowingly.

"...Are those two dating?" Jimin asks meekly as he sits next to Taehyung, who's laughing at
Yoongi, who's singing a high-pitched tune that makes him sound more like a cat in heat than an actual human being.

"Nah, they're just always like that. Well, my money, correction, all our money, is on Hoseok having a huge crush on Yoongs over there, but who knows, right?"

"I'm willing to bet my entire life savings on that," Jungkook mumbles before taking a sip of his drink. "I mean, it's kinda obvious."

"I know right?" Taehyung says excitedly, straightening up. "That's what I said to Jin, and he told me Hoseok's just being nice. Like please, look at that happy little smug face," he continues, waving vaguely towards the two men across from them. Yoongi is now making random motions with his hands as Hoseok nods and pretends to understand what the other man's doing.

"Jin's pretty clueless when it comes to these things," Jungkook adds thoughtfully.

"Oh hey, so have you decided yet?" Taehyung turns to Jimin, his eyes twinkling.

"Have I decided...what?"

"See anyone you like? We're all trying to guess your type. It's like a small game we play every time someone new comes working with us," the bartender explains gleefully and Jungkook shrugs flippantly with a nod.

"I don't know..."

"Based on looks alone though. That's the rule. Face and body, who's your type, go."

Jimin's brows furrow as he thinks about the question. He had been so preoccupied with not messing up during work hours and trying to get his head over how ridiculously good looking everyone is that he hadn't even thought about which one's his type. All he knows is that he likes people who are kind, considerate and devoted, so who looks the nicest...?

"I guess....I dunno, I guess Hoseok? He looks nice."

The two men sitting next to him exchange glances.

"Really? Kinda pegged you for the type to like bad boys, like Jungkook here or...boss man or, I dunno maybe even Yoongi."

"I don't think I have a physical type...I just wanna date a really nice person."

"Well," Taehyung starts, a finger on his chin. "You're not wrong. Hoseok is super nice. Too bad he's obsessed with Yoongi already."

"Oh, no no no, I'm not thinking of dating anyone here or anything~"

"Relax, we're kidding!" Taehyung says with a bark of laughter.

"I hope you guys aren't giving Jimin a hard time."

All three of them look up to find Seokjin grinning at them with his arms crossed. Right behind him is Namjoon, who's busy rolling his eyes at Hoseok and Yoongi who are quickly fusing into a single identity.

"Nah, we're asking him who he thinks is the hottest."
"Yeah? And what did he say?" Seokjin asks, as Namjoon turns his attention to Jimin.  

"Hoseok. Can you believe it? I can't believe I lost to Hoseok," Taehyung grumbles playfully and wraps his long arm around the smaller man.  

"I heard that, asshole!" Hoseok yells from across, his lips drawn into a lazy grin. Clearly, the alcohol was getting into his system as well.  

"Good!" Taehyung yells back and takes a long swig of his beer. "Apparently, Jimin here is into guys that look nice, as in personality-wise."

"Well, Hoseok fits the bill alright," Seokjin muses and then shoots Namjoon a fleeting glance, which the man ignores with a snort. "So what was the deal with your ex? I hear that he cheated on you?"

Jimin gives Taehyung a pointed look before sighing loudly. "Yeah...we were together for like half a year...and then we came here with some other people to grab a drink and I found him sucking face with someone else in the bathroom," he admits slowly, alcohol suddenly making him a lot more open and bolder. Usually, he'd never admit something so private about him to a group of near strangers, but here he is..."That's so cliche," Jungkook mutters under his breath, barely loud enough for Jimin to hear him.

"I know right?" Taehyung jumps in with a scowl. "And what kind of dumbass cheats on his boyfriend when he's like right there? Fuck that guy, Jimin, and my deal still holds true. If he ever comes back to this bar, you grab any one of us, minus Yoongi, please don't grab Yoongi, and we will make out with you so hard. Like, I'm willing to let you grope me for a full minute if it means getting back at your ex."

"You can kiss me," Seokjin adds with a hand up, "but no groping."

"We can kiss and I'll allow grinding," Jungkook volunteers.

"You guys are idiots," Namjoon mutters with a shake of his head. Jimin looks around all the faces in the room and starts crying emotionally, because he can't believe that these people are willing to do so much for him. He really, really should stay away from alcohol, because feels hit him so much harder under the influence.

"Uhh...are you crying?" Taehyung asks dumbly as Jimin shakes his head and starts wiping at his eyes. "Why is he crying?" he asks Jungkook, who shrugs exaggeratedly, he himself unsure.

"I-I'm just s-so happy!" Jimin wails dramatically, clutching at the bottle of beer in his hand. "Y-you guys are...so...so...awesome and-"

"Oh my God, he's such a lightweight," Hoseok comments and then takes the bottle out of the small man's hands. "Enough alcohol for you Jimin. Alright, we should start heading home. Tae, Jungkook, you guys gonna be alright?" Jimin continues to cry pitifully until he's sound asleep on the floor, clutching his own hands together.

"Psh, I didn't even have enough to get tipsy," Taehyung says with a wave of his hands before getting off his seat. "You gonna take Yoongi home?"

"Yeah. He's already out of it."

"Don't take advantage of him," Taehyung says with a delicate shake of his index finger. Hoseok puts on a fake smile and puts out his middle finger in response before hooking his arms under Yoongi's
armpits to help him up. Yoongi makes an incoherent noise while burying his face into the crook of Hoseok's neck.

"Joon, why don't you take Jimin home, he looks pretty out of it," Seokjin suggests, cracking his neck. "I'd take him, but we live in the opposite direction."

"And how do you know where he lives?" Namjoon asks, suddenly annoyed. He's so not looking forward to carrying a drunk anyone around.

"Because I give a shit, Joon, and when I give a shit, I ask people questions."

"Why the f-"

"I'm sorry, so are you saying that I should?" Seokjin asks with a fake smile that sends a chill down Namjoon's spine. While Namjoon may be the boss, there's no question that Seokjin is at the top of the food chain, and Namjoon doesn't want to find out the consequences for getting Seokjin pissed off.

"Fine..."

"Excellent!" Seokjin says with a sweet smile and proceeds to usher everyone out the building. Yoongi is securely on Hoseok's back, rapping under his breath about unicorns Taehyung and Jungkook casually walk out the building, arguing about who would be better at putting on a show for Jimin's ex. Namjoon sighs as Seokjin helps hoist Jimin onto his back for a piggy back ride, and Namjoon mutters under his breath about how heavy the smaller man is.

"Oh please, he probably weighs a little over 50 kilos you whiner," Seokjin huffs with a delicate roll of his eyes.

"Still doesn't change the fact that I could've gone home without this," Namjoon continues to complain as he links his arms securely around Jimin's legs.

"Oh will you stop it. Plus, Jimin's adorable. Now run along while I clean up."

"You sure you don't need a hand with cleaning stuff up?"

"Nah, not much of a mess. I'll see you in...a few hours?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Give me your address," Namjoon commands gruffly as he approaches his car. Jimin, however, makes no effort to answer, and instead sound asleep on the taller man's back, even managing to snore in the process. "Are you fucking serious," the bar owner growls through his teeth and shoves Jimin into the passenger seat with some difficulty.

"Hey, Park Jimin, wake up," he tries again, this time shaking the boy a bit roughly. Jimin frowns and waves his hands about as if swatting a fly before going limp again. Namjoon grits his teeth and juts his chin out, because his patience is already running thin, and he's not about to wait until the boy
sobers up.

"Wake up!" Namjoon yells this time while delivering a light slap to Jimin's face. "Where do you live!"

Jimin scrunches his nose a couple of times before answering "Busan..." and it takes every fiber of Namjoon's being to stop himself to actually bitch-slapping the sleeping figure. He sort of figured that Jimin's not from Seoul, judging for his slight change in dialect whenever he got a bit excited, but that's besides the point. He really wants to just drop him off and go home and get some well deserved sleep.

"Fuck this." The bar owner eventually gives up and starts the car, figuring he can just dump Jimin in his living room and get some shut eye.

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Namjoon wakes up to a dull thud coming from just outside his room. He snaps his eyes open in surprise and then remembers leaving Jimin on the couch in the living room. He gets up and winces at how sore his neck and shoulders are before heading out the door. As soon as the door's flung open, he sees Jimin on the floor, rolling with his hands tightly on his right shin.

"...What the hell are you doing down there?" Namjoon asks not at all amused.

"I hit my shin....somewhere...oww..."

Namjoon rolls his eyes and then saunters into the living room, past the figure still rolling on the floor, because he's hungry and eating is simply more important that looking after Jimin right now. He's still a bit bitter about having had to deal with drunk Park Jimin, and he doesn't think he's bad mood is going anywhere anytime soon. He rummages through his cabinet and pulls out a half eaten box of cereal and is about to grab some milk from the fridge when he's stopped by Jimin peering curiously at him from the counter.

"Can I have some too?" Jimin asks, his eyes wide and pleading. Namjoon sighs and lets out a "whatever" before grabbing two bowls. Jimin takes one gratefully and waits patiently for Namjoon to be finished pouring his own bowl before he takes the box.

"So uh...how did I end up here?" Jimin asks once half his bowl is finished.

"You got piss drunk and wouldn't tell me where you live, so I had to bring you back here," Namjoon asks gruffly, not even bothering to take the venom out of his voice.

"Oh...thank you so much. I'm glad you didn't just...throw me away somewhere."

"Why would I just throw you away somewhere."

"I dunno," Jimin answers after a moment of thoughtful silence "But I'm glad nonetheless!"

"Sure...finish your cereal," Namjoon mutters once he's done with his. He places the empty bowl in the sink, figuring he'll deal with it later. He can't help but think how surreal this entire situation is.
He's never had someone sleep over at his place unless it was for mindblowing sex, and none of them were allowed to stay for breakfast. Everyone who spent the night with the bar owner knew they weren't allowed to stick around, and none dared to disobey, but here Jimin is, munching on a bowl of cereal on his kitchen counter, looking completely at ease.

And somehow, Namjoon can't bring himself to kick the small man out just yet.
"Hey, do you wanna go shopping with me?"

Namjoon doesn't even give the question a moment's thought before answering with a resounding "no." He does his best to ignore how Jimin's now watching him with a crestfallen expression, his already droopy eyes growing even more so. The boy fell asleep on his couch, ate his cereal. Namjoon's not about to let the little man drag him around shopping too, no thank you. So he just remains still on the couch, his eyes fixed on the small screen of his phone in front of him.

"Uhh, boss?" Jimin tries again, this time sitting on the small space besides the taller man. "I need to buy my uniform and was wondering if you wanted to come with? You know, in case I pick something bad." Namjoon has to give it to him. The guy doesn't give up easily.

"...Are you being serious right now?" Namjoon asks gruffly, the familiar sensation of irritation bubbling inside him again.

"Yeah, so can we go?"

"I'd rather stay home and relax till I have to go back to the bar," Namjoon does his best to remain polite despite the onset of an headache. He doesn't get out of the house much, especially to anywhere crowded like a shopping mall, because he spends so much time around people for hours when he's on the clock.

"Please? Pleaseee," Jimin persists, dragging his word out and even twisting his body around like a shy school girl for emphasis. Namjoon raises his eyebrows and stares at the smaller man, hoping the hard stare might deter him, but he quickly finds out that Jimin is completely oblivious.

"Will you stop bothering me if I go shopping with you?" Namjoon asks with a sigh, putting his phone away. He doesn't like the idea, but he figures it's better than listening to Jimin whine for the next hour. And he does not have the patience or the energy for that shit.

"Yes," Jimin answers with a gleeful smile, his eyes practically twinkling under the fluorescent light. Namjoon sighs and nods before peeling his long limbs off the couch.

"Thank you! Awesome! Can we go now?"

"...Yeah, why not..."

They go to the nearest shopping center, and as soon as they're inside the building, Jimin is hopping
around all over the place, looking perhaps a bit too excited for someone looking to buy work uniform. Jimin insists that they get ice cream first, because he needs energy if he's going to go shopping, and Namjoon does open his mouth to argue but stops himself, because he can't be bothered to. Jimin is obviously going to whine until the ice cream is in his stomach, and he's not in the mood for that, so he lets Jimin lead him to a small ice cream shop located a few stores down from the entrance.

"Do you want anything?" Jimin asks, his eyes already fixed on his options in front of him and his hands and nose pressed against the display window.

"No."

"Are you sure? You're going to regret it later."

*I'm going to regret coming here with you*, Namjoon thinks as he shakes his head. Jimin ends up ordering three scoops for himself and binging on it with the bar owner sitting right across from him. Namjoon crosses his arms and just watches the smaller man in front of him shoving spoonful of ice cream into his mouth with more excitement than Namjoon knew possible.

"I see you like ice cream..." Namjoon mutters as Jimin is scraping at his nearly empty cup.

"Yup. One day, I'm going to find a guy who will go on an ice cream date with me every single day. Well, not every single day, but...you know what I mean."

"That much? Well, it shouldn't be too difficult to find a guy who will do that for you."

"Mmm...I dunno, so far, all my exes thought ice cream is stupid and said it'll make me fat, and well, apparently no one wants a fatty," Jimin answers sadly, staring at the spoon in his hand.

Namjoon raises a delicate eyebrow. He's met some salty gay men, who believed that being sassy was a part of their charm, but none had been rude enough to comment on one's weight like that. That was just fucking rude, and he'd kick someone like that out of bed without a moment's hesitation.

"Has anyone called you that?" Namjoon asks, shifting in his chair.

"Call me what?"

"A fatty," he explains and then winces at how childish the word sounds on his tongue. He can't remember the last time he's used or heard that exact word. Fatfuck, he's heard being tossed around playfully, but fatty?

"Umm...yeah, a couple of times."

"...Did you lose a lot of weight or something?"

"Hmm?"

"Were you always this size or were you a lot bigger?"

"Ummm...I think I've pretty much been this size," Jimin answers thoughtfully, looking back down at his body and pinching his barely there stomach.

"And some douchebag called you a fatty?" Namjoon's scowling now. He's seen big people. Of course he has, and even then, he's never made a comment about their weight, because really, he doesn't give that much shit (You know what they say. More cushion for the pushin'). But Jimin.
Now Jimin was nowhere near fat. Sure, he had chubby cheeks, but he found them sort of endearing. If anything, he thinks Jimin can afford to gain a few and still look perfectly fine.

"I mean, I do try to lose weight, but I can't seem to keep it off, so I even tried cutting icecream...but look at me now. I know, I shouldn't-"

"What do you mean you're trying to lose weight? Just because some dumbass tells you that you're a fatty, you decide that you're going to stop having ice cream?" Namjoon continues almost angrily, because he's feeling genuinely frustrated. He was all about people doing what makes them happy and having positive body image, because he appreciates that about people. Men didn't have to be lean, ripped and conventionally handsome for him to find them sexy. It was confidence that drew him to all those men.

"Well, I don't know what else to-"

"That's not the point. When an asshole tells you you're a fatty, you tell him to piss off. This is back to that whole confidence issue we were talking about. Remember that?" Namjoon pushes forth as Jimin nods hesitantly. "This is part of your lesson. Do not change yourself to impress some guy that makes you feel less than what you are," he continues firmly, leaning forward. Jimin swallows visibly and nods again. "Confidence is sexy."

"Confidence is sexy." Jimin repeats, blinking owlishly.

"And if you want to find a guy that will go on an ice cream date with you all the time, just find that guy. He's out there somewhere."

"You really think so?"

"I know so."

"That's nice...I mean, I don't know when or where I'll find him, but it's nice to think that he's out there somewhere waiting for me," Jimin says with a dreamy look in his eyes, and Namjoon has to fight the urge to roll his eyes. He's usually not this sentimental and would generally scoff at such romantic notion, but seeing Jimin, he can't help but say those words.

"Yeah well, can we go get your uniform now?"

"Oh, right. OK, let me just throw this away!"

It doesn't take that long for them to find a store filled with shirts and slacks. Jimin looks through each and every one, an adorable frown forming on his forehead as he studies the fabric of the shirt he's holding.

"That one's fine," Namjoon says gruffly, checking his watch to see that he's been in the store for nearly an hour. He doesn't know how Jimin even has the energy to be shopping like this, but he's done. So done.

"You think so?"

"Yes, now let's pay for it and go."

"What about the slacks?"

"The 4th one you tried on was fine. Let's get that one."
"Which one's the fourth one...?" Jimin asks slowly as he looks around the store. He's gone through so many pairs, he had lost count a long time ago. Namjoon makes his way to the opposite end of the store and retrieves the exact pair Jimin had tried on before handing it to the smaller man. Namjoon blinks and looks up, his mouth agape.

"How did you-"

"I pay attention to details. It comes from being a bar owner," Namjoon answers with a shrug. "Now let's go."

"Uh...OK. Are you sure they looked good on me?"

"What did I say about confidence?"

"Oh...right..."

Namjoon takes the articles out of Jimin's hands before taking them to the register and handing his credit card as well.

"Why are you paying?" Jimin asks from next to Namjoon, his hand holding his own wallet uncertainly.

"Well, the bar is supposed to pay for it, and I am the bar, so why not cut the middle man and get this done and over with."

"Oh...I guess that makes sense..."

Once they're out of the store, Namjoon hands Jimin the shopping bag and glances at his watch again. "Alright, I'm going to have to go back, grab something to eat and head to the bar."

"OK, sounds good," Jimin says, following Namjoon out the door. "Maybe you can give me a lesson before we have to go back to the bar?"

"...What?" Namjoon stops in his track and turns around to face Jimin, who looks happily oblivious to the hard look he's receiving.

"Lessons on getting and keeping guys with Kim Namjoon. Remember?"

"Don't give it an official name."

"So what do you say?"

"....Let me guess, you're going to continue to bother me until I do as you say huh."

"Pretty much," Jimin says with a cheeky grin, his eyes disappearing into crescents again. Namjoon sighs and then shakes his head with a quick chuckle. Alright, so the man was a bit more ballsy that he had anticipated. He can work with that.
They don't end up doing another lesson, because Jimin ends up falling asleep on Namjoon's couch as soon as they are finished grabbing a light meal. Namjoon lets the smaller man be as he cleans up the mess and looks through a couple of documents. He can hear Jimin's soft snoring, and while he would normally be annoyed by anything but absolute peace, the sound is strangely calming. He only wakes Jimin up when it's time to head to the bar.

Jimin wakes up with a dumb "huh?" and a little bit of drool on the corner of his mouth. Namjoon prays that none of that ended up on his otherwise pristine couch. Jimin blinks a few times like a baby owl and then wipes at his mouth with the sleeve of his shirt before getting up with a happy grin on his face. Namjoon watches the entire display with a small frown. No one has been anything other than perfectly well-kept and sensual when they were at his apartment. Men tried so hard to look good and be attractive for Namjoon. They dressed perfectly, smiled coyly and bent over furniture enticingly, but Jimin was something else. He clearly didn't care how Namjoon saw him, and the bar owner isn't quite sure what to make of it.

They are the first ones to arrive, and Jimin goes straight to setting all the glasses and plates out for Seokjin and Taehyung. Namjoon can tell that Jimin's quite quick to learn and retain information, because he's working as if he's worked here for months. The next person to arrive is Seokjin, followed by Taehyung and Jungkook who come into the building laughing at some joke. Then it's Hoseok and Yoongi, and judging from the looks of it, Hoseok is having the time of his life making fun of Yoongi about his drunk state the previous night.

"Did you get home alright?" Seokjin asks Jimin, who's finishing up getting the bar ready.

"Oh. Kind of. I ended up sleeping at the boss's apartment," Jimin answers with a smile before returning his attention to the box of peanuts in front of him.

"...At Namjoon's place?" Seokjin asks with raised eyebrows.

"Yeah. Apparently I was way too drunk to give him my address. The next thing I know, I find myself on his couch!" Jimin replies chirpily, not picking up on the look of surprise on the other man's face. Seokjin knows Namjoon. In fact, he's known Namjoon even before the opening of the bar. They became friends in highschool when they accidentally found out that each other were gay and since then stuck around. Seokjin knows that Namjoon has a way of taking men back home, but never has he heard of taking anyone home and not sleeping with him. But then again, Jimin is an employee and far from being Namjoon's type, so he figures it makes sense that he would just leave Jimin onto the couch.

"And you guys didn't do anything?" Taehyung pops out of nowhere to ask, his eyes practically twinkling. Jimin makes a face, as Seokjin slaps the other bartender's arm.

"Tae, go make yourself useful elsewhere."

"That was a legitimate question!"

"No it wasn't, now go."

"Aww come on. So what did you guys do then?" Taehyung asks, undeterred by the other man's efforts to have him leave. Jimin puts his fingers on his chin, remembering the events of the day.

"We went to get my uniform. Had icecream. Ate back at his apartment and oh, and I fell asleep again," the shorter man recites and then smiles, remembering the motivational speech his boss had given him. Perhaps Taehyung had a point about the best part of Namjoon being more than his looks.
Taehyung and Seokjin exchange surprised glances, because they can't associate ice cream with Namjoon in their heads. Not only did Namjoon let the boy sleep on his couch, but actually spent the rest of the day doing actual things with him? Now, this definitely got the two bartenders' attention.

Less than an hour later, the bar is bustling with young blood, all set on either getting drunk beyond recognition or taking someone home. Jimin hops from table to table, picking up empty glasses and wiping them to get them ready for people to sit at. One thing he's learned is that Yoongi is an excellent DJ, because he finds himself dancing along to the music even as he's wiping counters. Hoseok walks around to make sure everything's going accordingly and also helps Jimin from time to time, and the two even engage in small talk about who they think is the hottest person on the floor right now.

Jimin's approaching the bar with an empty tray in hand and is just about to tell Seokjin that he's going on his break when he recognizes the figure sitting in the stool right next to him. How can he forget? It's the same man who broke his heart less than a couple of weeks ago, and the man even has someone sitting on his laps.

Taehyung, oblivious to this information serves the man a glass with a polite smile on his face. Jimin, on the other hand, does his best to hide, which is impossible given that he's literally only a few inches away from him. Jimin fidgets nervously, fighting the tears threatening to come out. Jimin had fallen for that douchebag hard and fast and had actually believed that they were destined to be together forever. Jimin even had a plan to marry the bastard in America when they grew older. That was until Jimin found him sucking face with the very same twink he's currently preoccupied with.

Taehyung however quickly picks up on how Jimin is teary eyed and shifting nervously, all the while lamely trying to hide behind the tray he's holding. They eventually make eye contact, and Taehyung shoots the smaller man a questioning look. Jimin bites his lips and point to the couple and then at himself. Taehyung takes his information and then stares at Jimin with his eyes wide open and makes an E and an X using his fingers. Jimin nods furiously and then continues his quest to somehow slowly back away from the bar before he's seen.

However, Jimin isn't so lucky, because his ex spots him from where he's sitting, and the bastard even has the audacity to smirk at him while squeezing the twink's ass hard with his right hand. Jimin swallows hard, the hurt stabbing at him again. He can't understand why his ex has to be such an asshole about it. Wasn't it enough that he was caught cheating?

Just then, Namjoon's at the bar, doing his usual routine checkup, a bored expression fixed onto his face. He's about to ask Seokjin if everything's going alright when Taehyung starts motioning at the couple sitting only a few stools down. He leans back to glance at the couple and stares, because he has no idea what Taehyung's on about. It's not like the couple is doing anything prohibited. Their clothes are on, they don't look at all dangerously drunk and they aren't doing drugs. His eyes however quickly land on Jimin, who's clutching at his tray for dear life and biting his lip down hard. He recognizes that look. Jimin's trying not to cry, and Namjoon has no idea why.

He looks back at Taehyung, who makes an X with his fingers. Namjoon lets out a quiet "ah" in understanding. So that was the douchebag ex. How typical that they meet at the bar. He takes another look at the ex and realizes he doesn't appreciate the smug smirk on the asshole's face. No one messes with his employee like that.

Namjoon approaches Jimin and smirks in satisfaction when all eyes turn to him. The twink on the ex's laps is watching him with lust, even licking his lips in anticipation. Namjoon does his best to not roll his eyes and instead puts on his game face.
Jimin jumps when he feels a strong arm wrapping around his middle and pulling him in. He feels Namjoon's hot breath against the back of his ears as the boss man quietly tells him to just go along with it. Jimin swallows and looks up at Namjoon in confusion, only to be confused even further when Namjoon looks at him with adoration in his eyes.

"Baby, I was looking for you. Where were you?" Namjoon asks huskily, trailing his hands down Jimin's stomach.

"Uh..." Jimin squeaks out ever so eloquently as Namjoon nips at the smaller man's earlobe. Namjoon's body feels too hot against his back.

"Come on, you left me hanging, you tease. Come back to the office so we can finish where we started off," Namjoon continues, his voice dripping with need, his eyes boring a hole into Jimin's.

"Y-you and Kim Namjoon!?"

Jimin turns to the sound of his ex's booming voice and sees the man looking back and forth between him and the bar owner. Even the twink is watching them with disbelief, his delicate features scrunch up as if he's seen some kind of a vile insect. Well, fuck you too, then.

"Baby, do you know this guy?" Namjoon asks, his hands resting on Jimin's hips and holding on protectively. From the corner of his eyes, he sees Taehyung making an X with his fingers while shaking his head. Jimin swallows hard and musters enough courage to say "no," because this is some kind of God-given opportunity to finally rub it in the asshole's faces, and he does not want to let that slip through his fingers. His ex narrows his eyes, looking scadalized that Park Jimin would ever dare to be anything but a pliant doll he used to carry around.

Namjoon drapes his arm around the smaller man and pulls him in tightly. "He says he doesn't know you, so why don't you fuck off," he finishes with a taunting smile before taking Jimin towards the staircase. Jimin tags along, because he's still trying to wrap his head around what the hell just happened. Namjoon lets go of him as soon as they're in his office.

"Wow, that sack of shit was your ex?" Namjoon asks with a snort as he plops onto his chair.

"T-than you!" Jimin blurts out rather abruptly. He had been quite confused, but now he sees that Namjoon had only tried to save him from the embarrassment of having to face his ex with tears in his eyes. Perhaps he had been wrong about Namjoon being a cold and somewhat heartless owner of Bulletproof, and he's starting to see what Taehyung had been talking about when he mentioned that it wasn't only about the man's looks.

Namjoon only raises an eyebrow in response and then shrugs. "Before you get back to the floor, come here," Namjoon says motioning for the smaller man to approach the chair. Jimin does as he's told without question and blinks owlishly, waiting for Namjoon to say something. Instead, Namjoon gets up and runs his fingers roughly through Jimin's hair, turning it into a hot mess. Jimin puts up a futile fight, which is promptly ignored as the bar owner jerks at Jimin's shirt and rips the first two buttons off.

"Hey! I just got this shirt!"

"Buttons can be fixed. Stop whining," Namjoon growls as he musses up Jimin's shirt and then rubs furiously at Jimin's lips with the back of his hands. Jimin flails his arms around, but he's no match for
Namjoon's strong hold.

"What was that for!" Jimin complains once Namjoon lets him go. His lips are probably bruised now. In fact, he can't even feel them anymore.

"Everyone in that bar is expecting you to have had some wild office sex with me and I want you to look the part."

"But we didn't have sex..."

"The point is to make people think we have."

"Why?"

"Because in their minds, if you're good enough for me, you're good enough for everyone else."

"That's kinda...I don't wanna say cocky but..."

"It's just how things are. Trust me, people will start looking at you in a different light. This is what you wanted right?"

"Umm...maybe?"

"Good. Now go back down with a satisfied smile on your face."

"...Thank you. Seriously, thank you for everything."

"Just go."

And Jimin leaves the office, leaving Namjoon to lean back in his chair with an amused smile on his face.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long wait!! And thank you for your patience! :)

Words started spreading like wildfire, and before any of them knew it, the bar began quickly filling up with people dying to see this mystery man who won the heart of none other than Kim Namjoon. Now, being at the receiving end of Kim Namjoon's sexual endeavors was not unheard of, but the bar owner has never ever staked claim in public, let alone in front of patrons at his own bar. When they did catch a glimpse of the cute, short man, they were quite shocked, because Namjoon had only taken tall, well-built men home for the most part. They were classically handsome like Seokjin, built like Jungkook, with a personality that was more Yoongi than anyone else.

But now they were staring at a man even shorter than Yoongi, not at all classically good-looking like Seokjin and who behaved more like a mixture of Taehyung and Hoseok than anyone else. He was all smiles and excitement, working around the bar with a gentle and bubbly attitude, completely oblivious to all the studying eyes. Seokjin and Taehyung are the first to notice the different atmosphere in the bar, mainly because people wouldn't stop asking who this mysterious person who managed to tame the beast is. They do their best to keep a straight face and point at the new addition to the business.

Many of the patrons were shocked, but they also began making speculations. There must be a reason why Namjoon, the King Gay, decided to stake his claim on the small man. Maybe the man was a devil in bed. Perhaps he had a side to him that was coy and irresistible. There has to be something, right? Why else?

A few hours later, the bar closes, and Seokjin watches as Jimin runs towards him with a huge grin on his face. "I can't believe it! Five people asked for my number today!" he shouts as he jumps around excitedly with his hands on the bar counter. "Can you believe it? Five people!" he continues, stretching out five fingers in front of him. Seokjin clears his throat in an attempt to not let out an obvious chuckle and tells the smaller man a quick congratulations.

"Did you see any you like?" Hoseok asks with a teasing grin from next to the bartender.

"I uh....I'm not sure. I was too surprised to pay attention," Jimin answers shyly, remembering how he had been too flustered to even look them in the eye. He's not used to that level of attention, because up till now, all his relationships had stemmed from his pining like a lost puppy for months on end until the other party noticed.

"Shouldn't you guys be getting ready to close up shop?"

All men lookup to find Namjoon at the base of the staircase, walking towards them with a slight tilt of his head.
"Oh, Jimin here-" Seokjin starts, leaning towards the smaller man with a grin on his face. "-was just telling us how five guys asked for his number," he finishes, turning to look at the bar owner.

"Really now," Namjoon says with a slight undertone of amusement ladled with something else Jimin can't quite pinpoint. Jimin nods shyly, making a mental note to thank the bar owner later for the sudden change. Namjoon had been right all along. Being the "target" of the taller man's affection meant a lot to other gay men of Seoul.

"I think it's only a matter of time before someone snatches our Jimin away," Seokjin continues fondly, patting the smaller man on the head.

"Congrats," Namjoon says with a shrug before telling everyone else to close up shop because he's dying to go home.

Everyone's gone, except for Namjoon, who's finishing up as always, and Jimin, who's waiting outside. He wants to personally thank the taller man for making him so desirable, and he had been too shy to say it front of everyone else. He waits and waits, kicking the dirt under his feet while humming a random tune to himself. He spends this time thinking about the five men who asked for his number. He hadn't been lying when he said he didn't get a good chance to look at their faces. He really was too flustered, but he does remember one being quite tall, almost as tall as Namjoon, with quite a handsome face that Jimin only caught a glimpse of.

He pulls out his phone and looks through the new messages. He received texts from exactly five unknown numbers, and he hadn't replied back to any of them because one, he's not even sure who's who, and two, he doesn't know what to say. The five men seem to be comfortable though. Even slightly flirty. Jimin scratches his chin and then puts the small device away. He'll have to ask Namjoon about it. Surely the bar owner will know what to do.

"What are you still doing here?"

Jimin looks up to find Namjoon watching him curiously from the main entrance.

"Oh, I uh....I wanted to talk to you. In private," Jimin replies, straightening his back. "I wanted to thank you."

"For what?" Namjoon asks as he locks the door and turns around to face the smaller man again. Jimin clears his throat nervously.

"I had five guys ask my number thanks to you."

"Oh. That," Namjoon says curtly and then shrugs again in the same manner he had done previously when Seokjin was around. "Well, let's hope you find Mr. Right."

"Maybe....but I'm already stuck."

"....Stuck?"

"I got a bunch of texts, but I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do with them..."

"Right. Don't text back anything. Not yet. The ones that are serious will find a way to see you again," Namjoon answers as he checks for time.

"Really?"

"Yes. Now go home and get some sleep."
"'Kay...thank you. Again."

"Sure."

Namjoon watches as Jimin waves and bounces away down the dimly lit street. He lets out a low sigh and rakes his blond hair back with his fingers. He knows he should be feeling happy for Jimin, because it's what the man's wanted all along, but somehow, he can't shake away the feeling that perhaps he's made a mistake.

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One of the five men does come back to see Jimin. Seokjin notices him immediately, because he's seen the devilishly handsome face around a few times, and the staff members have even talked about how he must be an animal in bed. The man's a great dancer, with hip thrusts that can probably impregnate people, and Seokjin's not gonna lie. He hadn't expected such top-tier gay to make a move on the newest addition to the bar,

"How come you didn't return any of my texts?"

Jimin looks up from wiping one of the tables to find a ridiculously good-looking man watching him intently with a grin on his face. Jimin catches a glimpse of the man's piercings and smoldering black eyes, as well as a small tattoo on his arm that his shirt hadn't managed to cover.

"Umm..."

"Im Jaebum," the man continues silkily, putting a hand out. "I was waiting for you to text me back."

"Park Jimin," the smaller man answers shyly, taking the hand. "I'm sorry, I wasn't sure which one belonged to who," he answers honestly, but Jaebum quirks an eyebrow. Alright, so the kitty's got a lot more men after him. OK, he can work with some competition.

"Let me see your phone," Jaebum says smoothly, leaning forward towards the other man with his hand stretched out. Jimin, in his still confused state of mind, hands the man his phone without thinking it through and only opens his mouth to make a sound of protest when Jaebum is going through his address book. After typing his name into the right number, Jaebum hands Jimin his phone back.

"Now, you know it's me."

"Oh..." Jimin answers dumbly, staring at the name on his phone.

"So, can I buy you a drink?"

"Oh, we're not allowed to drink on the job."

"I never said here," Jaebum counters with a grin, and Jimin just makes an "oh" with his mouth. "When you have a day off. We should grab a drink together," the man continues and Jimin sort of nods to go along with it, because what the hell else is he supposed to do! Where is Namjoon when
you need him! "I'll text you, Jimin," Jaebum says before walking away, leaving the smaller man to swallow visibly. Wow, that was intense.

Seokjin, who's witnessed the entire scene play out, smirks as he watches Jimin make his way towards him with his cheeks flushed bright red.

"That man just asked me to have a drink with him!"

"Here?" Taehyung asks from next to Seokjin, picking up a bottle of gin.

"No, like when I'm not here. Like...go on a drink date outside."

"Good for you, Jimin," Seokjin cooes, doing his best to not laugh at how flustered the small man is. "What did you say?"

"I sort of said yes. This is crazy. A guy's never asked me out for a drink before."

"Better get used to it," Seokjin says with a wink "So when's the date?"

"Not sure. He said he'll text. Wait, should I ask him?"

"Slow down," Seokjin interrupts with a chuckle. "First things first. Do you like him?"

"He's really good looking. Like, insanely hot."

"Well, that's a good start I suppose. Why don't you just wait until he texts you," the broad-shouldered man suggests sagely, earning him a knowing glance from Taehyung.

"Yeah? You think so? Ok, good. I will uh...I'm just going to go back to working."

"You do that."

"Is it just me-" Taehyung begins once Jimin's lost in the crowd. "-that's a bit worried for some reason."

"It's definitely not just you," Seokjin agrees thoughtfully. He knows that Jimin had just become a target for a lot of heartbreakers trying to stake claim on what was originally Namjoon's, and while he doesn't want to be judgemental, most of them are not looking to stick around with Jimin for that long. And while Seokjin wouldn't really care what two adults do in their spare time, Jimin's just too sweet to be used like that.

"Should I do a background check?" Taehyung asks, referring to the man who had just asked their newest member out. Seokjin thinks for a moment. There is an invisible system in place when it comes to gay men of Seoul. It's a very tightly-knit network, which means a bit of digging is bound to yield a list of people the man's slept with in the last month and any acts of douchebaggery he may have engaged in in the last year or so.

"Frankly, I don't think we need a background check to see that man's bad news for someone like Jimin."

"Should we do something about it?" Taehyung suggests uncertainly. He's grown quite fond of Jimin. Jimin wasn't like any of the patrons that came to the bar. He was all butterflies and rainbows and romance novels that teenagers eat up, and while commendable, the particular traits made Jimin vulnerable. Taehyung's used to watching drunk gay men mindfucking each other until one caved and they took it to actual physical fucking, not a ball of fluff blushing at the first guy that asks him out on
a drink date.

"No...not yet. We might be wrong," Seokjin says, and even with the loud bass ringing through the building, Taehyung can pick up the uncertainty in the other's voice.

"I hope so."

"What are you guys talking about?" Both bartenders turn to look at Hoseok, who's looking as chirpy as always.

"Jimin and his potential new love interest."

"Oh jeez, don't even get me started," Hoseok says making a face. "People have been on my ass the whole week about who this Park Jimin is and how he tamed Namjoon. Like I'd tell them even if it was true," he continues with a snort. "Why, did Jimin find someone interesting?"

"Not sure. Some guy's been ballsy enough to make an actual move even though Namjoon sort of staked claim."

"I love gay drama. Kind of the main reason why I work here," Hoseok muses with a smirk, doing a quick scan of the bar.

"Do you even have time for other people's drama when you're struggling with your own?" Seokjin asks with a roll of his eyes, pouring the man a glass of water.

"What do you mean? What drama?"

"Your obsession with Yoongi."

"I'm not obsessed with him," Hoseok counters, shooting a pointed look at the taller man. "He's just adorable, Okay?"

"Did you just put Yoongi and adorable in the same sentence?" Taehyung questions, making a face. Yoongi is anything but adorable. Yoongi's menacing. He's mean. He's a straight up bitch when he feels like it. Sure, he might be loyal and a good-listener or even funny, but he definitely isn't cute.

"I think he's cute," Hoseok says, glancing at the DJ, who's busy working.

"Man, you're in deep," Taehyung mutters as he sets an empty glass onto the counter.

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"Seriously, do you really need to take notes?" Namjoon asks with yet another roll of his eyes as Jimin whips out his notepad again. They're in his apartment again, for session 2 of how to be sexy with professor Kim Namjoon, and Jimin seems to be an even more eager learner once he's starting to see the bar owner's reputation working its magic. Jimin has a date coming up, and he's expecting good things to happen, and he's going to need all the help he can get if he's hoping to not remain single for long.
"What if I forget though!"

"It's like there's a written manual for these things. You just have to let your body remember."

"Hmm...I'll just leave it here just in case then."

"...Sure...anyway, we're going to kiss again to make sure you haven't forgotten how to do it," Namjoon says in a bored tone as Jimin begins fidgeting in his seat.

"Oh. Right."

"And this time, I'm going to show you from the beginning," Namjoon says as he motions for Jimin to come closer. "Now, when you initiate a kiss, don't just go straight for it. Make the person want it," he explains as he changes the look in his eyes again into that of a smoldering stare. "Don't stare so blankly. Come on, do what I'm doing. No, now you just look angry. Maybe turn the corners of your lips a little bit upwards. OK good, that's better. Now, hold that gaze....good, and then lean forward, towards my lips." Jimin does as he's told. "That's when you should close your eyes. Not that tightly, obviously, you look like you're scared. That's not sexy. Relax. Good...now stop for a brief second before your lips meet. Let them want it badly. Be a tease. Now kiss me and remember to actually move your tongue."

Jimin leans in for the kiss, his nervous lips meeting the full, soft lips of none other than Kim Namjoon. The bar owner lets the smaller man set the pace, only brushing his hands against Jimin's lower back for encouragement. Soon, they're kissing at a moderate pace, and while it doesn't leave Namjoon breathless or aroused in any way, it's enough to make the taller man give the shorter one a curt nod of approval.

"I think you're somewhat ready for the post-date kiss if it happens."

"So you think I should kiss him after our date?"

"I'm not saying you should do it. I'm saying that if you want to do it and it happens, then just remember what we practiced."

"Is there like a rule? Like a certain number of dates I should go on before we kiss?" Jimin asks uncertainly, his hand hovering over his notepad.

"No. No rule. But...just wait till it feels right."

"Right...umm, I'm kinda nervous about this date, you know?"

"You've been on dates before, right?" Namjoon questions, hoping the answer is yes, because he can't be spending his time teaching the man in front of him what an actual date entails.

"Yeah. Sort of. I mean...hmm..." Jimin falters, furrowing his brows as if deep in thought.

"What do you mean sort of?" Namjoon asks, crossing his legs before him. He's not liking where this is going, because he can already see what must be going through the smaller man's head.

"We watched a lot of movies at home...sometimes shopping. That counts, right?"

Namjoon sighs inwardly. He should've seen this coming. Clearly, Jimin's been dating men who are so deep in their closet that they they can't bring themselves to go on actual dates with Jimin out in public. He doesn't want to blame them, considering the harsh homophobia atmosphere of the country they live in, but jeez, at least go to a nice restaurant and have a fancy dinner or go watch a movie in a
theater or something. What kind of assholes have Jimin been seeing until now?

"So you've never had a drink date?"

"Umm...I sort of did at your bar, but that's about it."

"Right...So what are you nervous about?"

"I don't think I'm very good at keeping conversations interesting..." Jimin laments, sticking his lower lip out as he plays with the pen in his hand.

"And it's not your job to."

"What do you mean?"

"You going on a date doesn't mean you have to say things to keep the other guy interested. You should be spending time getting to know him and decide if you're feeling the guy," Namjoon explains, hoping to get the point across. He knows Jimin's type. Jimin's bound to do his best to impress the guy, and Namjoon knows for a fact that trying too hard never works. Especially for someone like Jimin who word barfs when he gets nervous.

"Oh...I've never thought about it that way."

"Plus, this guy's the one that asked you out. Make him work for it."

"You think he will?"

"He asked for your number, didn't he?"

"I guess you're right...hey, can you tell me what your first date was like?" Jimin asks with a soft smile, leaning forward in excitement. Namjoon think about it for a moment, because he can hardly remember his first date. He's gotten so used to treating his dates (and one-night stands) to dinner and wine that he's lost track of how it all began.

"First date..."

"Or stories about your first love. First relationship? Anything?"

"I don't know about my first love, but the first guy I was in an actual relationship was in college."

"Oh...what was he like? How did you two meet?" Jimin asks, interest evident in his voice. He can't really picture the tall man being in a relationship, given his current status, which makes it even more fascinating.

Namjoon makes a face at the rapid firing of questions but decides to answer them anyway.

"He was a year older than me. We first met at a gay club when I visited for the first time out of curiosity. I was standing by the bar when he came and offered to buy me a drink. I said sure and we sort of talked. We hit it off, exchanged numbers and met on weekends to go to watch movies or grab a meal together. Nothing special," Namjoon continues with his story, trying to remember the details of their time together. It wasn't even that long ago, but he can only recall bits and pieces.

"How long were you together for?"

"A few months. Less than six, that much I can remember."
"Oh..what happened?" Jimin asks, looking sad, and Namjoon doesn't understand why the smaller man is so into the boring story.

"I saw him with his girlfriend."

"His girlfriend!? Wait, what?"

"It happens. You shouldn't be all that surprised," Namjoon explains with a shrug. He's seen a lot worse. Heard a lot worse.

"Did you at least ask him why?"

"No. I cut off all contact with him. I didn't need an explanation."

"Oh...that's horrible."

"Tell you what," Namjoon says with a clap of his hands, ready to change the subject. He'd rather not sit around his living room talking about his past. "We'll go on a practice date together to an actual restaurant."

"What? Are you being serious right now?"

"Yeah. You're clearly nervous about it. Maybe it'll help you give yourself a trial run."

"You'd do that? You'd actually do that for me?" Jimin asks as he jumps off the couch and his hands on his cheeks.

"Why not. It's just dinner and maybe a drink. I have to eat too anyway."

"Oh my god! Thank you, thank you!!" Jimin yells as he hugs Namjoon, pulling his arms around the taller man's neck. Normally, Namjoon would tell him to get off, but he lets the smaller man revel in the excitement.

"This place is so...nice," Jimin muses as he looks around the fancy restaurant located just a short distance away from the bar. The place is small, with only a handful of tables, and it gives the entire business an exclusive vibe that only adds to the already gorgeous decor. "I didn't know a place like this exists in Itaewon."

"Not many people know about it," Namjoon answers as they are guided to an empty table. The waitress, who recognizes Namjoon immediately, flashes the bar owner a knowing smile and mouths "Oh, he's a cute one" before handing them the menu.

"Now, remember this is supposed to be a date."

"Oh. Right," Jimin says, finally taking his eyes off the lighting and focusing on the man in front of him.
"Hope you like Italian."

"Yeah, of course! I'm really cool with anything as long as it's not too salty or spicy. My stomach-"

"Jumin."

"...Sorry. I mean...I do. Sorry, I'm just getting really nervous."

"That's why we're practicing."

They take their time to read through the menu (although namjoon's basically memorized the entrees by heart). They place their orders and Jumin's eyes dart around the restaurant nervously as Namjoon watches the smaller man with a hint of a smile on his face.

"You know, you should probably look at me, considering this is a date and all," Namjoon begins softly, effectively grabbing the other man's attention.

"Sorry-"

"Stop apologizing. Now, I'm going to ask you some questions that come up on first dates so you can practice."

"That sounds useful," Jumin replies with a nod and a look of determination in his eyes.

"What do you do?"

"I'm a student. Well, I'm taking some time off to save up for my tuition and sort of look into maybe trying out a different field I guess? I dunno, I haven't really-"

"Jumin. Student is fine."

"Okay..."

"Any hobbies?"

"I don't think I have any cool hobbies."

"What are even cool hobbies?"

"I dunno. Skydiving? Mountain climbing? Driving expensive cars around?"

"What did I say about not needing to impress your date," Namjoon chastises gently. Jumin slumps in his seat like a child being scolded. "Plus, no one has time to do shit like that all the time. What are your actual hobbies?"

"I like to dance...but it kinda sounds lame..." Jumin answers hesitantly, playing with the fabric of the table cloth in front of him.

"How is dancing lame? And stop picking at the tablecloth."

"It's...too...gay?"

"May I remind you that you're going on a date with another guy."

"Fine. Fair point. So I like to dance. And reading. Is that lame?"

"Nothing's lame, alright? You like what you like. What else?"
"I like taking a walk in the park when the weather is nice. If I had a dog, I'd love to take it out on a walk, but I guess I'll have to wait till I graduate from college and settle down..."

"Where're you originally from?"

"Busan. Oh God, is my satoori too obvious? I'm really trying to-"

"You shouldn't have to try to hide your accent. It's part of who you are, and I think it adds character. It's nice," the bar owner says honestly. He's noticed the satoori the moment he heard Jimin speak, but he hadn't made a comment on it. He can tell that Jimin's trying his best to mask it for the most part, but it definitely came out more strongly when he got excited or nervous. He doesn't mind it at all. In fact, the contrast between the manly Busan dialect and Jimin's sweet personality is a bit endearing.

"Yeah? You really think so? People used to make fun of it so I've been trying to get rid of it," Jimin admits, remembering the first time he came to Seoul.

"It suits you."

"Thanks! Can I ask you questions too?"

"Sure," Namjoon obliges, even though he's not a big fan of others prying into his personal life.

"What about you? Were you born in Seoul? You don't have any accent."

"Ilsan, but close enough to Seoul, I guess."

"When did you move to Seoul?"

"Right after high school," Namjoon answers, leaving out the part about how he basically ran away from home when his father found out about his son's not-so-traditional collection of porn. Both his parents were not at all on board with the idea of raising a homosexual child, so that was the end of their ties.

"By yourself?"

"Yeah."

"Weren't you...weren't you scared?"

"What do you mean?"

"When I first came to Seoul by myself, I was kinda scared. I mean, Busan's a big city and all, but it's not Seoul, you know? Everything happens so much more quickly here and I didn't know anyone..."

"You know people now though."

"I guess...but...I feel like I barely know them. Everyone at the bar's been so nice though. Made me feel welcomed. They are like this big family, and it must be so nice to be a part of it."

"You can be a part of it too, and as far as they're concerned, you're one of them."

"What about you?"

"What about me."

"Do you...consider me as part of your group?" Jimin asks, his tone hopeful.
Namjoon stops and stares at the smaller man before averting his gaze. It's a strange question. Jimin works with him, just like everyone else, and he takes care of his own, so the answer should be yes, but why is he having such a hard time vocalizing the sentiment? Jimin is watching him now, a hint of dejection in his eyes. Clearly, the man is taking the silence as a big NO, and now Namjoon sort of feels like an asshole.

"Of course I do," he answers instead and watches as Jimin perks up.

"I'm glad. You're like...this big brother I've never had. No wait, that sounds weird because you taught me how to kiss and everything. But you know what I mean. I'm really glad I got dumped at your bar."

Namjoon can't stop the laugh that bubbles out of his throat.

"You're a bit of an optimist, aren't you?"

"It helps to be, with my dating record. But...I'm really glad you took me to that office and insulted me."

"I didn't insult you."

"But you were mean to me."

"I'll give you that."

"As I was saying, I'm glad you were mean to me, cause look at me now!"

"Sure, when you put it that way..."

Just then their food arrives, and Jimin's all smiles as he looks at the plate full of risotto in front of him.

"This looks really good," he comments before taking a forkful into his mouth. He chews for a bit, savoring the taste and hums in approval. "Wow, the food is amazing here!"

"Glad you like it."

"Do you come here a lot? With other guys?"

"Rule number one of first dates. Don't talk about past dates, flings, one-night stands or relationships," Namjoon says, putting a finger up. Jimin purses his lips and nods rapidly in understanding before basically shoveling more food into his mouth.

"Rule number two, don't focus just on your food. It's nice to see you eat well, but remember it's a date."

"This is kinda hard."

"Relax. Just talk. Like you normally do."

"Okay...how's your food?"

"It's good. Do you want a bite?"

"Is this a trick question?" Jimin asks, narrowing his eyes in suspicion.

"No, it's not a trick question."
"Then yes please," Jimin responds gleefully, and Namjoon pushes his plate slightly towards the smaller man. Jimin takes a forkful and makes another comment about how it's the best thing he's had in a while.

"I wish I could cook like this," Jimin says once he's swallowed another bite of his risotto.

"Are you any good?"

"I think I can do Korean food alright, but I've never really tried making Italian."

"Maybe you should. And maybe you'll let me try some," Namjoon replies with a flirty grin, and Jimin blushes at the sudden shift in tone. Namjoon is so damn good at that, he understands why men are basically lining up to get a taste.

"But what if I suck?"

"We sort of had the flirting thing going and you sort of killed it," Namjoon mutters with a roll of his eyes and Jimin smacks his forehead with his palm.

"I suck at flirting!"

"You could've just said maybe and smile."

"Really?"

"Yeah, flirting isn't something you have to do outrageously."

"Okay. I'll get it right next time."

Namjoon smiles and takes another bite of his food. *This is nice*, he thinks. When was the last time he had a meal here without having to think about taking someone to bed?
Namjoon can't believe he's standing in Jimin's tiny apartment, waiting for the smaller man to finish getting changed. Jimin had begged for him to pick out an appropriate outfit for him to wear for his date tonight, and while Namjoon had brushed it off with a simple "just look it up online" and a "you can't go wrong with black and white," Jimin refused to settle for anything less than the official King Gay's Seal of Approval. Namjoon groans as he stretches his legs in front of him. He could be spending this time doing something a lot more productive (sleeping), but here he is...

Jimin's apartment is basically the size of his bedroom. It's a bit of a chaos, with books, CDs, clothes and towels thrown all over the place, and Namjoon can't help but make a face at all the takeout boxes piling up in the kitchen. He was sort of under the impression that Jimin must be borderlining OCD by how diligently he worked at the bar, but boy, was he wrong. Jimin was like any other male college student, and the thought comes as a bit of a surprise for him (especially since Jimin's view on relationship isn't that different from that of a teenage girl).

"Do I look OK?" Jimin asks, finally walking out of his room wearing a white tee, a pale, grey-washed denim jacket and a pair of black jeans. Namjoon does a quick do-over and nods his approval. He had picked them specifically out of Jimin's closet (which was also a horrible mess), because Jimin had initially wanted to go in a bright, nearly blinding, red hoodie. Good thing he came and chose for the smaller man instead.

"OK, whew, good," Jimin breathes out, finally letting his shoulders relax. "I think I'm getting nervous again," he continues, scratching at his own neck. Namjoon sighs and motions for the smaller man to sit next to him.

"Don't be. He should be the one that's nervous. He's the one that asked you out on this date."

"I know..." Jimin whines, jutting his lower lip out as he sits next to the bar owner.

"Just remember what we practiced. Don't try to add a paragraph of explanation behind everything you say and you should be fine."

"Hope so. What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Don't you have a date to go to? I thought you always have dates."

Namjoon peers over at the smaller man, who's watching him with a twinkle of curiosity in his eyes.

Goodness...sorry for the long wait and thank you for your patience! November has not been very kind to me :(
The bar owner doesn't think that whatever he does with other men counts as a date, because they're really not. Sometimes, they would skip dinner and wine altogether and go straight to fucking until the other party is an incoherent mess. Sometimes, they would grab dinner just for show, because Namjoon doesn't mind "spoiling" his one-night stands.

"Not always," Namjoon answers simply instead, choosing not to elaborate on his sexual life.

"You're so lucky..." Jimin begins with a huff, draping his body over Namjoon's lap. The bar owner raises an eyebrow at the sudden display of physical touch but doesn't comment on it. Jimin makes a small noise like a whining puppy before stretching his legs out and making himself comfortable on the bigger man's laps. "How does it even feel? To have so many guys after you?" Jimin asks, looking up and blinking owlishly at Namjoon.

Namjoon only shrugs with a quick "Nothing special," because it's true. He's gotten so used to having men lining up to spend the night with him, it has sort of become a chore at one point. There's no thrill. There is no more of the intensity which used to exist. He's still interested in what fresh new faces have to offer, because sex with someone else is always different, but that was about it.

"You only say that because you don't know what it's like to be me," Jimin mutters playfully with a pout, and Namjoon lets out a low chuckle despite it all.

"Is this what you want?" the owner asks, one of his hands subconsciously twirling a strand of Jimin's hair. It feels nice and soft against his skin, and if Jimin notices the touch, he doesn't show it.

"Kind of. I mean, I'm curious to see what it'd be like, you know?"

"It's really nothing special. Plus, aren't you looking for your one true love?"

"...Yeah that's true. Maybe tonight will be it," Jimin says with a dreamy look in his eyes, and Namjoon has to physically fight the urge to roll his eyes. He still can't get used to how sappy the smaller man is.

Namjoon's completely aware of the current situation with Jimin. He's heard it all from Hoseok, who's been keeping a close eye on the newest addition to the bar. Namjoon had expected men to make a move, and he also knew what kind of men Jimin were bound to attract with the kind of reputation that came with being staked claim by none other than Kim Namjoon. It was dangerous, yes he knows this, but it was also what Jimin wanted. He can only hope that Jimin doesn't get himself into any kind of trouble that will result in irrepairable damage.

He hadn't meant to behave that way at the bar that night when Jimin's ex came. He wasn't fond of putting on a show for anyone, especially because he had everyone else at the bar (minus Yoongi) to get the exact same job done effortlessly. Most of his employees have kissed one another at some point during their employment all in efforts to either get back at their exes or to get rid of pestering, drunk patrons. Yet Namjoon had stayed out of it, preferring to just hear about it later from Hoseok.

Then Jimin comes along, standing in front of his ex like a rain-drenched lost kitten waiting to be kicked, and something protective inside the bar owner roared and forced him to move. He doesn't like cheaters. And he definitely has no respect for men who feel no shame about. The nerve on the man had gotten on his nerves, and before he knew it, he was wrapping his arms around the smaller man.

He could physically feel the sadness and uncertainty radiating from Jimin. Jimin was trembling when he first hooked his arms around him. Up close, Namjoon could pick up on the way Jimin's eyes wavered and strained to keep them from crying, and he didn't like it one bit.
"Aren't you going to be late for your date?" Namjoon asks smoothly, glancing at the ridiculously large clock hung up on one of the walls in the apartment. Jimin finally gets off of the other man before making a strangled noise.

"Shoot, I'm getting nervous again."

"Stop. It's just a friendly date. Just don't drink too much and remember what I told you, and you'll be fine."

"Can I like...text you or call you if I have any questions?"

"...Sure. Just don't make it too obvious or else it's going to get weird."

"Okay!" Jimin immediately perks up and then bounces off the couch. "I think I'm ready."

"Alright. Off you go."

Jimin holds his breath for a little bit when he sees Jaebum again. Jaebum is still wearing around an aura that promises danger and thrill, and Jimin suddenly finds himself feeling so very small again.

"Good to see you've made it," Jaebum says smoothly, and Jimin nods shyly. They enter the bar, which also functions as a bit of a restaurant as well. The place is dimly lit, with gold-themed decorations scattered across the walls to give it an exotic flare. They take a seat, a small table for two, and Jimin glances at the small candles arranged at the center before finally looking back up at his date.

"This place is nice," Jimin comments politely, managing to put a smile on his face.

"Glad you think so," Jaebum replies with a devilishly charming grin before handing the other a menu. "Hope you're OK with an all-American menu. Well, so they claim anyway."

"I am," Jimin answers and quickly closes his mouth before he goes into an entire speech about how he would love to go to America one day and do a tour of all the wonderful restaurants and diners he's only seen on blogs. He's itching to talk about how a transfer student had made him mac n cheese one times and it was absolutely amazing and how much he wishes he had gotten the recipe from the guy, but he stops, because he remembers what Namjoon had told him.

They place their orders, and Jaebum orders some import beer to go with their dishes. Jimin makes a mental note to go easy on the alcohol, because he's told that he's not fun to be around when he's drunk.

"So Jimin, what do you do?" Jaebum asks, leaning against the table. Jimin swallows visibly at the intensity of the gaze. Good God, Im Jaebum is one good looking man, and he can't get over how hot his date is. Is this real life?

"I'm a student," Jimin answers curtly before taking a swig of his glass of water. His throat feels so dry from getting all nervous. At least he's managed to keep the answer short and sweet.
"I hope you mean college and not high school."

"Yup."

"That's good," Jaebum says with a chuckle. "So, Park Jimin, what do you do when you're not studying?"

"I like to dance. And read," Jimin answers, glad that the questions so far had consisted of the ones he's practiced with Namjoon. The man's a genius and deserves another cake.

"Dance huh? I'm a bit of a dancer myself. You're going to have to show me what you got," Jaebum replies with a hint of amusement playing around the corners of his lips. Jimin likes to dance, but he's not a big fan of doing it in front of people (unless he's drunk. Apparently he's done that a few times).

"You dance a lot?" He asks instead, and Jaebum nods.

"I actually have my own dance crew."

"Really? That's amazing!"

"Nothing too special. So, how long have you been working at Bulletproof? I don't remember seeing you before."

"Oh, not that long. Only about a couple of weeks."

"Yeah? And how long have you known Kim Namjoon?"

Jimin almost chokes on his own saliva. He'd forgotten about how this date came to happen in the first place. Namjoon's addressed this issue before and had instructed him to say that Namjoon and he are not exclusive. Apparently, that was supposed to bring all the boys to the yard, and while Jimin doesn't see the appeal of going for someone in a non-monogamous relationship, he figures Namjoon knows what he's doing.

"Just since working there," Jimin answers instead, omitting information about how the two really first met each other. It's an embarrassing story and he'd rather not share that piece of information.

"I see...and what's going on between you two? If you don't mind me asking."

"We're not exclusive," Jimin answers, almost robotically, hoping that he's doing it right. He gauges for any kind of reaction and then relaxes when the corners of Jaebum's lips turn upward at the piece of information.

Just then, their beers arrive, and Jimin sighs in relief at the interruption. If Jaebum were to ask any more questions, he wouldn't know how to answer them, so he quickly takes a sip and comments on how nice it is. Yes, beer, he can talk about beer without being weird.

"Do you drink a lot of beer?" Jimin asks and inwardly cringes at the question. That was not a very sexy or witty question...

"Sometimes. Vodka, whisky and wine are all nice, but I think I'm more of a beer kind of guy. You?"

"I'm cool with anything. I'm just not very good at drinking."

"Light-weight? Didn't really peg you as one," Jaebum muses before taking a long swig for himself. Jimin wants to ask if it's a bad thing, but he keeps his mouth shut. He's going to have to ask Namjoon later.
"You have a lot of tattoos. Are they real?" Jimin asks instead, pointing vaguely at the other man's arm.

"Oh these? Yup. All real. Started inking since I was 18."

"How many do you have?"

"I don't even know anymore...but you can see all of them later," Jaebum answers with a sultry grin, his voice practically dripping with invitation. Jimin, however, only nods, thinking how nice of Jaebum to volunteer to show them all. He had always been fascinated by tattoos but too much of a chicken to get them himself.

Jaebum, on the other hand, raises an eyebrow. For some reason, he had expected Jimin to play harder to get. Afterall, this is the same man who's captured the attention of King Gay himself, so there must be something else going on beneath the innocent smile and blinking. Jaebum smirks. Interesting, he thinks. Does Jimin think he's not even worth the effort of playing coy?

Game on, Jaebum thinks. Kim Namjoon's got nothing on him.

- 

"I miss Jiminie," Taehyung whines as he drapes his body over the counter, squishing his right cheek against the cold surface.

"He's gone for just today, what's wrong with you?" Yoongi quips as he takes a glass of water from Seokjin. He hadn't gotten much opportunity to speak to Jimin, mostly because when he's not busy DJing, he's hiding somewhere catching shut eye, but from what he's seen and heard, the man seems like a decent human being, and that's all he needs to know to not hate him.

"He's being dramatic as always," Seokjin replies from besides him, rolling his eyes as well.

"But it was nice having Jiminie around. He's so cute. Like a puppy, you know?" Taehyung argues, managing to pick his face an inch off the counter before laying it back down again.

"You know what? You're kind of on point about that," Hoseok muses, popping out of nowhere and placing his chin on Yoongi's shoulder. The DJ makes an annoyed noise but doesn't make any physical effort to take the other man off of him. Jungkook shoots Hoseok a look that says "gross" and turns to face the rest of the group instead.

"I know right?" Taehyung shouts out excitedly. "And he was so excited about the date today, you should've seen his face. He's so squishy."

"Anyone know who he's going on a date with?" Jungkook asks, playing with one of the straws he's managed to steal from behind the bar counter.

"I don't know his name, but I'm sure you guys have seen him," Seokjin begins, a finger to his lips. "He's really good at dancing. Jet black hair. Tattoes all over his arms and chest. The one with all the piercings."

"Oh, I know him," Hoseok says, raising a hand. Not many patrons with tattoos come into the
establishment, considerably not many people are so heavily inked in Korea to begin with. He was quite an attention-grabber, with his sensual moves and smirks that's sent a number of twinks on the verge of heartattacks. "He's the one with the geometric wolf on his right arm, right?"

"That was a wolf?" Jungkook asks with a frown. "I thought it was an alligator."

"How the fuck would that be an alligator?" Yoongi counters with a scowl.

"Hey, art is up for interpretation, alright?"

"...."

"Guys, that's not what's important here," Hoseok says with a hand up. "That guy has a bit of a reputation as a heartbreaker."

"Not that hard to tell. Look at the guy," Seokjin comments, slapping Jungkook's hand as it's trying to reach for another straw.

"You think Jimin will be OK?" Taehyung asks, his expression slightly more serious.

"What are you guys all doing here?"

All of them turn to look at Namjoon, who's making his way down the staircase with his usual stoic expression.

"Talking about what to wear to our Halloween event," Seokjin lies smoothly, complete with a smile, and everyone shoots the man an impressed look. The bar held a Halloween party in celebration of the holiday, and it had been a hit since its first year a few years back. All the employees dressed up and served horror-themed drinks, and an increasing number of patrons came dressed up as well. There were prizes to be won (free drinks) and everyone had a great time. This year wasn't going to be any different, which meant that they were going to have to start coming up with ideas really quickly.

Last year, Taehyung dressed up as a sexy devil, which meant he basically walked around with only a pair of leather shorts and fake black wings that did very little to cover his body. The patrons had gone wild especially when Taehyung decided to dance on one of the bar counters after being dared by Hoseok. Yoongi was the little Red Riding Hood (because he had lost a bet to Hoseok), while Hoseok was dressed as the Big Bad Wolf and spent the whole night making lewd jokes about how he's going to eat the smaller man up. Seokjin was a cowboy, complete with the right hat and everything and said "howdy" until Taehyung begged him to stop with the bullshit Southern accent. Jungkook dressed up as a giant bunny, which happened to be a mistake, because the costume made it nearly impossible for him to put anyone in an effective chokehold before taking them out the bar. Namjoon was the grim reaper, which earned him one too many "take me" from the patrons at the bar.

"I think I'll be something sexy again this year," Taehyung says, wiggling his eyebrows. "Sexy nurse maybe?"

"Like a female nurse?" Jungkook asks with a frown, trying to picture the tall man in a teeny tiny nurse outfit.

"Duh."

"Gross..."
"Excuse me, are you being transphobic?" Taehyung asks with mock hurt, putting a hand over his chest dramatically.

"I'm you-in-a-female-nurse-outfit-phobic."

"Guess I'm just going to have to do it now," the bartender teases with a sneaky grin just as Jungkook rolls his eyes.

"Guys," Hoseok says, drawing everyone's attention. "We should all do some kind of uniform together. I think it'll be hot."

"I call dibs on police officer," Jungkook says, raising a hand up. "And I'm going to handcuff people out if they cause trouble."

"Shit, then I do military," Yoongi says quickly, refusing to be stuck with something weird, like a...sexy nurse.

"Car racer!" hoseok says, perking up.

"Doctor for me," Seokjin adds, putting a finger up. "And I will carry around giant syringes filled with alcohol and just squirt it into people's mouths."

"Wow, that's pretty sexual," Taehyung muses, earning a smack in the arm.

"Guys, whatever, you guys figure it out," Namjoon interrupts. "We have to open shop now."
Everyone goes to their respective spots, with the exception of Hoseok, who asks to speak to Namjoon in his office about "last month's profit." Namjoon frowns, not knowing what to expect. As far as he's concerned, last month had been great.

"What's this about?" Namjoon asks with an exasperated sigh as he enters his office. "Why can't we just talk about this downstairs?"

"Did you know that Jimin's on a date right now?" Hoseok asks point blank as soon as he closes the door behind him.

"...Yeah, why?"

"And do you know who he's on a date with?"

"No. Why?"

"You probably know him. Tats everywhere, piercings here, here and here. Jet black hair...you know who I'm talking about."

Namjoon goes through the list of familiar faces in his head and then stills when he remembers. He had kept a close watch on him one time a few months back when a fight broke out among three catty twinks who were after the man. Oh he remembers the way the man had just stood by the bar watching the fight as if it was the most entertaining thing he's seen all year.

"....That guy?"

"Yup. That guy," Hoseok says before crossing his arms and staring at the bar owner expectantly.

"So what?" Namjoon blurts out, not liking the look on the other man's face. He had sort of expected something like this to happen. He's not happy about it, but Jimin seemed excited about the date...and who knows? Maybe they'll hit it off stellarly.
"What do you mean so what? Aren't you going to do something about it?"

"And why would I do something about it? I'm not his mother."

"Yeah, but you're kinda responsible for all of this."

"How am I-"

"Look, we all knew this was going to happen the moment you decided to stake claim on Jimin in public, right?"

"....So?"

"You're telling me that this isn't bothering you, not even one bit?" Hoseok continues, taking a step forward with a smirk on his face. Namjoon hates that particular smirk.

"Why would it?"

"Come on, Joonie, we've known each other for so long. You really going to do this?"

"Look, I have no idea what you're talking about, and that aside, Jimin is an adult. He can make decisions for himself, and if the date doesn't turn out well, then tough. Shit happens."

Hoseok watches the other man silently, and Namjoon can almost hear wheels turning inside the manager's brain.

"You sure you're not hoping it goes wrong?" Hoseok questions all of a sudden, a single corner of lips turning upwards slightly.

"What?"

"You heard me. Well, I guess I better go downstairs and help open up shop, boss."

With those words, Hoseok exists the room, leaving a very annoyed and confused Namjoon.

"Thank you for walking me all the way home," Jimin says with a shy smile as they arrive in front of his apartment. Jaebum had been quite charming throughout the entire dinner and drink, and while Jimin had done his best to control his alcohol consumption, he was feeling a tiny bit tipsy. Time for him to hit the bed!

"Aren't you going to invite me in?" Jaebum asks with a grin, leaning towards towards the smaller man. Jimin swallows visibly, trying to remember if Namjoon had taught him anything about this. Was he supposed to invite the man up for tea or something? Would it be considered rude to say no? But his room is such a mess! Oh God, Jaebum is going to get a glimpse of his room and lose all interest. God no. He can't let that happen.

"Not today. Next time?" Jimin asks tentatively, hoping that he's not being rude. To his surprise, he
sees Jaebum quirk an eyebrow with an amused look on his face.

"Next time then" Jaebum says while taking a step back. Jimin only nods slowly as the other man bids him goodbye and turns on his heels.

"I did it," Jimin whispers to himself, suddenly realizing that he's had a successful date. No word barf, no awkward touching. Just a nice dinner and some beer and good conversation. He was a bit tired before, but right now, all he wants to do is share his excitement with someone. That someone being Namjoon. Namjoon is going to be so proud of him!

He knows it's his day off, but Jimin immediately begins making his way towards the bar, so ready to talk about his date. He hums a little tune to himself, smiling stupidly at how perfect the day is going. He needs to thank Namjoon again and hopefully get more advice for the next date. He also has a few questions in his head that he needs to ask the bar owner as well.

He arrives at the bar, and as soon as he makes his way towards the bar, Taehyung lets out a squeal before pulling him into a tight embrace. A couple of the patrons leaning against the counter throw them curious looks, but the bartender doesn't mind it at all as he starts firing questions about the date.

"So? How was it? Did it go well?" Taehyung pries, hoping that the answer isn't something like "No, it was shitty" or "I got molested," because that would mean that he and everyone else will have to join forces and beat the other man into a little pulp.

"It was good! He even walked me home!"

"Did he now, good for you, Jimin," Seokjin cooes from where he's standing, mixing a quick drink for the man waiting patiently across the bar counter.

"We're going to have another date! I think...he said next time, so I'm guessing that means it's another date. Is it?"

"It is," Taehyung answers, ruffling the smaller man's hair. "But what are you doing here? Don't you have today off?"

"Oh...I do, but I just wanted to visit, I guess. Do you know where boss is?"

"In his office. Go ahead, I'm pretty sure he's not doing anything important."

"Thanks!" Jimin thanks chirpily before making his way towards the staircase, not forgetting to wave the resident bouncer in greeting on the way. He's just about to climb the staircase when a rough hand grabs him from behind. He lets out a embarrassingly high-pitched squeak when he feels his body being pulled back roughly. He's swung around equally violently, and before he can even figure out who's manhandling him, he feels a sharp impact across his left cheek, followed by a stinging sensation that makes him almost tear up.

It takes a few seconds for Jimin to realize he's been slapped across the face as he comes face to face with a seemingly very angry individual. Now, Jimin isn't perfect, but he's made sure to never make enemies. He's lived by a good set of morals, and he was definitely a lover, not a fighter. So why was he getting slapped in the face by some random person he's never even seen before?

"What-"

"You bitch!" The man screams, and Jimin wrinkles his nose at the gust of alcohol that hits his nose. "You fucking slut!" Jimin blinks owlishly, unable to even get angry, because he's so confused. Who is this person and why is he being called a slut? He's never done anything to warrant that kind of
Before he can utter a word, Jungkook is immediately behind the angry drunk, one of his arms wrapped tightly around his neck. The man struggles, kicking and screaming at Jungkook to let go, but the bouncer only tightens his grip, his lips pursed tightly.

"You bitch! You took Namjoon away from me!" the man continues to yell at the top of his lungs as he's being dragged away, and this inevitably draws the attention of everyone around them. Jungkook moves more quickly, rushing out the building before dumping the man onto the pavement and letting him know that he's blacklisted from the establishment indefinitely. He goes back inside to find Jimin standing where he was before, a hand over his cheek and his mouth agape in shock.

"Jimin?" Jungkook ventures carefully, and Jimin looks up, his eyes wide in panic.

"What...what was that...?" Jimin manages to let out, the throbbing pain in his cheek getting worse. Good god, getting slapped by a full-grown man was basically getting punched by a bear, and it hurt so bad. He's almost certain that the inside of his mouth must be busted, because his tongue is picking up hints of something metallic.

"You should talk to boss man," Jungkook says with a sigh as he motions for everyone else to mind their own business. "Here, I'll walk you to his office." Jimin nods dumbly, unable to break out of his current state of daze and confusion. He's never been slapped before. God, it hurts.

"Why does nobody knock-" Namjoon begins with an irritated frown when his door flings open but stops immediately when he sees Jimin standing in the doorway besides Jungkook. Jimin is holding onto his own cheek, his eyes wide in panic. "What the hell happened?"

"I think one of your flings just bitch-slapped Jimin."

"...What?"

"I threw the guy out. Anyway, I should go back downstairs," Jungkook explains quickly before leaving Jimin alone with the bar owner.

Namjoon shuts his eyes and rubs his hands against his face. He's not a stranger to jealousy and drama. Hell, he knows for a fact that he's responsible for at least 10% of the drama that goes down in the bar, but he's never expected Jimin to fall victim to it. In retrospect, he should've seen it coming, since he did stake claim in public. Damn it, of course something like this was going to happen.

Namjoon gets off his chair and walks towards Jimin, who's still looking incredibly shell-shocked.

"Jimin, let me see," Namjoon begins softly, drawing the smaller man's attention. Jimin looks up and slowly lets his hand down, revealing a cringe-worthy, angry, swollen red patch of skin. Namjoon tries not to show his anger as he takes in the damage. Whoever hit Jimin must have really meant it, and now he feels like a giant asshole for having been the root of this problem.

"Shit, I'm sorry," Namjoon apologizes lowly and guides the smaller man towards his chair. "Sit. I'll be right back."

Namjoon leaves his office and rushes downstairs, and judging from the looks thrown his way by all the patrons, Jungkook must've been right. Great. More drama. He ignores them all as he meanders through the sea of people and arrives at the bar, where Taehyung and Seokjin are pouring drinks for a couple of people.

"I need ice. In a bag," Namjoon says gruffly, earning him a curious look from Seokjin.
"For what?"

"Jimin got slapped." The bartender sighs and wordlessly shovels some ice into a zip lock bag before throwing a small towel over it. He knows better than to ask questions now, so he settles for just handing it over to the bar owner. Namjoon throws the other man an appreciative look before getting lost in the crowd.

"Did he just say Jiminnie got slapped?" Taehyung asks from besides Seokjin, his eyes narrowed.

"...Yeah. I think so."

"....Does it make me a horrible person if I say I saw it coming?"

"Nope. 'Cause we all did."

Jimin's still staring off into space when Namjoon's back in the office.

"Here, this will help with the swelling," the taller man explains as he presses the ice gently against Jimin's cheek. "I'm sorry you got involved."

"It's...it's OK...but it really hurts..." Jimin says quietly, taking the bag of ice into his own hand. It feels as if his entire brain got rattled inside his skull.

"I know."

The two wait around silently as Jimin continues to nurse his swollen cheek. The stinging sensation isn't going anywhere, but the ice is doing its job alleviating the burning sensation, so that's something.

Namjoon watches the smaller man in silence, absolutely hating the way Jimin's wincing in pain. He can't stand it when anyone lays a hand on any of his employees, and in this case, it's so much worse because he caused it. What's even worse is that he has no idea who even did this, because it could be any of the countless men he's slept with. Hell, it could even be someone he's never even spoken to. And now he's a bit worried that Jimin's gotten himself into a dangerous position with some of the more possessive and psychotic gay men of Seoul. How is he going to fix this though? He would never, ever want any harm done to Jimin, and it's his mess to clean up...but how?

"What are you doing here anyway?" Namjoon asks, changing the subject before his brain explodes from thinking too much.

"Oh...I wanted to tell you about the date..." Jimin answers shyly and then winces again as he repositions the ice pack on his head.

"How did it go?"

"It was good. He even walked me home and we're going on another date. Gosh...I had these questions I was going to ask you and now I can't remember..." Jimin laments, figuring the slap gave him a mild concussion.

"That's good," Namjoon replies half-heartedly. He should be happy to hear that Jimin's had a good date, but there is a bitter taste in his mouth as he takes the words in.

"Do you think this is going to bruise?" Jimin asks abruptly, moving his tongue around and regretting it immediately. Yup, there's definitely blood in his mouth.
"Let me take a look," Namjoon says, and Jimin lowers the icepack so the taller man can get a better look. The bar owner places gentle hands on the other man's face, making sure to avoid any of the swollen area, and looks around briefly. "It's going to be bruised for awhile. You should just leave it alone, but if it bothers you, Taehyung's really good with makeup."

"Nah...if anyone asks, I'll say I helped an old lady from getting mugged or something," Jimin says with a weak smile before pressing the bag of ice against his cheek again. Namjoon sighs inwardly. Jimin has every right to be angry. Or even be insulting about Namjoon's sexual endeavors, but instead, the smaller man is trying to make him feel better about the otherwise enraging situation. Namjoon doesn't get it. Is it possible for someone to even be this...naive and nice?

Namjoon doesn't even know anymore.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long wait! Was caught up with trying to finish On Patrol and deciding on a plot for this one...but hope you enjoy! And thank you for all the wonderful comments in the last chapter! :)

Namjoon glances at the figure now decidedly sleeping on the couch in the office. He had told Jimin to go home after icing the bruise for a few minutes, but the smaller man decided to stick around because he was “too excited” to go to sleep anyway. So the bar owner let the other man be, partly because he still feels bad about the man being slapped across the face and also because Jimin's soft chattering provides just the right amount of background noise for him as he types away on his laptop.

Jimin had been quite excited about his date. He retold their conversations, how the food tasted, what Jaebum looked like and how they ended the night. Namjoon continued to listen, his eyes still glued onto the screen in front of him. He nodded and made small sounds of acknowledgement to let the other man know he's still listening, and while he may not have been a very good conversation partner, Jimin didn't seem to mind. He looks happy about the idea of going on a second date, and that left a strange, bitter taste in the bar owner's tongue. He should be happy that his protege is doing so well, right? Afterall, this is exactly what Jimin wanted.

For a minute, he wonders if he should warn Jimin about the man, but he decides against it. It doesn't seem like his place to be a mother about a relationship between two grown men, and for all he knows, the guy might end up being a decent partner for someone like Jimin. So he only listens, until the chattering turns into murmurs and yawns. And then silence.

Namjoon's fingers stop. They now hover over the keyboard, uncertain of where to land next. His eyes continue to linger on the way Jimin lets little puffs of air escape his pouty lips as he sleeps. The way his lashes cast a small shadow over his round cheeks. Namjoon can't remember the last time someone other than Jimin had fallen asleep around him. He had always made sure that no one sticks around, and people were never quite relaxed around him. He and his staff members were close, but it's not like they were going to sleep in his apartment, and Yoongi always crawled up in some random hole to sleep in, so he never quite witnessed him asleep. All the flings he had been with had been so tense. Wanting to please him. Wanting to look their best. They wanted to be perfect for him. Coy. Sultry. Desirable.

But Jimin. Park Jimin was always falling asleep around him, seemingly completely oblivious to his presence, and the bar owner isn't sure if he should feel glad or a little bit insulted. He figures that his presence must have some sort of a comforting effect on the otherwise slightly nervous and antsy man, but at the same time, why was it that Jimin didn't see him in the same light as everyone else did? People didn't feel comfortable around him. They were in awe with him. Flustered, mesmerized, captivated and even slightly feared, but Jimin...he was something else altogether.

Namjoon slowly gets off his chair and lets his long legs carry him to the small couch where Jimin
makes a little garbled noise before falling back to snoring softly. The swelling seems to have gone down slightly, but the color was becoming nastier, and the taller man can't help but reach out and brush his fingers against the angry patch of skin. Jimin's brows furrow slightly at the contact and Namjoon immediately retracts his hand.

He sits by the flood besides the furniture. He doesn't want to be a creep, he really doesn't, but a more twisted part of him convinces him that it's not like he's stalking or hurting the other man. He's just concerned about the bruise, because he's behind it. So Namjoon raises his hand again and experimentally runs his fingers across the bruise again, and this time Jimin remains still. His fingers continued to move, trailing around the bruise and down to the man's chin and stopping right before reaching his pouty lips.

"What the fuck am I doing..." Namjoon mutters before quickly getting off the floor and dusting off his trousers. This is ridiculous, he thinks. He has so much work to do and shouldn't be wasting his time being a damn creep. He's just distracted by the bruise, that's all, and that's good, because that means he's a decent human being who is capable of feeling guilt.

The bar owner returns to his laptop to get back to his spreadsheet, willing the numbers in front of him to get his mind off of the bruise. He types away in silence, letting some of the bass bouncing against the walls of his office to keep him company. He does his best to filter out the soft snoring coming from his couch, and for the most part, he does succeed.

There is a soft knock, followed by the door opening without even waiting for him to say anything, and namjoon knows it must be Hoseok. The little shit never had a problem with just barging in, and Namjoon stopped trying to dissuade the man from the particular bahavior.

"Oh, so this is where Jimin is. We all thought he left and we missed him. Figured he wouldn't go without saying good-bye," Hoseok muses as his eyes immediately land on the small sleeping figure.

"...Did you seriously just come into my office for that?" Namjoon asks raising an eyebrow, and Hoseok shrugs nonchalantly.

"Well, yeah, that and was going to discuss the Halloween party with you, but I see that you're a little busy."

"....I can finish this later," the bar owner says, pushing the laptop close.

"I didn't mean that," the manager quips, crossing his arms in front of his chest. "I meant him," he continues, pointing at the still figure on the couch with his chin.

"He's sleeping," Namjoon counters with deepend frown.

"Joonie...what are you doing," Hoseok asks softly, taking a step forward. The playfulness is gone from his face, and Namjoon is not exactly sure what to make of it. He doesn't like it when Hoseok makes that face.

"I was working on numbers until you barged in," Namjoon answers nonchalantly, waving towards the laptop in front of him.

"No, I mean, what are you doing with him," the manager continues without backing down. His voice is low and hushed, and the bar owner can't remember the last time the man had used that tone with him.

"Nothing. He said he didn't want to go home and just fell asleep on the couch."
"You know that's not what I'm talking about."

"Then what are you talking about, because you better not be suggesting that I've been making inappropriate advances towards one of my employees."

Hoseok says nothing for a while. Instead, he gives Jimin's sleeping figure a fleeting glance before making his way towards the desk. He can't exactly refute the bar owner's argument, because he knows for a fact what kind of man Namjoon is. He would sleep around, but he would never ever lay a hand on one of his employees, and he expected the same from them.

So he stares into the other man's eyes instead. Namjoon does play the role of the playboy quite well, but Hoseok has always known that there is another layer to the man that he refuses to show anyone else. No one has ever asked why Namjoon does the things he does. Never questioned why he chooses to move from one man to another without settling down or why he never lets anyone really take his breath away.

Then Jimin comes, and all of a sudden everyone, even including the mostly dismissive Yoongi, knows something has changed. Namjoon may be close to them, but the man never let them too close, but Jimin was everywhere Namjoon was. The newcomer was sleeping over at Namjoon's place, having breakfast there and, most surprisingly, somehow had the bar owner pretend to be his boyfriend (or something like it) in front of all the other patrons. Logically, it doesn't make sense that Kim Namjoon would allow all those things to happen, especially because Jimin was nothing like the guys he usually spent time with.

So one explanation was that Namjoon decided to take pity on the other man, because everyone close enough to the bar owner knows that the man has a gentle, kind heart. But still, it doesn't explain the sleeping over and breakfast. It's not like Jimin's homeless...but then again, if Namjoon wanted Jimin, he would've had him. Namjoon wouldn't stand around watching Jimin dating another man...so what is it?

"Well, you should probably take him home when you're finished," Hoseok says instead, and Namjoon raises an eyebrow at the suggestion.

"What? I'm not taking him home with me."

"...I meant taking him to his home, but OK, Freudian slip much?" Hoseok quips with a smirk. He gets a feeling that things are about to get quite interesting around here.

"Really?"

"Alright, I'll let you two be," Hoseok says with a laugh before leaving the office. Namjoon sinks into his seat and ventures a glance at Jimin before opening his laptop again. Time passes as Namjoon forces himself to continue working, and when it's time to close up shop, he does a quick scan of the bar before signalling everyone to leave.

"Jimin," he calls out once he's back in the office. "Jimin, it's time to go home," he continues as he gentle shakes the smaller man awake. Jimin moans and groans, flailing his hands around weakly as he protests the movement. "Jimin, come on, time to go home."

"...Hn?" Jimin's eyes finally flutter open as he looks up with bleary eyes at the bar owner. "Oh...Sorry...fell asleep on your couch..." the man slurs with a dopey smile.

"It's fine. But it's time to close up shop. I'll drive you back home."

"...Really? You're so nice..." Jimin cooes, clearly still half asleep. He lets Namjoon help him off the
couch and giggles when the taller man's hands stabilize ends up tickling him accidentally. The bar owners throws the smaller man a questioning look, which Jimin completely misses as he continues to giggle and squirm.

"...Are you OK? Are you drunk?"

"I'm not drunk!" Jimin manges to let out before he breaks into a fit of giggle again. "Ooh, that tickles!"

Namjoon immediately lets go of the other man and watches as Jimin wobbles out the office on his own, his eyes drooping and his head lulling side to side. The bar owner keeps a close eye on the other man, and grabs hold of him just as he's about to take the first step down the staircase.

"Be careful," Namjoon warns and Jimin manages to stop in time before he goes tumbling down the staircase. He wraps an arm around the smaller man and carries him downstairs slowly, only relaxing once they've reached the dancefloor. He's know that Jimin's considerably smaller than him, but he's never really known just exactly how much smaller until this point. Jimin was malleable. Soft and pliant in a way like a kitten asking for attention, and Namjoon can't remember the last time he's made that comparison to another human being.

"I need your address," Namjoon demands as they make their way towards the exit, needing his brain to stop comparing Jimin to a kitten. Jimin mumbles his address, a jumbled mess of numbers and words as the bar owner helps the man into the passenger seat. He's not exactly sure why Jimin seems so out of it. Perhaps the man didn't get any sleep the previous night out of excitement. Perhaps he had been too tense during the date and was finally relaxing. Whatever the interpretation for his current behavior is, Namjoon is not on board with the idea, so he focuses on driving instead.

Jimin is snoring softly besides him again, and Namjoon gnaws at his lower lip as the GPS tells him to take the next right.

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Jimin is back in the bar the next day, one side of his face swollen and purpling. All the staff member have been notified of the biggest bitch slap to happen in Bulletproof since Taehyung's ex came in and slapped the bartender solidly across the face last year. None of the employees talk about Jimin's face in front of the man, and Jimin doesn't really make an effort to discuss it either. His face hurts, but it's not bad enough that he has to miss work. Plus, Hoseok got him some ointment for the bruising, so that's something.

"Have you been dating MMA fighters or something?" Hoseok asks playfully from besides Namjoon as he watches Jimin rushing from table to table, cleaning everything up.

"Shut up," Namjoon answers gruffly. He still hasn't completely gotten over the fact that someone was hurt because of his sexual endeavors, especially when it feels completely out of the blue. It's not like he ever led anyone on. All of his partners knew exactly what they are signing up for and Namjoon made sure to not give anyone false hope.

"But seriously. Man, someone must've meant business," the manager continues to ponder out loud,
leaning against the wall behind him. "You think anyone else is going to try something now that you two are strangely an item?" Hoseok asks, putting air quotations around the word "item."

Namjoon only shrugs in response. He really doesn't want to think about this particular issue right now. He's too busy dealing with his guilt every time the smaller man walks by with the bruised face and trying to figure out why it is that Jimin is the way he is around him.

Jimin spots the two men from across the bar and waves his hand slowly in a silent "hello." Hoseok smiles and waves back, while Namjoon nods back curtly in acknowledgment.

"I like that kid," Hoseok comments idly, a smile still playing on his lips. "Don't hurt him, Kim Namjoon." With those words, Hoseok walks off, leaving a baffled bar owner behind.

Jimin does go on another date with Jaebum. The man's charming as always, with a grin that has girls tripping over their own feet as they walk by. Jimin quickly finds himself becoming increasingly self-conscious, which has him stuttering and babbling like an idiot until he physically makes the effort to shut his own mouth up and keep it that way. If Jaebum notices the sudden changes, he doesn't give Jimin any indication that he does, and eventually, Jimin falls into a more comfortable pattern of conversing with his date with relative ease.

"So my friends are holding a party tonight and I was wondering if you want to come with," Jaebum says as soon as they are finished with dinner. Jimin stares at the empty plate in front of him, sudden feeling nervous again. He wonders what would be the polite thing to do. If Jaebum is asking him to accompany him, it's probably more acceptable to say yes, but then again, what if Jaebum is doing this out of courtesy? What if Jaebum wants to go to the party but not with him? Should he say no and then make up some excuse about not feeling so well and go home?

"Hey, you feelin' alright?" Jaebum asks with a small frown once he realizes the blank look on the other man's face. Jimin looks up and flashes a sheepish grin before nodding. "If you don't want to go, that's fine, but Jackson throws amazing parties."

"Um...I haven't-" Jimin begins, intending to tell his date that he has never been to a party. However, he stops himself, because what kind of loser has never been to a party, right? And he can't be that loser. Not in front of his date. "I mean, yeah, that sounds good. I'll go," Jimin finishes instead, hoping that the false bravado isn't too obvious. He's glad to see Jaebum's lips stretch into a toothy grin, revealing a perfect set of white teeth.

"Excellent. So, shall we get going?"

"Sure," Jimin answers with a curt nod before getting off his seat. Jimin does his best to listen to Jaebum's words as they near the party, because he needs to focus on something other than the fact that he will be going into crowded space with a bunch of people he doesn't know. He's never been much of an extrovert to begin with, and he had only begun working at Bulletproof mostly out of desperation than anything else. Will Jaebum's friends like him? Will they think he's weird and try to persuade Jaebum to find someone else? God, he hopes not, because that's just depressing.
The party is held in a small bar located in Hongdae. As soon as he enters the venue, he's met with loud music and too many people looking intoxicated given that it's hardly 10. He eyes some couples making out heavily against the walls, some looking to be ready to tear each others' clothes apart. Jimin blushes and averts his gaze, focusing instead on not getting lost in the crowd as he trails after his date.

"Ayyy, you made it!"

Jimin looks up curiously at the booming voice to find a blond man doing a fist bump with his date.

"Who's that?" the blond man asks, pointing at Jimin with his chin. Jimin purses his lips, wondering if this is where he's supposed to introduce himself. What is he supposed to say though? Hi, I'm Jimin, Jaebum's friend? Does anyone here know that they are on a date? Is Jaebum even out?

"Oh, this is Jimin. My date."

"...Right, I remember. Nice to meet you, man. I'm Jackson. Welcome to the party. Feel free to grab a drink," Jackson greets, putting a hand up. Jimin takes it rather uncertainly and shakes it. "Yo, if you see Bambam dancing on the bar counter, tell him to get the fuck down. I don't want to have to pay for the damage," Jackson tells Jaebum, and the man laughs.

"I will."

"Alright you two, have fun," Jackson finishes before getting lost in the crowd of people.

"You want anything to drink?" Jaebum asks, basically shouting over the music.

"Ummm yeah, some beer maybe," Jimin answers, eyeing how everyone is nursing a bottle of beer in their hands. Frankly, he's in the mood for something sweeter (or nothing alcoholic for that matter), but he'll live.

"You wanna stay here or come with?"

"Oh, I'll go with you," Jimin replies almost frantically, not wanting to be left alone. Some of the people in the bar are glancing at him curiously, and he'd rather not be the center of that kind of attention. He tags along Jaebum and watches for a bit as his date and the bartender have a small chat. They seem to know each other quite well judging by how much they make fun of each other and call each other dickheads, and it's not until a few minutes later that Jimin finds himself holding a bottle of opened, ice-cold beer in one hand. He takes a tentative sip, still unable to feel at ease in this crowded space.

Jimin quickly finds out that Jaebum is basically a Kennedy at the party they are currently in, because even in their drunk state of mind, it seems as if everyone is stopping by to say hello. Girls are draping themselves over him, watching Jimin curiously in the process. A few of them even pinch Jimin's cheeks, cooing at how adorable who he is, and as much as he finds the behavior downright distasteful and disrespectful, Jimin doesn't comment on it. He doesn't want to ruin the party and plus, the girls look way too drunk to even be aware of what they are doing.

"Who's this?" A lanky man with a rather prominent set of canines asks while draping an arm around Jaebum and pointing at Jimin with his pinky.

"My date," Jaebum answers with ease before taking a swig of his beer.

"Ohh, so you're the one," the man says cryptically and laughs when Jimin's brows furrow slightly in confusion. "Don't worry about it. I'm Mark."
"I'm Jimin. Nice to meet you."

"He's cute," Mark says with another toothy grin.

"Not again. Cut it out," Jaebum says with a playful smirk and a roll of his eyes. "Alright, go bother someone else, I'm going to dance with my date."

"Fine, fine. Be careful with this one," Mark says with a wink before disappearing into the crowd as well. Jimin only laughs back nervously. Something about this entire party feels a little off for him, and while he can't quite put a finger on it, it makes him feel a bit on edge. Jaebum doesn't seem to notice it, because he's wrapping a strong arm around Jimin's waist. Jimin makes a squeak but doesn't get to vocalize any more of his protest, because he finds himself being dragged to the small dancefloor where people are already heavily grinding against each other. Jimin likes to dance, but he's never danced like this, and now he's feeling lost.

"Dance with me," Jaebum murmurs seductively against Jimin's ears, and Jimin nods uncertainly as his date begins moving to the beat. Jimin sort of lets Jaebum's hands guide him, and while he should be happy that he's finally doing something physical with his date, he can't bring himself to enjoy any of it. It's too stuffy, too hot and too sweaty. There are people constantly bumping into him, pushing him around. There's alcohol on everyone's breath, including Jaebum's, and its starting to make him feel a bit nauseated. All of a sudden, the bar feels too small. The people too many. And Jimin doesn't think he can breathe properly.

Jimin gently pushes Jaebum away from him and bites his lower lip at the look of confusion on his date's face.

"I'm sorry, I'm not feeling too well, I should go home," Jimin manages to shout over the loud music.

"You OK? Anything I can do for you?"

"No. I should just get some fresh air, go home and get some sleep," Jimin continues to shout, doing his best to look a little bit ill.

"You sure?"

'Yeah. Sorry about that."

"No, that's fine. You want me to walk you home?"

"No, don't worry about it. You go ahead and have fun," Jimin replies hurriedly before pushing past the crowd of people in an almost panicked search for the exit. He does see Mark and Jackson watching him curiously, but he keeps pushing forward, desperately needing some fresh air. What is wrong with him? He's been around a lot of people before. He's been around loud music too. In fact, that's basically what Bulletproof has always been like, so why does it feel like he's going to suffocate?

Once Jimin's outside, and when the cool air hits him, he can finally force the tension out of his body. He slowly begins relaxing his shoulders when there is no longer heavy beat pounding against his ears or people shoving him around. God, today was supposed to be a fun night out with his date, but it's ended so horribly. Jaebum probably thinks he's like the least coolest person on the planet...

Jimin randomly kicks a small plastic bottle cap lying on the ground.

After letting out a long, suffering sigh, he pulls his phone out and scrolls through his list of contact, wondering if there is anyone he can call or text to make himself stop thinking about what a giant
loser he is. Then his eyes land on Namjoon. Namjoon's always been that boost of confidence whenever he needed...so maybe....

He knows he shouldn't be texting. He's probably working right now and too busy for tales of his lameness, but...

Oh, too late, he's already sent a text asking Namjoon what's he's doing. When did that happen?

What r u doing rn?

...working

Arent you supposed to be on a date

umm

yeah

Then why are you texting me

umm

I WAS on a date

What happened

I left

What did he do

Nothing

We went to a party

And I just didnt want to be there

:(}
I just wanted to talk to someone

Where are you

Hongdae

Somewhere in Hongdae

I don't really know this place that well though

Did you drink?

A little bit

Like a bottle of beer

You think you're going to be OK?

Do you want to come to my office?

Can I?

Yeah

Nothing stopped you before

:D

ok
"Is it just me or does Jimin always come here after his dates," Taehyung says absent-mindedly as he watches Jimin going upstairs after saying his hello to all of them.

"It's not just you," Seokjin says with an amused look on his face. He doesn't make a comment on how it's not just Jimin coming to the bar after his dates. Jimin comes back to specifically see Namjoon, which has the man wondering what could possibly be driving that kind of behavior. He knows for a fact that it's not like Namjoon would explicitly ask for the details of Jimin's dating. In fact, Namjoon is quite notorious for not caring about anyone else's romantic affairs, which means Jimin must be making the conscious decision to tell the boss about the details of his dates...

But why? Who makes that much effort to tell their boss stuff about their dates?

"Well this is interesting..."

"Huh? Did you say something?"

"Nothing."


"OK, so you just left?"

"Yeah, I know, I freaked out. I bet he thinks I'm a total loser though."

"How does leaving a party make you a loser?" Namjoon scoffs. There were days he used to go on an insane amount of parties, and he never stuck around for long. Mostly because he thought they were boring, and partly because it didn't take long for him to pick a partner to take home.

"I dunno...but people are supposed to have fun at parties, you know? Dance to good music, get drunk and take stupid selfies and laugh about it the next day."

"...And which movie is this from? That's really not how it goes."

"Yeah? Well...I guess I'm just not made for parties," Jimin laments, sighing into the cushion he's been holding in front of him. Namjoon throws the smaller man a wary look. Jimin always has his head full of certain ideals that he pressures himself to be a part of, and Namjoon has no idea why.

"So what kind of date would you want to go on?" Namjoon asks, taking his hands off the laptop and swiveling in his chair to face the other man. Jimin looks up while biting his lower lip.

"You're going to laugh." Jimin narrows his eyes slightly, and Namjoon's not sure where this is coming from.

"I've had plenty of chances to laugh at you and haven't," he answers instead and has to stifle a laugh when Jimin narrows his eyes further.
"...That's mean."

"Well?"

"I've always had this scene in my head that I wanted played out. It's just me and my boyfriend in the room. The lights are all out except for on the dancefloor. And then So Close begins playing."

"...Jon McLaughlin?"

"Oh my God, finally, someone who knows the song! Yeah, the song from that movie Enchanted."

"...Go on," Namjoon urges. He hasn't seen the movie, but he's heard of it since he's always listening to new songs. He's come across it randomly a few years back and thought the melody and the lyrics were nice enough for him to listen to it on repeat for a whole hour.

"Anyway, the music starts playing, and my boyfriend comes up to me, offering his hand for a dance. And then we dance until the end of the song and then we kiss."

"...Right."

"Ugh, just laugh now," Jimin whines, burying his face into the cushion. Namjoon however only stares back. He's not sure what was funny about the idea. Sure, it's a bit cheesy, but it's not funny.

"I'm not laughing."

"But you want to. You think it's totally lame."

"Not really. We all have our own thing. Plus, I already figured you'd be the type," Namjoon counters with a shrug. He's already heard about Jimin's ice cream date idea, so why not.

"Is this where you tell me I should be more realistic..."

"No. You just need to find that guy."

"Do they exist?"

"Probably," Namjoon answers softly, and he can't decide whether he wants Jimin's current date to be exactly that guy or not.
The next day, Jaebum does ask Jimin if he's feeling OK, and Jimin apologizes for leaving the party early, coming up with some excuse about a stomach flu. The man tells him to take care of himself, and Jimin says that he will before hanging up and going about the rest of his day.

Bulletproof is crowded as usual, and Jimin can pick up the excited vibe of the place with the Halloween party coming up. Everyone is still deciding what to wear for the big event, and both Hoseok and Taehyung do their best to coax other members into engaging in bets with them in hopes of making the other wear something embarrassing. Yoongi, who had learned his lesson the previous year, refuses to engage, settling for staring off into space whenever any of them approaches him to taunt him.

"I think we should definitely go for a sexy theme this year," Taehyung muses idly, twirling a muddler around. "You know, like sexy cops, sexy firefighters, sexy military officers and all the sexy shit."

"That's actually not a bad idea," Hoseok agrees with a mischievous grin. "Whoever goes firefighter has to wear nothing waist up."

"So, Jimin, anything you have in mind?" Taehyung asks, sliding next to Jimin who is taking a quick break by the bar.

"Um...not really?" Jimin replies, his hands ceasing to play with the piece of napkin he's been shredding into tiny pieces subconsciously.

"Hey, this is that day of the year when you can be whatever you want to be. Go crazy. Actually, crazier and sexier the better. I can help if you'd like," Taehyung offers with a mischievous grin Jimin somehow fails to pick up under the dim lighting of the business. Seokjin throws the other bartender a pointed look before rolling his eyes. He should've seen this coming. Taehyung was clearly going to get involved in the process.

"Oh, yeah, actually, I think I might need your help. Later. I think my break time is over," Jimin announces after glancing at his phone. "I should go get back to work."

"Right," Seokjin says with a nod before putting a finger up. "But before you go, how is your dating going, Jimin?"
"...It's going...well," Jimin says rather uncertainly, and both the unsure tone in the smaller man's voice and his forced smile do not go unnoticed by the broad-shouldered bartender. He doesn't comment on it, but instead smiles back and watches as Jimin disappear into the crowd.

"Man, are we going to have to beat someone up in about a week?" Taehyung grumbles, leaning against the bar counter with a serious expression as the excitement of dressing Jimin up is drained from his system rather quickly.

"Taehyung, what did I tell you about violence?"

"There are smarter ways to make people's lives miserable?"

"Exactly. Now go back to work."

- 

"...Jimin, what are you doing here," Namjoon asks when he finds the smaller man standing in front of his apartment, dressed in an oversized hoodie and a pair of jeans that may be a bit too big for the man. Its their day off and Namjoon was hoping to just relax at home, catch up on some books that he had been dying to read, but he knows by now that having Jimin visiting him probably means that the plan has already been flushed down the toilet.

"Umm...I wanted to...talk to you about something?" Jimin answers unsurely, scratching his chin with one hand.

"...Come in," Namjoon says instead of just asking him right there and then and sending the man back home. He knows enough about Jimin to know that the conversation is probably going to last more than a couple of minutes, and he'd rather not be doing that in the doorway.

"I'm sorry. I know I should've called or texted before coming here but umm..." Jimin explains himself sheepishly as he settles down on his usual space on the couch. "I just..."

"It's fine. Would you like some tea? I was about to make some," Namjoon offers, heading towards the kitchen.

"You drink tea?" Jimin asks, perking up at the sudden piece of information. He knows better than to judge a book by its cover, but he's never pegged the bar owner to be the type to cozy up with some hot tea. He's always imagined Namjoon to drink whisky at home. Straight. Maybe even wine.

"Yeah...why wouldn't I?" Namjoon questions casually, not even surprised. He knows exactly what sort of image he gives off to others. He just had never bothered to offer any clarifications.

"I dunno," Jimin answers back with a puzzled frown. "I actually don't even know why I said that. I think I'm nervous again."
"So is that a yes to tea or not?"

"Yes please."

"So why are you nervous," Namjoon asks, grabbing another mug before dropping a teabag inside. He reaches for the kettle and pours hot water into each, watching its color change as tea bleeds through. He takes both mugs into the living room to find Jimin playing with the ends of his own sleeves.

"Here." Namjoon sets one mug down in front of Jimin, who takes it with a quiet "thank you." "So, why are you nervous?" he repeats, sitting down on the couch as well.

"It's about Halloween."

"What about it?"

"The party," Jimin says slowly, scratching his arm again. "I know this year's theme is sexy and I don't know what to do."

"You need costume ideas?" Namjoon asks with raised eyebrows. From the looks of it, Taehyung and Hoseok both had appeared more than invested in the idea of dressing up the newest addition to the bar. As a matter of fact, he's willing to bet that they probably already have a full list of possible options for Jimin.

"No, it's not that," the smaller man says meekly. "I...I don't think I can do it."

"Do what. Wear a costume?"

"Look. I'm not sexy enough. I mean...Jin hyung was talking about going as a sexy firefighter and oh my god, have you seen him while in the dressing room? He has like the most perfect body, and well, so does everyone else. It's like everyone has abs and they just have these perfect faces, and Jungkook wants to be a sexy cop and he probably looks sexy in anything! I've accidentally seen him without a shirt on and oh my god, who even looks like that? And I've seen photos from last year. Taehyung looked, I don't even know what word to use, and he was only wearing a pair of black shorts and fake wings!" Jimin rants hurriedly, his face turning red at the sudden exertion as he continues to spit words out ceaselessly.

"...Are you done?" Namjoon asks once Jimin is silently raking his own fingers through his own hair, hard enough to probably hurt.

"...Yeah. Sorry."

"What makes you think you're not sexy enough?" Namjoon questions, setting his mug back down after taking a careful sip.

"Look at me!" Jimin waves his hands over his body as if to prove a point, and Namjoon only raises a delicate eyebrow at the statement.

"I am looking at you."

"....And I'm looking at you, and you're...you're..." Jimin sputters, making vague motions with his hands and fingers that the bar owner can't exactly decipher.

"I'm what."
"You're really hot!" Jimin blurts out after a moment of gaping. "Everyone knows that! Half the people who come to Bulletproof come for you," he mutters, his shoulders suddenly slumped in defeat. Namjoon watches the smaller man sulking in front of him in silence for a few seconds before shaking his head and snapping his fingers. Jimin looks up at the sudden noise, his eyes questioning, and Namjoon gets off the couch slowly.

"OK, I think it's time for another lesson. Get up," Namjoon says lowly, and Jimin doesn't miss the underlying authoritative edge in the tone.

"Huh?"

"Get up."

"...Okay...are you kicking me out of the apartment?" Jimin asks, slowly getting off the piece of furniture he's been sitting on.

"No I'm not kicking you out," Namjoon corrects, doing his best to not laugh at how Jimin is watching him with droopy eyes, looking every part a sad little puppy. "Now, take your shirt off," the bar owners commends gently once Jimin is standing straight.

"...What?"

"Take your shirt off. We're going to have to work on your confidence here."

"But-"

"Look, you keep linking your idea of perfection to defining what is sexy, and instead of seeing what you have, you keep focusing on what everyone else has. So let's practice with you being comfortable in your own skin," Namjoon explains calmly and pretends to not notice the way Jimin is swallowing visibly now.

"But I've never...taken my shirt off in front of someone," Jimin admits meekly, suddenly berating himself for ever coming to the apartment.

"You're going to have to one day," Namjoon points out, and Jimin realizes that he really doesn't have anything to say to that. Namjoon is right. The entire point of their interaction was for Jimin to get sexier and finally be able to sleep with the right guy, and in order to do that, getting naked was definitely one of the crucial steps in making all that possible.

"...Can you take your off first so I don't feel like I'm the only one doing it..." Jimin mumbles, both to stall for time and also to not be the only person to stand in the middle of the apartment without a shirt on.

"Fine," Namjoon says briskly before swiftly unbuttoning his shirt and discarding the fabric over the couch. "Now your turn," he continues, turning his body around to stand in full view of the smaller man. Jimin gapes, taking in the breath-taking perfection that is Kim Namjoon. The bar owner's skin looks flawless and sun-sunkissed, seemingly almost glistening under the living room's light. His broad shoulders serve as a stark contrast to his narrow waist, and while the man's abs may not be glaringly obvious, there is enough definition to keep everything tantalizing.

"Uh...." Jimin says dumbly, his eyes glued to all the lean muscles and taut skin, and he immediately regrets having made his request, because now he's definitely feel self-conscious about his own body. There is no way that he can compete against someone so damn perfect, and oh god, he will become the laughing stock of the entire party and he will have to leave the bar forever and then be single until his death and never get to-
"Well?" Namjoon urges, quirking an eyebrow. He doesn't miss Jimin's intense stare. He'd be lying if he said it's the first time he's been at the receiving end of such awe. Hell, most of the time, guys were staring at him with visible boners, so really, he's not at all uncomfortable by the way Jimin's gaze is locked onto his exposed torso.

"You...wow...see? Now I just feel worse!" Jimin laments, clutching at the hem of his hoodie.

"Can you at least take your hoodie off?"

"...."

Jimin gnaws at his lower lip briefly before fumbling to take his hoodie off. He sets it neatly on the couch and remains standing, looking up at the taller man expectantly. Namjoon says nothing as he takes a few steps forward until he's standing mere inches away from the other.

Jimin swallows visibly as Namjoon reaches down, securing his fingers around the hem of the plain tee the smaller man is wearing. Namjoon looks up briefly to make eye contact, as if to ask for permission, and when Jimin neither say nor does anything, he slowly pulls the fabric upward, giving the smaller man a plenty of opportunities to stop him if he wishes.

Jimin remains frozen still, almost feeling dizzy at the way he can start feeling cool air touch his exposed skin and the way Namjoon has his eyes fixed on his. No one has ever undressed him like this, and the sense of vulnerability is heightened by the underlying tingling of excitement which hums just beneath his skin. Jimin raises his arms almost instinctively by the time his entire stomach is exposed, and Namjoon swiftly pulls the rest of the tee off, dropping it next to his feet before looking down, giving the smaller man's figure an appreciative hum that sends Jimin blushing furiously.

"You look beautiful," Namjoon murmurs, slowly reaching out to run a hand down Jimin's waist, his thumb brushing against the soft patch of skin around the smaller man's belly button. Jimin flinches at the touch, the jolt of electricity that runs through his skin making it impossible for him to stand still.

"Y-you're just being nice..."

"I wouldn't lie. You look beautiful," Namjoon continues, continuing his administration, gauging for the other man's reaction to make sure he's not overstepping his boundaries. But the thing is, he needs Jimin to know that he's telling the truth. Jimin is beautiful. Sure, Jimin may not be as sculpted or tall and lean like some of his flings, but that didn't make the smaller man any less beautiful in his opinion.

"R-really...?"

"Yes really. Jungkook will have a difficult time keeping people off of you," Namjoon says playfully, hoping that it will alleviate some of the tension in the other man. Fortunately, it works, because Jimin is smiling sheepishly now, his eyes folded into crescents.

"...You're really nice."

Namjoon throws the other man a puzzled look. Jimin rolls his eyes around as if to find the right words to say before opening his mouth again.

"You've just been really nice to me. And I know you said you wouldn't lie but...whatever it is, thank you. I mean, I guess that's what I'm trying to say," Jimin continues, subconsciously raising his hands to cover his bare torso.

"Do you really think I was lying about finding you beautiful?" Namjoon asks calmly, and Jimin looks away, looking equal parts guilty and contemplative. The bar owner's tone in accusatory.
Instead, it sounds genuinely curious, and Jimin's not quite sure how to answer it.

Namjoon takes a step forward so that there is barely any space between them. Jimin jumps and looks up, surprised by the sudden proximity. Before Jimin can take a step back, Namjoon is holding him firmly in place by his waist, and Jimin lets out an embarrassing squeak as he shuts his eyes instinctively.

The taller man pulls the other's body flush against his before leaning down and pressing his lips against the soft spot at the crook of Jimin's neck. Jimin tenses at the contact, his arms now placed awkwardly to both sides of him. He's not entirely sure what's happening or what he's supposed to do, but one thing he knows is that he can't help the small moan that escapes his lips when Namjoon grazes his teeth gently against the sensitive patch of skin. He's almost shivering now, lost in the unfamiliar sensation, and he only comes to his senses when he feels something hard pressing against him.

"You still think I was lying?" Namjoon says huskily against Jimin's ears, and Jimin shakes his head quickly before he finds himself released by the other man. Namjoon's expression is completely at ease as he makes his way back to his original spot on the couch, seemingly unaware of the hardness in his own pants.

Jimin blinks owlishly, not knowing what to believe anymore, because why is he the one standing flustered and short of breath when Kim Namjoon is the one who's-

"Jimin? Are you OK?" Jimin jumps at the sound of Namjoon's voice calling out his name and fumbles down to reach for his tee.

"D-do you need me to leave?" Jimin asks shyly, diverting his gaze to anywhere other than the taller man sitting on the couch.

"No, why?"

"You know, to, uh, to take care of....you know," Jimin mumbles, heat quickly rising even to his ears.

"You mean my erection."

"Oh my god," Jimin mutters under his breath. He doesn't know how Namjoon can talk about such things so casually.

"It'll go away."

"B-but."

"Jimin, I'm not some horny teenager who needs to get off every time he gets a boner. Relax. You're welcomed to stay and talk if you want, but also free to leave if you please," Namjoon explains calmly, leaning back against the couch with a blank expression.

"C-can I ask you a question?" Jimin asks instead of heading towards the door, because now there is a burning question at the back of his head that's probably going to bother him for the rest of the day if it isn't answered.

"Yes."

"Would you, you know, sleep with someone like me?" Jimin throws it out there, not caring how desperate it might sound. It's not that he really needs the level of validation, but it's Kim Namjoon he's talking about, and the man was literally someone who could get any guy he wanted.
"I don't think you should use the phrase 'someone like me' in that context," Namjoon answers sagely before continuing honestly. "And yes, I would."

"So...how come you've never, you know?" Jimin continues, knowing that it's probably both a stupid and ridiculous question to ask. Really, he should stop talking and just leave the house, but it's like he can't filter himself anymore.

"Because you don't want to," the bar owner answers matter-of-factly, and Jimin pauses, tilting his head in confusion. That was definitely not the answer he had been expecting. He was halfway expecting something like "You're not really my type" or something along that line but...really?

"What do you mean?"

"I don't ever make the first move," Namjoon elaborates with a shrug. "And people who want to sleep with me know exactly what they are getting into. Plus, I don't sleep with my employees."

"...Oh..."

"So you have nothing to worry about," Namjoon says in a reassuring tone, and Jimin smiles back weakly, unsure of exactly what to feel. "Have you eaten?" the man asks casually, suddenly realizing that it's a few minutes past his usual meal time.

"Um...no."

"You're welcomed to stay for dinner if you'd like," Namjoon offers, suddenly feeling slightly bad for Jimin, who is looking oddly distressed as he remains on the small nest he's built for himself on the couch.

"Are you sure?"

"I offered because I'm sure."

"What are we eating?" Jimin asks quietly, seemingly still unsure about the idea of extending his stay at the apartment.

"I was thinking of making some pasta."

"You cook?"

"...Yes."

"I didn't know that..." Jimin muses, suddenly distracted by the new piece of information. First tea and now this? It's like he knows nothing about the bar owner other than the fact that he's super hot and super popular.

"I've lived alone since high school. I sort of had to learn how to cook."

"Can I watch?" Jimin asks, suddenly at ease. For some reasons, he hadn't associated the bar owner with anything potentially domestic, and now that he knows, he's curious to see how the man is in the kitchen.

"Sure. It's nothing special though."

"It's OK. Maybe I can learn something. I already told you, I can only make Korean dishes. And uh, I can help if you'd like. You know, like chopping onions or something."
"It's fine," Namjoon replies before slowly heading to the kitchen. He rolls up his sleeves before washing his hands and pulling out a pan from his cabinet. Jimin watches silently as Namjoon fills it with water and sets it aside to boil before he starts taking out everything he needs. In a couple of minutes, the counter is covered in ingredients.

Jimin soon finds himself mesmerized by how Namjoon works in the kitchen, his strong arms cutting the ingredients with ease, only the sound of knife hitting the wooden cutting board ringing through the vicinity. Soon, Namjoon is already cooking up garlic, chopped onions and shrimp in a separate pan, filling up the room with a scent that reminds Jimin just how hungry he is.

"Wow, you're really good," Jimin muses, standing next to the taller man, his eyes practically twinkling.

"You haven't even tasted it," Namjoon answers with a small hint of a smile, tossing the shrimps with ease.

"But I can already tell you're really good. I can't cut anything that quickly," Jimin says and then peers at the bar owner curiously. "Do you cook for your um...boyfriends?"

"Not boyfriends, and no, I don't cook for anyone."

"Oh. Why not? But you're really good."

"Because they're not my boyfriends," Namjoon answers with a shrug, as if it's a clear explanation enough. Jimin scratches his chin with a confused frown.

"Well uh, can you teach me how to make pasta?"

"I thought you were watching the whole thing."

"Yeah, but I didn't bring my notepad with me so I didn't get to write anything down," Jimin admits with a small pout, and to this, Namjoon lets out a small chuckle.

"First I teach you how to kiss and now you're asking me to teach you how to cook."

"Umm, well when you put it that way..."

"It's fine. I guess I can teach you a few, if you're planning on using the information to impress someone. After all, I did say that I will help you with getting a guy, didn't I?"

"Really? You'd do that?"

"Yeah. Just make sure you bring your notepad next time."

"I will! I promise!"

"It's almost done, so go ahead and sit down. Do you drink wine?"

"You have wine at your house?" Jimin asks blinking owlishly. Namjoon and he were clearly two very different people. Jimin only had standard carbonated drinks stored in his fridge. Maybe a couple cans of beer he had stashed away a few weeks back because it sounded like a good idea at that time (which was proven wrong, because he doesn't even like beer that much).

"Yeah, why?"

"I don't know why I asked...because it makes sense that you'd have wine."
"And why does it make sense?"

'Because! You're like I dunno, always on dates and you cook awesome Italian food and stuff."

"...Well, to be clear, I buy wine more for myself to enjoy on days off. So is that a yes to wine?"

"Um, I don't really know much about wine, but can I try it?"

"That's why I offered." Namjoon says, setting the two plates of pasta down. Jimin marvels at the dish in front of him as the bar owner brings a bottle of wine to the table. Jimin doesn't think he can pronounce the French on it accurately enough, so he remains quiet, just eyeing the bottle while Namjoon brings two glasses over as well.

"Here," Namjoon pours the small man a glass before pouring himself one as well. Jimin makes a small "ohhh" as he swirls the dark liquid in his glass as he's once seen it being done on TV.

"Do I just...drink it?"

"Yeah, why not."

"Is this stuff expensive?"

"Why do you ask."

"I'm not sure..."

"Eat, Jimin."

"Okay..." Jimin murmurs before taking a sip of the wine in his hand. He holds it in his mouth, trying to determine all the different scents and flavors people talk about on TV, but he can't, for the life of him, pick out anything that stands out. Sulking, Jimin digs into the pasta instead and then lets out a loud, appreciate moan at how amazing it tastes.

"This is so good," Jimin lets out, pointing at the dish in front of him. "It's such a shame you don't cook for your boyfriends!"

"Not my boyfriends."

"Well, I don't know what to call them."

"Let's go with dates."

"OK, then, it's such a shame that you don't cook for your dates, because this is really, really good. I actually think this is better than the stuff we had at that restaurant!" Jimin continues earnestly, taking another forkful into his mouth. "I can eat this all day, everyday. I'd probably get super fat but-"

"Jimin."

"Huh?"

"Stop talking about getting fat. You can enjoy pasta without having to worry about gaining weight."

"I'll still blame you if I do," Jimin says with a grin, and Namjoon actually lulls his head back in laughter.

"Sure."
"You know what's also a shame?" Jimin begins once he's done shoving a couple more extra forkful.

"What."

"The fact that you don't have a boyfriend...cause you're such a catch, you know? You're so nice and so good-looking and I know you're smart too. And you can even cook! And I'm not saying it's a shame that you don't have one, it's more like, it's a shame that no one can experience all of that, if that makes sense?" Jimin continues to ramble on, twirling his fork.

"I'm really not that great of a boyfriend, Jimin."

"I think you'd make an awesome boyfriend," Jimin answers back with a toothy grin, and Namjoon smiles back softly before returning to his own plate.

"Tell me about your date," he asks instead, shifting the attention back to the smaller man in front of him. "How is it going with him?"

"It's...going, I guess," Jimin answers once he's finished swallowing his mouthful. "I mean, he's kinda busy now with performances. He's the head of a dance crew. Pretty cool huh?"

"Yeah, it is. When are you seeing him next?"

"He says he'll be coming to the Halloween party, so that's probably when I'll see him next. Hopefully I can pick out a nice costume in time."

"I see."

"Have you decided what to go as?" Jimin asks, suddenly remembering that Namjoon hadn't been around when they discussed what to wear.

"No, but Hoseok says he has some ideas," Namjoon answers with a shrug. Hoseok had mentioned that the bar owner should go all out this year, because the party was starting to get hyped up as years go by. What had started as a small and silly costume party had turned into a mark-you-calendar-and-RSVP-ASAP event for gay men both in and out of Seoul, and the costumes patrons were wearing were becoming increasingly elaborate. So it was only expected that the owner of Bulletproof should show up in something that will blow everyone's mind away, and Namjoon had agreed to the deal.

"I know I said I was worried about the concept, but I'm kinda excited too," Jimin admits sheepishly. "I've never been to an actual Halloween party. Never got a chance to dress up, but like I've seen it in American TV shows and drama all the time and it kinda looked fun, you know?"

"I'm glad then that you'll be at the party. And you don't have to work as hard that day. Everyone is allowed to have a good time, and no one really minds the mess during the party. Plus, Taehyung and Seokjin are probably going to go around feeding people alcohol for fun, so you'll be able to spend time with your date."

"What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Will you be um..finding a date too?"

Namjoon only shrugs in response. Honestly, it's not as if Namjoon actively tries to seek companionship when he's out and about, and recently, he's just not been in the mood to bring near strangers back to his apartment.
After dinner, Jimin offers to do the dishes, and Namjoon, while he would normally not let a guest partake in the actual chores around the house, lets the smaller man be (Jimin can be both very persuasive and persistent, it seems). The bar owner turns on the TV, immediately needing some kind of a distraction, because he's not accustomed to having anyone else doing the dishes and he finds the entire concept slightly...unsettling?

"Oh! This movie!"

Namjoon jumps and whips his head around to find Jimins standing next to the couch with his eyes fixed on the screen in front of them. He had done such a good job of distracting himself that he hadn't even heard Jimin finishing up and making his way back into the living room.

"I've been meaning to watch this! I heard it's really good," Jimin comments idly, and Namjoon's not sure if it's a random comment or if he's supposed to offer to let the man watch it in his apartment. Eventually, he settles for the latter, moving over on the couch to give room for the smaller man. Jimin takes it gladly, claiming that Namjoon's TV is so much better than his shitty one and promising that he will leave as soon as it's over.

"I bet you that guy is the traitor. He has that face," Jimin mumbles halfway into the film, looking genuinely distressed by what is happening in the movie. "No but is that too obvious? I don't want it to be that woman, she looked really nice," he continues, now suddenly sad at the notion. Namjoon presses the back of his right hand against his mouth to keep himself from laughing out loud, because come on now, that's just silly. He didn't know that Jimin was the type to get so emotionally invested in movies.

Namjoon honestly can't remember the last time he watched TV with another human being for the sake of actually watching something. Sometimes, the TV would be on and whoever was present would be aggressively trying to give him head or hint at him to take shit to bed, so it was a strange feeling knowing that he can just watch a movie with Jimin without having to even think about what he should do next.

"Did you see that! He has to be the bad guy! Please make him the bad guy!" Jimin whines loudly, throwing his hand at the screen, and Namjoon pretends to have paid attention as he nods back in response. Frankly, he finds Jimin's reaction a lot more entertaining than whatever movie is playing.

Then Namjoon hears something vibrating and glances towards the source of the sound to find Jimin pulling his phone out of his pocket.

"Oh, it's Jaebum."

"...Who?" Namjoon asks with a small frown at the mention of an unfamiliar name, and the frown is deepen when Jimin answers "my date" before picking up as he walks away from the living room. Namjoon watches the retreating figure for a bit before turning the volume down and remaining still on the couch, wondering why he's suddenly bothered by the phonecall. He hears low murmuring coming from just outside the living room, so he turns the volume up slightly to prevent himself from accidentally eavesdropping on the conversation. He knows that it probably doesn't really matter if he does listen in, but he doesn't want to be that guy.

Jimin returns to the living room with a smile on his face, and Namjoon inexplicably decides that he's not at all happy with it.

"He says we should go grab a drink since he's finished with practice! I should go back home to get ready," Jimin announces gleefully, and Namjoon finds himself tensing his jaw while pretending to be
engrossed in the movie in front of him.

"Leaving now?" Namjoon asks instead and then glances at the smaller man who lets out a chirpy "yup" as he shoves his phone back into his pocket.

"Thank you again for uh..the advice? Lesson? And the food. If you’d like, I can cook something for you next time?"

"....Sure."

"OK, wish me luck!" Jimin says before making his way out of the apartment, and Namjoon immediately turns the TV off before lulling his head back against the couch.

Why does it feel like there is a headache coming his way now?
Chapter 9

The day of the long-anticipated Halloween party at Bulletproof arrives, and all of the bar's employees find themselves quickly changing at all the separate corners of the bar. Jungkook is the first to step out in his police uniform, handcuffs around his hips and a fake gun resting nicely in the leather holster he managed to secure from an online cosplay shop. He glances at the mirror next to the bar and makes a comment about how fine he looks, and Taehyung, who walks out just at the moment makes a face at him.

"You really dressed as sexy nurse?" Jungkook asks with an exaggerated look once he sees Taehyung dressed in a near skin-tight nurse uniform, holding an oversized plastic syringe in one hand and a belt holding a few more slung around his waist. As much as Jungkook wants to deny it, Taehyung looks damn fine with the white fabric stretching around his slim waist.

"Uh, yeah, I said I would, didn't I? The bar's going to be a medical station. We're going to squirt jello shots into people's mouths. It's going to be awesome," Taehyung replies as he pumps the syringe with a wiggle of his eyebrows. "We even got sugar pills ready to give to people. Drop 'em in their drinks for fun."

"People are going to think you're roofing them."

"Calm down. Everyone trusts this face," Taehyung counters with a wiggle of his eyebrows just as Yoongi and Hoseok walk out, both dressed in military uniforms.

"You guys got matching costumes?" Jungkook asks, glancing at the DJ and the manager. Hoseok nods with both thumbs up while Yoongi shrugs. "What happened to your race-car whatever?"

"Nah, decided military is sexier than car racing, so I just decided to go for this with Yoongs," Hoseok answers, ignoring the fake puking face Taehyung makes from besides the bouncer. "Plus, it's actually pretty difficult to find a legit car-racer costume around. Anyway, have you guys seen the boss man yet?"

"No. I think he's still in his office," Taehyung answers, glancing towards the staircase. "Whatever
he's doing, he sure is taking his sweet time."

"Oh, you guys will like it. Trust me," Hoseok says with a grin, earning himself a curious look from everyone else. "Where's Jin hyung?"

"Checking up on some stuff in the back," the bartender responds, pointing towards behind the bar with his thumb.

"What's he dressed as?" Yoongi asks, remembering that the tall man had mentioned something about a sexy firefighter.

"A doctor," Taehyung answers still playing with the plastic syringe in his hand.

"...How is a doctor sexy?"

"Dunno, but he says he's sexy no matter what he wears," the bartender answers with a shrug, and everyone nods in understanding.

"..Yeah, that sounds like him alright," Yoongi mumbles, and just then they hear the sound of Namjoon's office door opening. Everyone divert their attention to the staircase immediately, each and every one of them anticipating Namjoon's costume. Only Hoseok, who knows about it, is standing with a shit-eating grin on his face, looking oddly proud and smug about the entire process.

Namjoon struts out of his office and descends downstairs, his entire torso exposed but instead now covered in tattoos, each intricately designed and running down even to his fingers. His blond hair is slicked back, fake tattoo covering parts of his face as well, including the space around his eyes.

"Holy fucking shit," Taehyung breathes out, staring at the tall man make quite an entrance onto the bar floor. "He's El Diablo. From Suicide Squad. Fuck, boss man looks fine as hell. Who did the tats?"

"My friend who's a makeup artist," Hoseok answers, leaning against the bar counter. "I told the boss man that he should go all out this year, and you know how he is. When he puts his mind to something, he really does it. Damn, I suggested doing El Diablo, but even I didn't think that he'd look so good."

"Man, I'm going to have fun fending people off of him the entire night," Jungkook mumbles, wondering just how many he's going to have to drag out before business hours are over.

"Lookin' hot boss man!" Taehyung shouts once the bar owner is within hearing range. Namjoon shoots the bartender a withering look before continuing on with his walk, scanning the small crowd of people in front of him.

"Where's Jimin?"

"Oh shit," Taehyung lets out, slapping his own forehead. "I was supposed to help him. Hold on, I'll be right back out with him. After he's finished."

"Sure."

Taehyung disappears into the storage room which was functionig as a makeshift dressing room for Jimin, who was feeling too self-conscious to be dressing around everyone else. "Hey Jimin! Can I come in or are you finished?" Taehyung asks after knocking a couple of times. He can make out shifting and rustling nose coming from inside, followed by a small thud and an "oww..."
"Uh, Jimin?"

"I um...yeah, I think I need a little help," Jimin answers meekly as he creaks the door open, and Taehyung is quick to rush inside.

"What's the pro-holy shit, Jimin-" Taehyung falters one he finally takes a good look at the man who'd been cooped up inside the storage room.

"Oh..that bad?" Jimin groans, pulling his arms over his bare torso. immediately feeling self-conscious, especially now that he's witnessing that Taehyung can wear a tight nurse outfit and still come out looking like a boss. He should've know that Namjoon was lying. Hell, at this point, he shouldn't even be surprised if Namjoon can control his boner on cue.

"Are you kidding me? Are you looking at yourself?" Taehyung nearly squeals as he flails his hands around the smaller man. "Fuck, I know I ordered that costume for you but, damn. I'd do you right here, right now."

"W-what?"

"I mean, obviously I'm not going to actually jump you, but wow you look good."

"Oh..OK..Oh, and uh, I can't get these chains on properly. This is a lot more complicated than I expected..."

"Oh, right, yeah, I modified that part a bit. Here, let me help," Taehyung offers before reaching out and adjusting all the leather straps and chains that he managed to add before the party. Taehyung had become a bit of a seamstress around the bar, being the biggest costume enthusiast the building has to offer. He was also the mastermind behind most of their themed nights, and he gladly spent extra time tweaking costumes for everyone else.

"We will just finish with some makeup and I think you're set. Let me just get them from my bag," Taehyung finishes with a toothy grin and a pat on the other man's back before making his way out to room to retrieve his makeup bag.

"Where's Jimin?" Namjoon asks once he spots Taehyung leaving the storage room by himself.

"He's not done yet. I'm just getting some stuff for him. Eager much?" Taehyung counters with a teasing grin, and Namjoon rolls his eyes in response.

"No, it's just that we're going to have to open soon."

"He'll be out soon!"

When Jimin does step out of the makeshift dressing room, he finds everyone, including even Namjoon, staring at him wordlessly. Sure, Taehyung had told him only about a couple of hundred
times that he looks absolutely fuckable, but Jimin's starting to feel almost naked under the collective
gaze. Was it too much? Should he have at least covered his upper body? Perhaps he looked stupid
with makeup on?

"Holy fucking shit," Jungkook basically shouts out, being the first to break the silence. "Dang, you
look good."

"H-huh?"

"Wow, Jimin, you look amazing. What are you exactly though?" Hoseok asks, breaking out into a
broad grin as he approaches the smaller man.

"Incubus," Taehyung answers on behalf of the smaller man, slinging an arm around the other's
shoulder. "I had to order the horns separately and sort of add to it, and it was a bitch to find the right
wings, but here is it," he explains proudly with his nose held high.

Namjoon says nothing as the rest of the group, even the usually reserved Yoongi, makes a comment
about how sexy Jimin looks. He takes in the exposed torso with two leather belts across his chest, the
two black shoulder pads decorated with thin metal chains, down to the black fabric covering parts of
the smaller man's forearms. As Taehyung explained, there were two medium sized horns to both
sides of his head, curling towards his face, and with a pair of tight black pants and a pair of boots
with chain added onto them, alongside the dark smoked eye he's wearing, Jimin looks, in all honesty,
absolutely....well, for a lack of better word, *fuckable*.

And Namjoon's not quite sure where it's even coming from. Jimin was cute. He was beautiful in his
own way. Yet, he had never expected the man to pull off looking so dangerously-

"Take a picture, it'll last longer."

Namjoon jumps at the sudden voice coming from his left and makes a face when he finds Seokjin
standing there with a smug grin on his face.

"Just wasn't expecting something like that, that's all," Namjoon counters briskly with a shrug and
pretends to not notice how the corners of Seokjin's lips are now stretched further.

"By something, I'm guessing sexy?" Jin purrs teasingly, nudging the bar owner in the arm. "I know
this year's theme is sexy, but who would've thought that Jimin would've pulled something like that
off? You're not so bad yourself, but Jimin?"

"OK, that's enough," Namjoon says with a roll of his eyes, pushing the tall man away before
motioning for everyone to get ready to open shop. Taehyung does a last minute checkup on Jimin's
costume before doing a quick thumbs up and bouncing towards the back to check on the spiked jello.
Seokjin retreats to the bar as well, not forgetting to wink at Jimin and making him blush scarlet yet
again. Both Hoseok and Yoongi make their way to the DJ's normal spot, discussing what time the
special events are going to be held, which leaves just Jimin and Namjoon to stand around in
awkward silence.

"I um...I almost didn't recognize you," Jimin begins with a blush, rubbing his own chin. "You look
really good. But I guess that's expected."

"You...look really good as well," Namjoon replies lamely, scratching his own arm and then checking
the spot to see if he's accidentally managed to rub any of the fake tattoo off.

"Maybe I...overdid it?" the smaller man continues rather uncertainly, staring at his own body and
suppressing a sigh as he makes a mental comparison between his physique and the bar owner's.
"No. It's perfect."

"...Oh...Thank you...um," Jimin fidgets nervously, suddenly looking around the establishment as if searching for a way out. "I will uh, I will help everyone get ready," he announces before scurrying off towards Taehyung, and Namjoon watches briefly before making his way towards Hoseok for their last-minute checkup.

The Halloween is in full-blown mode, with gay men from both in and out of Seoul gathered at the venue, already dancing to loud music and marveling at some of the more creative costume choices. Taehyung and Seokjin make their rounds as promised, shooting alcohol-infused jello into people's mouths, who take them perhaps a bit too willingly. Jungkook gets his fair share of "arrest me, officer" while both Yoongi and Hoseok find themselves being saluted with a flirty wink every time they walk across the bar.

As for Namjoon, he clearly draws quite a bit of attention, since the tattoos give him a flare of danger that sends men staring and thirsting even more shamelessly than before. Even the patrons who frequent the bar and have thus become somewhat immune to the man's charms find themselves unable to take their eyes off of him, shocked and turned on by the new side of the man who's usually dressed in a clean and well-fitting crisp white shirt and black slacks.

Jimin, to his own surprise, finds himself under quite a bit of spotlight as well. Many customers stare and wonder who this man is, never having noticed the smaller man prior to the party. The only thing keeping them from making a move is the red ribbon on his wrist signifying that he's working at Bulletproof, but it doesn't stop them from giving the small man nearly predatory stares.

"Jimin, stop working and have some fun!" Taehyung calls out as he drags the man away from one of the tables he's clearing. "Jin hyung and I injected enough jello shots to get everyone at the bar piss drunk. No one's going to care that the tables are a bit messy. Comeon," he urges as he leads them towards the dance floor, already heavily occupied with men grinding against each other.

"Let's dance, Jimin. You're the only one at the bar I haven't danced with yet," Taehyung says with a teasing grin as he grabs a hold of the small man's waist. Jimin lets out an embarrassing squeak and is glad that the club is way too loud for anyone to have heard it. "Relax. Have fun, live a little. It's Halloween," the bartender urges playfully, swaying to the beat and encouraging the other to do the same.

Jimin, despite his initial comfort fueled by his self-consciousness, surprisingly eases into dancing as he watches Taehyung moving his body shamelessly to the beat. The man is making all kinds of faces that makes Jimin laugh, and in no time, Jimin is dancing with the other, forgetting briefly that he should be working.

"There we go," Taehyung comments, waggling his eyebrows. "Knew you had that in you."

The two continue to dance, and unlike Taehyung, Jimin remains oblivious to the whispers and glances thrown their way. There's no question that Taehyung is one of the most attractive men (hell, everyone at Bulletproof is) Seoul has ever seen, and everyone had been dying for a chance to dance with the man since the first day he started working at the bar. Yet everyone had steered clear in fear of being blacklisted (and Jungkook's famous chokehold), so they can't help but watch the bartender dance with the incubus that had everyone surprised.

"Really Joon, if you want to dance with Jimin, you can probably just ask."

Namjoon rolls his eyes at the familiar sound of the other bartender, who's decided that he's done making jello shot rounds for the time being (and Namjoon agrees because any more and everyone is
probably going to be puking all over the dancefloor).

"I don't dance."

"That wasn't the point of what I said," Seokjin counters with a smirk, playing with the empty plastic syringe in his hand. Namjoon says nothing, knowing that anything he says can and will be used against him. He has long given up trying to bullshit his way out of whatever Seokjin throws at him. The man was way too smart and quick-witted for that.

"Shouldn't you be working?" Namjoon tries instead and regrets it immediately, because now Seokjin has his face right up to his and he can't avoid the smug expression on the other man's handsome features.

"Ohh, pulling out that card now, are we?"

"Jin, come on."

"Joon, what's the big deal. I'm not saying go sleep with him. You guys can just dance and have a good time."

"I don't dance and have a good time."

"Ironic, considering you own the biggest gay bar in Korea," Seokjin mumbles, crossing his arms in front of him. "Well, it's your loss," he finishes with a shrug before jumping into the dance floor as well to do his famous chicken dance, flapping his arms around all over the place with not an ounce of shame in his system.

Taehyung now has his arms slung around Jimin's neck and dancing in a way that is surprisingly equal parts playful and sensual, and it's not until he feels an arm wrap around his waist from behind that he immediately freezes up. He jerks forward in surprise, almost crashing right into the bartender, and whirls around to find Jaebum standing in a black shirt and slacks, with two fake fangs protruding from his lips with specks of fake blood to one corner of his mouth.

"Jaebum? Wow, you came," Jimin says slowly, his eyes blinking owlishly at the devilishly handsome man who's drawing quite a bit of attention as well.

"I did. Needed to see what you'd be dressed up as," Jaebum answers with a mischievous grin, making his fangs more prominent and then glances at Taehyung while keeping a strong arm around Jimin. The bartender stands his ground for a bit, keeping his hard gaze on the vampire. Jimin swallows visibly at the sudden tension and only relaxes his shoulders when Taehyung breaks out into one of his boxy grins before walking off without another word.

"I didn't think you were going to make it," Jimin says once Taehyung becomes lost in the crowd. "Do you want a drink?"

"I'm good, already had way too much at the other place, but we should dance. You look so hot right now by the way, but I bet you already knew that," Jaebum purrs, pulling Jimin flush against him. Jimin can feel heat rising to his ears, and he hopes that the dim lighting of the bar is enough to conceal his flush, because he can't been seen so flustered after one compliment.

"You look good, too," Jimin says instead, avoiding the man's intense gaze.

"I'm glad you think so," Jaebum replies against the smaller man's ears and begins to move, grinding against Jimin who has to physically will his body to move as well so he's not just standing around like a complete idiot.
Jaebum's hands are tight against his hips, his body too close, and Jaebum's cologne is strong against his nose. Something is off, and a voice in his head yells at him that he's just being an awkward virgin as always, and Jimin begins to immediately berate himself for not being able to enjoy a little harmless dance with his date.

Afterall, he had been excited about the idea of enjoying the party with Jaebum, right?

He tries to remember how Namjoon had trained him for this moment. Namjoon had touched his bare skin too. The man had been just as close and had whispered against his ears. Yet something feels different. He can't quite put a finger on it. In fact, he can't even tell if what he's feeling is excitement of discomfort, and the only thing he knows is that there is an unsettling sensation in his lower stomach that makes him ache for some fresh air, or some quiet, or-

Jimin flinches when he feels one of Jaebum's hand slide against to his lower back, pressing firmly against his bare skin, and he finds himself quickly regretting letting Taehyung talk him into the outfit. He continues to dance anyway, because he can't bring himself to just ask Jaebum to maybe hang out at the bar and talk there. So he lets Jaebum's hand roam around his exposed back, trying to focus his best not to focus on how he's becoming hyperaware of every callous and length of the other man's fingers.

Jaebum pulls him in even closer, grinding against him in a blatant invitation, and Jimin presses his hands against the other man's chest, hoping that the other man will pick up on the hint. However, Jaebum is either too drunk or too absorbed in their dancing to notice and continues to roll his hips, his firm hands making it impossible for Jimin to pull back.

Jimin shuts his eyes tightly and ducks his head down, hoping that Jaebum will grow tired of the song and move on. Then suddenly, he feels the pressure against his body taken off of him and the heat radiating from Jaebum absent. Jimin instinctively snaps his eyes open and inhales sharply when he sees Namjoon standing between him and Jaebum with his hand gripping tightly onto Jaebum's wrist.

Jimin gapes like a fish, unsure of how to react as he watches Jaebum pull his arm roughly out of the bar owner's grasp. Jaebum looks extremely irritated, not even bothering to conceal the particular sentiment as he glowers at Namjoon, his stance every bit confrontational as if challenging Namjoon.

Wordlessly, Namjoon reaches for Jimin and wraps his fingers gently around Jimin's wrist before pulling the man towards him. Jimin wordless lets his body be dragged towards the taller man, who proceeds to wrap a protective arm around his shoulders.

"...Boss?" Jimin asks meekly and is met with the older man's steady gaze which renders him speechless yet again. Namjoon throws Jaebum one last look before turning on his heels with Jimin still pulled to his side, but he's stopped by a rough hand grabbing onto his shoulder. Namjoon turns back slowly, the black around his eyes almost giving him a feral look as he glowers at Namjoon, his stance every bit confrontational as if challenging Namjoon.

Wordlessly, Namjoon reaches for Jimin and wraps his fingers gently around Jimin's wrist before pulling the man towards him. Jimin wordless lets his body be dragged towards the taller man, who proceeds to wrap a protective arm around his shoulders.

"Hey, what is your problem, man?" Jaebum hisses, taking a step forward. "I was dancing with him, unless that wasn't obvious."

"My problem is that you put your hands on what is mine," Namjoon counters, and at this point, everyone, even those who were too drunk to function, are watching the three with abated breath. They are all somewhat aware of Namjoon staking claim on someone a few weeks back, but they had not been expecting the bar owner to actually confront someone during one of the biggest events at Bulletproof.

"And now I suggest you take your hand off of me if you're planning on keeping it," the owner
Yeah? And why don't you let go of Jimin and just walk away?" Jaebum growls with equal animosity, and Jimin fidgets nervously, wondering if he's supposed to step in or not. Before he can open his mouth, he spots Taehyung watching him with his index fingers crossed in front of his mouth in an X, so Jimin remains still, waiting for whatever is happening to resolve, because he is really, really hating every moment of this confrontation.

In a blink of an eye, Namjoon is twisting Jaebum's hand off of him, and the dancer doesn't miss a beat as he pulls back and pushes the bar owner roughly with both of his hands. Namjoon takes a few steps back at the impact, dragging Jimin along with him, and once he catches up to the momentum, he lets the smaller man go while motioning for him to remain where he is. Jimin opens his mouth to protest but is immediately stopped when Namjoon, against all expectations, stomps over and pushes Jaebum equally hard, sending the man skidding against the floor.

One by one, people begin to move out of the way, the music long forgotten and the alcohol no longer in their system. No one had ever seen the bar owner angry, let alone aggressive. The man had kept his cool around everything, even when legitimate fights had broken out and drunk people broke expensive speakers or import furniture. Plenty of men had started drama with the said bar owner as well, sometimes going as far as nearly stalking the man, but even then, Namjoon had kept his calm, opting to talk things our peacefully or to let people get whatever they needed out of their system. Yet here Namjoon was, aggravated enough to actually push someone back, and everyone watches while holding their breath, both fascinated and intimidated by the change in the usually placid demeanor. And plus, most of them are at least a little bit aware of who Jaebum is. After all, the man was quite notorious for breaking hearts as well, with his boyish charm and flirtatious behavior. So really, what better drama can they ask for?

Jaebum retaliates immediately, pushing Namjoon harder than before, and this time, Jimin immediately scans the bar for a sight of their resident bouncer. Jimin knows that no one else would be able to stop the two at this point. Maybe Seokjin, but he's been watching the entire interaction with an unreadable expression from the bar, so Jimin doubts that the man is going to jump in any time soon.

Jimin does spot Jungkook eventually, but against his expectations, he sees the man standing his ground, watching the two with a frown but no sign of willingness to mediate the situation. Jimin jumps when he hears a loud thud and sharp shattering noise which resonate over the loud bass of the music currently playing and finds the two men against the bar, broken glass already surrounding them.

There is an audible thud. One loud enough to make others cringe. Yet everyone stands in stunned silence when Namjoon's fist collides with Jimin's face instead and the smaller man falls to the floor, one hand covering his right cheek in obvious pain.

"Jimin!" Taehyung calls out running towards the fallen man, but Namjoon is quicker. He's down on his knees on the floor, his hands already cradling the other man.

"Jimin, hey," Namjoon calls out, reaching for the other man's face. "Jimin, look at me," he continues, taking in how disoriented the smaller man is. Jimin looks up bleary eyed, squinting every once in a while as if he's trying to clear his vision, and Namjoon grits his teeth before picking the man up in a
single swift motion.

"I'll be in my office," Namjoon announces to Taehyung and Jungkook, who are both now standing besides him before making his way briskly to the staircase.

As soon as Namjoon is through the door, he's setting the smaller man down gently on the couch before slowly prying Jimin's hand away from his face to assess the damage. Luckily, nothing seems broken or ruptured from the looks of it, but he knows that he's going to have to take Jimin to see an actual doctor to make sure. For now, he was going to have to make sure that he hadn't somehow given the other a concussion.

"Jimin, can you hear me?" Namjoon asks in a quiet tone, doing his best to not let his panic show.

"Umm..yeah...owww," Jimin replies slowly, wincing as he tries moving his facial muscles again. "Wow boss...you can really throw a punch..." he continues with a forced smile, pulling himself into a sitting position as he hisses in pain again.

"We should get you to the ER," Namjoon states, watching the other man carefully.

"No need, nothing's broken." Jimin opens and closes his mouth a few times to make sure that nothing seems out of place. And here he thought the bitch slap had hurt...Getting punched by the boss felt like getting hit by a truck. Face first. On a freeway.

"Jimin...why did you step in," Namjoon asks, sitting at the edge of the couch. The thing is, he wasn't even going to actually punch the other man. He was planning on stopping just before making contact to get his message across, and all his other staff member had stepped back knowing that's what the bar owner would do. Namjoon didn't believe in violence, but he knows that there were times where he had to act a certain way when dealing with certain people.

But now he regrets ever letting himself get into that situation in the first place, because he had inadvertently punched Jimin.

He. Punched. Jimin. In the face.

And this is after one of his flings had already bitch-slapped the man. At this rate, Jimin is going to leave the bar on a stretcher one day.

"I didn't want you to get in trouble," Jimin mumbles in response, looking distracted by the hot pain spreading across his face.

"Jimin-"

"It's fine. I mean, I've never gotten punched before and now I have, right? Another one off the bucket list! And plus, I'd rather be punched by you than some stranger," Jimin chirps in a lame attempt at alleviating the heavy tension in the room. Honestly, Jimin wasn't thinking too clearly when he had jumped in. In his state of mild panic, all he could think was how much he didn't want things to get out of hand, especially when he was involved as well and had run in between the two rather blindly. In retrospect, he could've just pulled Namjoon back or something, because man, the punch had hurt. For a brief moment, he wasn't aware of what was up or down or where he was or whose hands were on him. He could vaguely make out someone calling his name from a distance and the next thing he knows, he's being carried into the familiar office of his boss.

"Jimin, you could've really hurt yourself," Namjoon replies with a sigh, burying his face into his hands. He doesn't know why it is that nothing goes as intended whenever Jimin is involved. First, Jimin gets slapped because of him, and Namjoon had spent the next few days bothered by his role in
the smaller man getting hurt. But all of that guilt paled in comparison to what he's feeling now. Namjoon may be against the idea of beating someone up, but he had trained in boxing as part of his workout regiment, which meant that he knew how to throw a real punch when needed.

Namjoon did see Jimin jumping into his vision and he had tried to pull back, but the momentum was too strong, with less than a fraction of a second to spare, so all he could do was somehow cushion the blow as much as he can by jerking his body back. Yet, he couldn't avoid making contact with Jimin's face, and well...

There is a small knock, and Hoseok walks in with a pack of ice and a towel, looking every bit concerned by what had happened. The manager hands the items to the bar owner and leaves the office, telling them to let him know if they need anything. Namjoon quietly thanks the man before returning his attention to the smaller man who winces in pain as ice is pressed against his cheek.

"Can I ask you a question?" Jimin says after a moment of silence, and Namjoon nods as he continues to press the ice, applying as little pressure as possible. "Umm...why did you, you know, pull me away from Jaebum?"

Namjoon exhales slowly through his nose, choosing his words carefully. He's not entirely sure how to go about answering the question, because in all honesty, he himself isn't even sure why he did what he did. All he remembers is Taehyung coming to tell him that the guy looks like bad business with perhaps too much alcohol in his system, so he had watched the two careful, assessing for any sign of foul play. He wasn't stupid. He knew all too well what went down especially on nights like their Halloween party, and Jimin's costume and a drunk horny date was a recipe for disaster.

At the end of the day though, Namjoon didn't really have any reason to meddle in Jimin's affair. Jimin was an adult capable of making his own conscious decisions and dealing with the consequences. It wouldn't have been the end of the world if the asshole had decided to take Jimin to the nearest surface and fuck him until Jimin can't walk straight for a week. If Jimin was all for it, than so be it, but the thing is, Jimin wasn't up for it. The man was clearly uncomfortable with the proximity and the touching, but for whatever reason, the douchebag had continued with his advances.

And if there is one thing Namjoon will not tolerate in his establishment is any unwanted sexual advances. He's all for rampant sex and whatever fetishes people may have, but he will not stand around and let any form of sexual harassment or assault happen. Not on this watch.

So he had approached the two and, without thinking much, had pulled Jaebum or whatever the fuck his name is off of his employee. He had meant it as more of a warning to leave Jimin alone and give him the space he needs, but somehow it had turned into an anger-fueled confrontation as soon as the asshole decided to open his mouth.

And something within Namjoon sort of...snapped. He's not proud of it. He could've been a adult about it. Been a responsible and respectful human being about it, but something almost feral within him had bared its teeth, ready to go straight for the throat. Perhaps it was the fake tattoos. Perhaps it was the lack of sleep. Hell, perhaps it was the spooky sound effects which rang out through the bar. Whatever it was, it drove Namjoon into a level of unfounded anger, and he had given into the violence.

But what can he tell Jimin? Really, what can he say when he himself isn't even sure?

"I," Namjoon starts slowly, mulling over words in his head. "You didn't look very comfortable dancing with him," he continues semi-honestly, omitting the entire spiel about losing his cool for a few minutes.
"Oh...was it that obvious?" Jimin murmurs to Namjoon's surprise and then juts his lower lip out. "I'm so bad at this, aren't I..."

"...Jimin, aren't you mad?"

"...At what?"

"At me. For ruining your date."

"Nah...you're right. I wasn't ready for it. It just...I dunno, it didn't feel that great, you know? I mean I had fun dancing with Taehyung and I thought I'd have fun dancing with Jaebum but...I dunno..."

Namjoon drops his gaze, not sure of what to say to that. Sometimes, he forgets that this is who Jimin is. Jimin has every right to be mad. Afterall, Namjoon had barged into the pair's affair uninvited, caused a scene and even punched him in the face, yet Jimin hadn't expressed even a drop of anger or frustration. If anything, he looks a little bit disappointed in himself, and Namjoon can't quite grasp his head around it.

"I'm sorry," the bar owner says anyway, knowing that Jimin at least deserves to hear it.

"Hmm? Oh, don't worry about this," Jimin says instead, pointing at his cheek and letting out a smile but wincing immediately at the movement.

"No, not about that. I mean, that too, but...also because I came in between you and your date."

"Oh...well...I'm glad you came and helped. I guess I really need to learn how to say no, you know?"

"......It does help sometimes."

"Yeah..."

"I will apologize to him if you'd like," Namjoon offers sincerely, although his pride quickly protests against the notion. He'd rather give his bar away for free than apologize to that asshole but, if Jimin wants him to, he knows he has to.

"Nah...I don't think I'll be seeing him again anyway."

"....What do you mean?"

"I don't think I can be with someone that...violent anyway," Jimin answers earnestly, recalling how confrontational his date had been. Perhaps it was the heavy alcohol in his system, but the man had been rather forceful the entire time they were dancing and had been the first to shove Namjoon off and even try to punch him. Jimin doesn't have a definitive type, but that sort of behavior sure was something he can do without.

"...Are you sure?" Namjoon asks, doing his best to ignore the nagging feeling that perhaps he himself has been categorized as "someone that violent" alongside Jaebum.

"....Yeah..." Jimin lets out with a small pout, stretching his legs in front of him. "I guess it's hard to get it right on the first try, right? You know what they say, third time's a charm, right? Oh shoot, I shouldn't say that...that means my next date is going to suck too, if I ever get one," the smaller man continues, mumbling more to himself than anything, and Namjoon, despite the severity of the situation lets out a soft smile at the small preoccupied frown.

"You'll get one," Namjoon encourages, putting a gentle hand on Jimin's head. The man looks up
curiously, and the bar owner immediately drops the hand, opting to fake a cough instead.

"Man, these chains are getting itchy..." Jimin murmurs, looking down at his costume and wanting to get out of it immediately now that the excitement of the party is flushed out of his system. However, he’s not quite understanding where the chains start and finish, since Taehyung had done most of the chainwork, which leaves him to sit around helplessly, waiting for the bartender to finish with his shift.

"Here, I'll help you," Namjoon offers, reaching for the chains. "You can put on my spare shirt."

"You keep a shirt around?"

"Always. Never know who's going to spill drinks on me."

"Oh, that's really clever."

Jimin says nothing else as Namjoon begins to work on unhooking everything, from the belts to the smallest of the chains. As the pieces come undone, Namjoon suddenly finds his movements strained. It's not like he never undressed anyone (not that this even counts as undressing someone to begin with), and he's definitely seen Jimin without a shirt on, so why does it feel like he's doing something he shouldn't?

Namjoon's fingers accidentally brush against Jimin's smooth skin, and he pulls back as if he's been burned. What the hell is wrong with him today?

"....Is everything OK?" Jimin asks, picking up on the small frown on the other man's face.

"Yeah, just...this chain," Namjoon lies and pretends to be fumbling with a hook that has already come undone.

"Oh. Yeah, it's a bit tricky. Taehyung had to do em all for me."

"I see."

Once all the chains and belts are off, Namjoon swiftly reaches for the small closet besides his desk and pulls out a crisp white shirt to hand over to Jimin.

"Oh, this smells nice," Jimin says absent-mindedly, sniffing the fabric and smiling pleasantly. Namjoon says nothing and instead busies himself with gathering up all the tiny pieces of the costume. "Wow boss, I knew you're tall, but man..." Jimin mumbles and Namjoon instinctively looks up to find the smaller man almost swamped in the white fabric, his hands lost in the long sleeves and the shirt coming down halfway his thighs.

Namjoon swallows hard and then looks away. Plenty of men had worn his shirt after sex in a lame attempt at being cute or whatever the hell it was, but everytime, Namjoon had sort of glanced and not paid a second thought. In fact, most of the time, he was annoyed, because he wasn't keen of sharing his clothes with anyone else.

But something about the way Jimin is toting his shirt is different. Perhaps it's because no one that small had ever worn it. Perhaps he's confusing lingering guilt with something else. Or maybe it's the fact that he's never had someone wear his shirt unless it was after sex. Whatever it is, Namjoon decides to just push it to the back of his mind as he tells Jimin to continue icing his cheek.
The party does come to a close, and despite everyone's protest to have Jimin just go home already, the man joins the floor to help with the clean up. The mess is a lot bigger than usual, with confetti and bits and pieces of costume scattered all across the floor, with spilled drinks creating a sticky mess everywhere.

"Jiminnie, you're so stubborn," Taehyung mutters as he mops besides the incubus. "By the way, is that boss man's shirt?"

"Oh. Yup. The chains were getting itchy so he helped me take em off and even let me borrow his spare shirt!"

"Did he now...."

"Why?"

"Oh, 'nuthing. Hey, how's your face?"

"It hurts...but I think it'll be alright."

"You scared the shit of everyone by jumping in, man. Boss man wasn't even going to punch the guy and you go ahead and get punched instead...what am I going to do with you."

"...What do you mean?"

"Boss man would never punch someone like that. I mean, we all know that, and I sort of forgot that you might not know that."

"...He wasn't going to punch Jaebum?"

"Of course not. The man wouldn't hurt a fly unless the fly threatened to kill his entire family or something," Taehyung explains nonchalantly and then curses at a particularly sticky patch on the floor. "It was a bit of a scare tactic, you know? So imagine our surprise when you jumped in and got punched instead. You're lucky boss man pulled back. That man's learned boxing. He might's accidentally caved your face in."

Jimin makes a face at the image and then shudders.

"I mean, usually, he wouldn't even have pulled that guy off of you," Taehyung continues, stretching his back momentarily. "But I guess he has a bit of a soft spot for you huh, Jiminnie," the bartender continues with a grin, wiggling his eyebrows for good measure and expecting to see the smaller man flushing scarlet. However, he's quickly disappointed when he

"Nah, I think it's because I'm just so bad at the whole...you know, stuff," Jimin answers with a shrug and then slumps in defeat before continuing with the mop, completely missing the long, drawn-out sigh by the other man.
"...Uh......Boss?"

Jimin almost drools out the cereal in his mouth when he finds Namjoon, dressed to perfection as always, standing in front of his door. He had not been expecting a visitor and had been lazing about the house, using his busted face as an excuse to not even brush his teeth or to change out of his boxers and old, ragged, too-big-for-my-body tee he had worn to sleep.

The last time he checked, his hair was sticking out everywhere and half of his face was visibly bigger than the other. He was in a sad tee and an embarrassingly colorful boxers which were given to him as a gag gift about a year ago, probably tiny bits and crumbs of his cereal (and the cheap kind too) at the corners of his mouth.

"You weren't answering my calls or text, so I got worried," Namjoon replies nonchalantly, and if he notices the terrible state Jimin's in, he doesn't show it. The man himself is dressed with a clean cream colored casual shirt, a black coat and a pair of black jeans which, as expected, shows off his long legs as if they need any more showcasing.

"Oh..you called?" Jimin says rather stupidly, swallowing all of his mouthful and suddenly realizing that he should probably cover himself up in a more guests-friendly manner. "Uh hold on. Um, I uh....I'll be right back. Wait, come in. You can wait in the living room. I..OK-" he stutters before rushing towards his bedroom to pick up the cleanest tee he can find off the floor. He manages to find one that smells fresh enough and changes into it before scavenging a pair of shorts as well.

He had been ignoring his phone, choosing to go full-lazy considering his face now feels like pieces of it are coming off, and now that he's checking it, he sees that the bar owner had indeed called him a couple times and left a few messages asking how he's feeling. The last one says "I'm heading over right now."

Oh.

Great, and now his boss probably thinks he's one lazy ass-
"Jimin?"

"Uh yeah! Coming! Just a sec!" Jimin yells out before rushing towards the mirror. He gasps in horror, his hair a lot worse than he had last witnessed, and does a dismal job of trying to tame them with both his hands. After making a guttural noise of frustration, Jimin runs back towards the living room to find Namjoon standing in the middle of the chaos that is his apartment.

"I'm sorry. I probably should've waited for you to call back," Namjoon explains, and all Jimin can think of is "please don't look inside the kitchen" because good lord, he hadn't done his dishes for too many days.

"No, it's fine. Um....did something happen? Is everything OK?"

"I'm here to take you to see a doctor."

"A doc- oh, for this?" Jimin asks, pointing at his own bruised cheek. "Nah, it's fine. I don't think anything's broken."

"You should still get it checked. Do you need to get changed, or are you ready to go?" Namjoon asks gently, and despite the soft tone, Jimin doesn't quite find any room for disagreement. He's not even surprised anymore. That's the kind of man Kim Namjoon was, is and probably always will be. He had a commanding presence, regardless of which mood he was in.

"Can I umm...take a quick shower? Would you like some cereal while you wait?" Jimin awkwardly waves towards the small table and the box of cereal on it. Namjoon shakes his head slowly, leaving Jimin to scuttle towards the bathroom with a quick "Make yourself at home! You can turn the TV on!"

Namjoon nods and heads towards the couch that's already half-covered with clothes and textbooks. Normally, he'd be cringing at the mess, but he finds himself chuckling under his breath. How Jimin-like, he thinks. A little bit of homeliness and a dash of chaos that somehow ends up being...endearing.

Namjoon pushes some of the hoodies off to the side and sits on the couch. He can pick up a mildly sweet scent that has always accompanied Jimin. Perhaps its the body wash that Jimin uses. Whatever it is, he finds it pleasant. Unlike the strong cologne that all his flings had doused themselves in.

The bar owner pulls his phone and begins to scroll through random articles, waiting for Jimin to finish showering. He knows that Jimin didn't want to go see a doctor, but he couldn't sleep last night knowing exactly how hard the punch was. No lie, he's impressed that Jimin was able to bounce back so quickly after such an impact. The man was clearly a lot stronger than he appeared, but it still doesn't make him feel any better. Perhaps Jimin had a broken tooth he's not even aware of. Perhaps there is some kind of blood clotting that needs immediate medical attention. At the end of the day, he doesn't quite trust Jimin to get any potential problem fixed on his own.

The sound of running water does come to an end, and Namjoon instinctively tears his eyes away from the phone to glance towards the bathroom. There is rustling and a low thump, followed by a "ow!" The bar owner sighs, hoping that Jimin hadn't managed to bruise himself again.

Jimin does walk out, with nothing but a towel around his waist, his cheeks tinged red as he tries to tip-toe towards the bedroom.

"I forgot to take fresh clothes with me!" Jimin blurts out once he makes eye contact with his boss, and Namjoon quickly turns his head around, giving the man some privacy. Namjoon clears his throat
a couple of times, suddenly feeling quite fidgety as he listens to Jimin scurrying off to his bedroom. He's seen plenty of men walk out of showers before. Hell, most, if not all of them, had walked out stark naked, quite proud of what they were working with. Namjoon had long grown out of being in awe or flustered every time a man appeared in front of him without anything on. But then Jimin walks out, and it sort of feels like he's just witnessed something he shouldn't have....

"OK! I'm ready!" Jimin calls out as he exits the bedroom, his hair still wet.

"Jimin, you should dry your hair. It's chilly out."

"Nah, I should be fine. Just airdry it. Plus, my blowdryer kinda broke a couple days ago and I forgot to get a new one," the smaller man answers with a shrug before checking his pockets for his wallet and phone. He tries to put on a reassuring smile but regrets it immediately and ends up wincing in pain.

"Jimin-"

"I'm OK!" Jimin says hurriedly, putting both his hands up. "Shall we...get going?"

"...Yeah."

-Luckily, the two were able to leave the doctor's officer with a "nothing to worry about." The doctor does offer to write prescription for some painkillers if he'd like, but Jimin politely turns it down, saying that it's not bothering him all that much (which is a lie, because it hurts like hell, especially when he's trying to brush his teeth).

"See, I told you it's not a big deal!" Jimin says with a small grin that doesn't put too much strain on his face and Namjoon counters it with a light-hearted "better safe than sorry." The two walk in comfortable silence, just taking in the brisk outside air and the soft background noise passerbys provide.

"Would you like some ice cream?" Namjoon asks softly, drawing a rather curious look from the other man. "I think I owe you at least ice cream after punching you in the face." To this, Jimin actually lets out a small laugh.

"That was an accident!"

"Still doesn't change the fact that there is a huge bruise on your face."

"I think it's kinda cool. Makes me look badass, you know?" Jimin jokes, sticking his chest out playfully. Namjoon doesn't vocalize how the other doesn't look at all intimidating and instead chooses to just laugh besides the smaller man.
"Well, I'm still getting you ice cream. If you want, that is. Maybe it will numb the pain," he offers again and pretends to not notice the way Jimin's face lights up at the suggestion.

"Ok...well, since you're offering," Jimin replies with a sheepish grin, and the two end up in the first ice cream shop they find. The place isn't all that crowded. Just a couple sitting at the farthest table, talking about what they are going to do for the rest of the day. They aren't all that surprised to find the place mostly empty. After all, it's quickly approaching winter, and ice cream isn't usually on people's mind at this time of year.

"What would you like?" Namjoon asks, his eyes fixed on the colorful array of ice cream presented before him. He himself isn't big on sweets, but he figures he will take a scoop for himself as well. After making their orders and grabbing a cup each, Namjoon follows Jimin to a small round table that is colored in an almost embarrassing shade of pink.

"Jimin, are you OK?"

"Huh? Yeah, I told you. The bruise should be gone in a-"

"No, Jimin. I meant about...your date," Namjoon voices the question which had been on his mind since the party. Normally, he wouldn't bother with other people's romantic affairs, but he can't help but feel guilty about the "break-up."

"Oh..." Jimin lets out and then stabs his ice cream a couple times with the plastic spoon in his hand. Namjoon watches silently, his own dessert forgotten as he braces himself for some kind of a horrible news, because suddenly, Jimin looks absolutely heart-broken, more so than he had been last night.

"He didn't even call me," the smaller man continues after a stretch of silence. "After what happened, I mean."

Namjoon grits his teeth and distracts himself by shoving a spoonful of his ice cream into his mouth. He doesn't even register what it tastes like as he waits for the other to continue.

"Which is kinda good, I guess," the smaller man continues quietly, his shoulders slumping. "I wasn't sure how I was going to tell him I wasn't going to see him again anyway."

"...You deserved better anyway," Namjoon says honestly. He himself has witnessed some assholes during his days as a heartbreaker, but he himself has never ever pulled off such a dick move. He may have had to resort to some blatant wording to stop stalkerish behavior, but never has he just disappeared after his wrongdoings.

He's not all that surprised. What happened with Jaebum and Jimin did happen quite often. Many of the people who came to his bar didn't bother dealing with any "sticky situation" and there was a mutual understanding among them to just accept it and move on, but this was Jimin. Jimin didn't go by those rules nor was he even aware of them.

"Well, he was too hot for me, anyway," Jimin mutters, and this time, Namjoon can't just let it go. He reaches out and wraps his fingers around the smaller man's wrist, effectively stopping him from shoving more sad ice cream into his mouth. Jimin looks up in surprise, almost dropping his spoon in the process.

"Don't say things like that."

"...Boss?"

"He wasn't too hot for you. He was just an asshole."
"You were too good for him, anyway," Namjoon says honestly before dropping his hand and returning to just watching the other man instead. Jimin fidgets in his seat momentarily before staring at his cup, his cheeks tinged pink again.

"....I dunno about that," Jimin replies meekly before stabbing the ice cream again. "but...I guess we just weren't a good match to begin with anyway."

Namjoon doesn't realize that his hand is on top of Jimin's head until Jimin looks up in surprise. However, instead of pulling back, the bar owner pats the other's head slowly a couple times before ruffling it and then finally letting go.

"....Boss...?"

"Your ice cream is melting."

"Oh, right."

Namjoon pretends to busy himself with ice cream as he waits for Jimin to finish his. So Jaebum's out of the picture. He sincerely hopes so, because he's not lying about Jimin deserving better. Jimin needed someone who's devoted. Who is all about romance and being faithful. Someone who will take him out on nice ice cream dates and watch over him to make sure he hasn't hurt himself. Who will put up with the messy apartment and his nervous stuttering and rambling. Who is equally nervous and hopeful about their first kisses and will spend months tip-toeing around the idea of their first time "making love" (not sex, "making love").

And for some reason, the thought leaves a bitter taste in Namjoon's mouth that no amount of ice cream seem can seem to wash away.

Jimin doesn't explicitly say it, but everyone, including the owner of the bar, can see that the man is moping around the bar at the sudden loss of a date. Both Taehyung and Seokjin, who had heard the most about Jaebum and has seen first hand out excited Jimin had been excited about his future dates, do take pity on the man and help him to a couple drinks when work hours are over.

Even Yoongi, who stays out of people's business, hands him an ointment for the impressive bruise on the man's face and leaves with a silent pat on his back. Jungkook sort of twitches every time he sees the bruise, remembering the impressive punch the boss had thrown. He's still quite glad that Jimin hadn't broken anything, because the Namjoon looks damn miserable as is. Imagine if the man had accidentally caved in the newbie's nose or something.

"Jimin, boss man already said you can take a few days off until the bruise goes away...why do you
keep coming here? Not that I don't like your company or anything," Taehyung asks idly after work one day as he pushes a weak cocktail towards Jimin.

"I like being here," Jimin answers, taking a sip and letting out a pleased hum. "I don't really do much at home anyway."

"Jiminnie, are you sure you're OK? And I'm not talking about the bruise."

"Huh? Oh...yeah. It sucks but...the boss says I'll find someone again in no time."

"...Did he now," Taehyung says with an amused glint in his eyes.

"I know he's just trying to be nice, but I dunno, he's really...believable?"

"Yeah, the man is persuasive alright," the bartender muses, wiping one of the glasses. "But...if there is one thing I can tell you about the man, it's that he doesn't bullshit around. Hey, can I ask you a question?"

"Hmm?"

"Why are you working here?"

"...Huh?"

"One day you're crying here and then the next thing I know, you're working here, and I know for a fact that the bar didn't have any plan to hire anyone."

"Ummm..."

"What really is going on between you and boss man? If you don't mind me asking?"

"It's...a long story," Jimin starts, taking another sip of his cocktail before shifting a little bit. "He's sorta helping me with something."

"Helping you with something?"

"Promise me you're not going to laugh?" Jimin bites his lower lip just as Taehyung nods and leans forward. "He's helping me get dates."

"......What."

"He's helping me-"

"No, I heard you. Just...what? He's helping you get dates? Our boss is actually making an effort to get you dates, as in other men?"

"...Yes? Is that that weird?" Jimin asks with a frown, wondering if he should be offended.

"No. I mean, boss man is probably the best person to go to for that kind of stuff, but...really? He's OK with you seeing...other...men...?" Taehyung trails off, suddenly frowning as well, and Jimin peers back curiously, trying to decipher what the other man is getting at.

"...Why wouldn't he be?"

"Because...uhh...I'm weird, haha," Taehyung finishes with a fake laugh before pretending to be busy with putting the clean glasses away. Seokjin, who's been listening to the entire conversation but
acting as if he hadn't heard a thing turns around and lets out a small sigh, exactly understanding Taehyung's confusion.

"It's been decided!" Hoseok announces rather loudly as he descends down the staircase, and all eyes turn to focus on him.

"What's been decided?" Seokjin asks, setting a bottle of whiskey down with an expression that says "this better be good news, Jung Hoseok."

"Our winter retreat. We're doing a Monday through Wednesday next week for this year."

"Oh, fucking yes," Taehyung moans from besides the other bartender. "About time!"

"...Wait, what's going on?" Jimin asks curiously, suddenly feeling out of place.

"Ah, I should've explained it to you," Hoseok begins, moving closed to the smaller man. "We go on two retreats every year, all the employees. You missed the summer one, but hopefully you can make this one. We close the bar for the three day period and we'll be staying at the boss man's summer home. None of it's mandatory, so if you have something you need to be doing, don't feel pressured."

"Oh...wow, that sounds so nice..."

"Just let me know if you can make it, alright? We do really want you there though. It'll be fun. Just lots of drinking, hanging out and relaxing."

"I can go!" Jimin blurts out, not even bothering to check if he's free for the duration of the period. In fact, he's quite willing to cancel anything if it means going on a legit mini-vacation with everyone else.

"Alright, good to see you're excited," Hoseok replies with a thumbs up and Jimin smiles back sheepishly. "You two are going, right?"

"When have I not?" Taehyung says with a grin, just as Seokjin lets out an "of course."

"Alright, Monday through Wednesday it is. Pack all your shit, and let's meet up at the bar 7am sharp. Cool?"

The day of the retreat comes a lot quicker than Jimin had anticipated. He had been quite excited about the entire trip, since he can't even really remember the last time he had been on one with people he actually enjoyed spending time with. Taehyung and Jungkook were clearly not morning people, both looking equally tired and lazy as they doze off next to their luggage. Namjoon, unlike his usual attire, is wearing a plain tee and a pair of dark washed jeans, and Jimin can't help but marvel in how different and casual the man looks today.

"OK, so two cars," Hoseok announces once everyone is gathered inside the brightly lit bar. "Boss
"I'm guessing you're calling dibs on Yoongi," Taehyung says with a roll of his eyes, and the manager flashes everyone a cheeky grin before slinging an arm around the DJ. Yoongi does throw the other man a pointed look but doesn't necessarily protest the moment, instead choosing to focus on his phone.

"Bar boys, you want to get in my car?" Hoseok asks, pointing at both Taehyung and Seokjin with his chin. The two bartenders glance at each, and then at Jimin and then the bar owner before glancing at each other again and simultaneously answering "yes." Jungkook, on the other hand gives the two a look that reads "!!!!!", his mouth gaping like a fish as makes vague motions with his facial muscles.

"Well, I guess that leaves Jimin and Jungkook with the boss," Hoseok finalizes, ignoring the bodyguard screaming silently at him.

"I hate you. I fucking hate all of you," Jungkook continues to mouth, this time to the bartenders, and they just laugh at him. "I can't believe you're making me third wheel this entire car ride. Fuck you guys."

"Tough titties, get in the car," Seokjin commands with a flip of a hand, and the four taking Hoseok's car exit the building first, leaving the bar owner, oblivious Jimin and distraught Jungkook picking up their own luggage before exiting the venue as well.

"How far is your summer home?" Jimin asks, walking besides Namjoon towards the man's car.

"About three hours drive, but we'll probably stop by here and there for snacks and rest, so I'd say about four hours until we arrive there."

"Wow, it's so cool you have a summer home! It must be so nice to have one."

"It's nothing special...plus I only use the place twice a year."

"Still. And it's really nice of you to invite everyone over," Jimin continues with a big smile, and Namjoon clears his throat before unlocking his car.

"I'll take the back seat. Jimin, you should sit in the front next to boss man," Jungkook suggests, needing to just stick the two together and take up space for himself, because there is no way in hell that he's going to become an active participant in their convoluted I'm-probably-attracted-to-you-but-let's-not-think-about-it bullshit. No thank you.

"This place is beautiful!" Jimin lets out as soon as he gets out the car and takes in the summer home. It's a lot more modern than the man had expected, but there is enough detail alive to give it a more earthy feel. The interior is simple, as expected of Namjoon, but unlike his apartment which is spotless and almost aristocratic in its flare, the summer home is decorated with faux fur rugs, books, a fireplace with ashes still inside.
"Ah, it's good to be back here," Taehyung purrs, jumping on the couch and stretching his legs. "We're getting the bonfire going tonight right? I even brought marshmallows this time."

"Oh, I've never had marshmallows," Jimin murmurs from next to the bartender, more to himself than anything else, and Taehyung lets out a drawn-out "awww" before pulling the smaller man into his arms and smooshing his cheek against the other man's.

"Jiminnie, why are you so cute! We're going to have marshmallow, buddy, and you're going to love it," Taehyung coos exaggeratedly and then laughs when Jimin squirms out of his grasp with a roll of his eyes.

Seokjin and Yoongi naturally become in charge of the lunch after losing a game of rock paper and scissors, but Hoseok, in a not so secretive attempt to spend more time with Yoongi, volunteers in place of Seokjin, and the bartender lets the man be after giving him a judging look.

"Ugh, when it comes to choosing rooms, I'm not putting those two in the same room," Seokjin mutters, glancing towards the small kitchen. "I'm not going to fall asleep to the sound of them fucking each other into the mattress, no thank you."

"Oh. Are they fucking already?" Jungkook asks, point blank, and Jimin pretends to be busy with a particular patch of the rug he's sitting on.

"I dunno, and I'm not about to find out. I came here to relax and have a good time."

"Well, I'm not going to be the one to break the news to either of them. No thanks," the bodyguard murmurs before glancing at Jimin and laughing silently to himself at how embarrassed the man seems. Sometimes, he forgets that Jimin isn't used to this kind of talk. It's almost as anything remotely sexual flusters the man.

The day goes by with everyone just taking it easy. A few of them, including Jimin, walking outside to check out the scenery and get some fresh air. Being winter, they can't venture into the creek which runs only a small distance away from the summer home, but it doesn't damper their mood.

"Alright gentlemen," Hoseok announces once they are finished with their dinner. "It is time."

"Oh, I'm so ready for this," Taehyung says with a grin, rubbing his hands together with a mischievous grin.

"What's it time for?" Jimin asks the resident bodyguard sitting next to him, and the man flashes him perhaps one of the most gleeful smirk Jimin's ever seen the man wear.

"Truth or dare. I know it's an old-school game, but trust me, it gets a lot more exciting when we get drunk."

Truth be told, Jimin's never played the game. One time, he almost had a chance to play it while on a binge drinking session with other ppl from college, but that hadn't gone down so well, because Jimin ended up puking the entire night before even getting a chance to participate.

"Wow, I thought you guys knew everything about each other already," Jimin muses quietly, and Jungkook chuckles lowly with a nod.

"We do. That's why the dares get more fun," the man explains, looking back at Taehyung and Hoseok who are bringing an seemingly endless stream of alcohol to the table. "Plus, now that you're here, I think it might get even more interesting."
"Me? But I'm really not that interesting."

"We'll see."

"Alright, we got our empty bottle here," Hoseok announces, putting an empty beer bottle at the center of the circle they have all created for themselves. "The rules, as we know, are simple. Whoever doesn't answer or doesn't do the dare has to take a shot made by Kim Taehyung." To this, everyone groans, except Taehyung, who only waves around, and Jimin, who's confused. "If anyone takes the shot for you, you have to grant them a wish. What else...oh, and we know there's no bullshitting, because...come on, yours truly, the human lie detector that I am will sniff that shit out, and that's three shots."

"Three? Fuck, it was only two last time," Yoongi mutters, eyeing the drinks in front of him.

"So, I'm spinning first," Hoseok says with a raised hand before spinning it. Jimin, who is sitting right across from the manager, between Jungkook and Namjoon watches the bottle in almost child-like excitement, wondering what kind of questions he can ask and get away with. The bottle continues to spin and spin until it eventually slows down and points to none other than Taehyung.

"Bring it," the bartender encourages, pushing his chest out.

"Man, we already know too much of the nasty shit you've done," Seokjin groans and everyone else laughs in agreement.

"I'm an adventurer. I take dare."

"Whatever," Hoseok cuts in before Seokjin can say anything else. "I want you to give anyone of your choice a lap dance."

"Oh, easy," Taehyung says, getting up and cracking his neck. "But I'm going to need music."

"You got it," Hoseok snaps his fingers and reaches for the audio system right behind him. He hooks his phone to eat and scrolls through his playlist before turning on a song which starts off with some heavy bass. Taehyung begins to walk, swaying his hips as he does a full circle around everyone. The rest, even including Yoongi and Namjoon, cheer and catcall, and Jimin claps along, not even sure what a lap dance entails. Taehyung continues to walk around and then stops right in front of none other than Jimin, who mouths a "me??" and then lets out a high-pitched squeak when Taehyung takes his hand and pulls him up.

Jimin finds himself being led to a chair by the bartender, and despite his pleading looks for an explanation as to what the hell is going on, everyone just hoots and cheers. Taehyung pushes the smaller man onto the chair, and Jimin swallows visibly when Taehyung straddles him without even an ounce of hesitation. When the taller man begins to roll his hips seductively to the beat, Jimin shuts his eyes, deciding that he might as well choose darkness over figuring out what he's supposed to look at.

"Aww come on, you're missing the show," Taehyung purrs against Jimin's ears and the smaller man jumps, almost sending the chair, and the both of them, topping backwards. Fortunately for the both of them, Taehyung has both his hands gripping the back of the chair tightly to keep Jimin from running away.

"I-I th-think this is e-enough, th-thank you," Jimin stutters, now feeling Taehyung physically grinding against him, and the bartender finally gets off, taking pity on the poor soul sitting under him. Jimin is burning scarlet red, his eyes shut tightly and even his ears a deep shade of pink. Taehyung
bends backwards laughing, never having elicited that sort of a response from anyone else. He's had people come in their pants or try to jump him or even drool, but this? It's expected, but still hilarious.

"Holy shit, I kinda wanted to see Taehyung give the boss a lap dance, but that was ten times better," Jungkook says, still choking on his laughter as Taehyung returns to his place on the floor, looking rather proud of himself.

"He thanked me," Taehyung adds with grin, and Jimin tries to hide his face in his own hoodie. "This is the first time I've been thanked for a lapdance!"

"Alright, stop torturing him. Taehyung, your turn to spin," Yoongi mediates, seeing how embarrassed the other man seems to be as he slowly transforms himself into a ball between Namjoon and Jungkook, who happen to be two of the biggest men at the bar.

Taehyung spins the bottle gleefully, and when it stops, it's pointing right at Jimin.

"Fucking. Yes," Taehyung purrs, rubbing his hands together, and Yoongi lets out a long, drawn-out sigh, knowing exactly where this is going.

"Truth or dare, Jiminie?"

"Oh...umm...truth?"

"Aww, and I was hoping for a dare. Alright, I'll go easy on ya," Taehyung continues with a smile, deciding that he will let the smaller man off the hook just this one time. "If you had to choose three people to make out with in this room, who would they be?"

"Oh. Wow...umm," Jimin stalls, glancing around the circle and flushing red again. "I uh...."

Jimin doesn't think he's ever thought about his co-workers in that light. Sure, they are all incredibly attractive, but making out with them? That was definitely something he hadn't thought of before....well, except Namjoon, because they've actually kissed before (for research purposes, but still). So, OK, who else...

"I um...Jungkook, Taehyung and....boss?" he answers meekly, wondering if he's crossing some sort of a line, but he doesn't even have time to think about that, because Taehyung raises both his hands up with a loud "Yes! See! I'm fucking irresistible!"

"Jimin, why not me?" Seokjin whines, putting on a fake sad face, and Jimin starts making incoherent noises from across the room. "I'm kidding," the bar tender stops the other man with a laugh, because really, he's not mad at all. In fact, he got the answer he, and probably everyone else, wanted so he can't complain.

"The boss, huh?" Yoongi throws it out there with a smirk, and Jimin glances at the tall man sitting next to him before dropping his gaze immediately. Oh no, is Namjoon mad? Because now the man is staring at the bottle in front of him as if it's personally offending him.

"Jimin, your turn to spin the bottle!"

The bottle lands on Seokjin, who surprisingly takes truth instead of dare and is asked whether he's fantasized about anyone in the bar in the last month. Seokjin, without missing a beat, answers Jungkook, and the bodyguard, instead of looking uncomfortable, lets out a smug "yeah, that's right."

"I wouldn't get cocky," Seokjin counters with a roll of his eyes. "I tried. Didn't work out too well. I think it's just the dumb shit you say that ruins it."
"Wow, you're an asshole."

"I know. My turn."

The bottle stops and points at Namjoon, and this time, everyone leans forward, suddenly at least 10 times more invested in the game.

"What's it gonna be, Joonie?" Seokjin asks rather tauntingly, and Namjoon grits his teeth, knowing exactly where this is all going. Either way, he's screwed, especially with Jimin sitting right next to him. He should've blackmailed them ahead of time.

".....Dare."

"I dare you to kiss someone sitting next to you."

Everyone watches with abated breath, each hoping for a singular outcome. Namjoon is conveniently seated between Yoongi and Jimin, and Yoongi, besides the fact that he is giving the boss a homicidal look, is basically official with Hoseok, which left Namjoon to make out with Jimin....and anyone else, Namjoon would've gone for it and laugh about it, but it's **Jimin**. Jimin didn't make out with people for shits and giggles. And even though they've already kissed before, this is different. This is in front of people. Jimin didn't ask for it.

So he reaches for the glass in front of him and takes a shot, and when he's finished, he finds five pairs of eyes watching him disapprovingly. Well, shit, what did they want with him, now? Namjoon glances at Yoongi, who is giving him a blatant "really?" look, and when he sees Jimin, he finds the smaller man squirming nervously in his seat, his toes curled and his fingers playing with the hem of his hoodie.

"No fun, boss man, no fun," Taehyung mediates to get back into the mood and then tells the bar owner to spin. It's Hoseok's turn, and when he's dared to make out with Seokjin, Yoongi jumps in and takes the shot instead, eliciting a collective "ewww, you two are so gross."

The bottle lands on Jimin again, and this time, Jimin picks dare, hoping that maybe he'll have better luck with that one. Unfortunately, unlike Taehyung, Hoseok doesn't hold back, and Jimin finds himself being dared to make out with Jungkook.

"M-make out?" Jimin squeaks, his eyes on the handsome bodyguard sitting next to him.

"I'm ready," Jungkook says with a small grin, leaning a few inches forward as if to invite the smaller man to initiate when he's ready.

"I, uh, I'm-I'm really not good at-"

"Don't worry. I'll lead."

"I...um..." Jimin's eyes dart across the room as if to ask for help, but he's only met with cheers and claps. Oh god, he can't kiss Jungkook. He's probably still a horrible kisser, and the idea of kissing Jungkook feels so wrong...not because Jungkook is unattractive or anything (because lets face it, the man is insanely hot), but because....because it's just....

And then a loud "ohhh!!" breaks out, and Jimin instinctively turns around to find Namjoon taking a shot. The man wipes his own mouth with the back of his hand before setting the shot glass down with a "clack," and Jimin watches the entire process in silence, his mouth hung open.

"B-boss?"
"Your turn to spin," the bar owner says curtly, and Jimin obliges, still looking confused as to what exactly happened. The bottle lands on Jimin again, and Taehyung yells "Oh! Jimin you have to take a shot!"

"Why?"

"If it lands on yourself, you gotta drink!"

"Oh...ok."

Jimin takes a shot, and the game continues, each asking lewd questions and giving each other ridiculous dares. Through the whole thing, Jimin learns a few things about his co-workers.

1. Jungkook's had sex both inside a car and while on a flight. He only drinks when he's dared to put on a strip show.

2. Taehyung has had sex in drag before.

3. Yoongi and Hoseok refuses to disclose if they are official or not.

4. Seokjin is a pretty aggressive kisser, judging by the show he's put on with the other bartender.

5. Namjoon refuses to answer when the last time he's had sex was.

At this point, Jimin has taken another shot (when asked if he's top or bottom. He didn't answer because he was too embarrassed to say "i dont know.") and a few minutes later, he knows that he's quickly approaching the realm of "piss drunk" rather than "pleasantly buzzed."

"Jimin, I think you're going to need some fresh air," Jungkook suggests, noticing how the man is sort of swaying beside him. The bodyguard makes the motion to help the smaller man up, but Namjoon cuts in, and Jungkook lets the bar owner be.

"Jimin, let's get you some fresh air outside," Namjoon says gently as Jimin nods, and the two men leave the building, leaving the rest to wait in silence for the door to close.

"Well gentlemen," Hoseok begins with a clap once the door is shut. "I think our plan has worked spectacularly."

"Holy shit, I honestly was expecting boss man to make out with Jimin," Taehyung muses, taking a bottle of beer for himself. "But he drank, which is actually even better?"

"It is! I didn't think he was going to be so obvious about everything, and oh man, did you see his face when Jimin was about to kiss Jungkook? I've never seen him jealous, ever."

"He didn't even answer when the last time he had sex was," Yoongi adds, looking genuinely amused by the turn of events.

"Because I can fucking guarantee it was before he met Jimin," Jungkook says with a finger up and everyone else nods in agreement.

"Man, the cap is kinda obvious but..." Taehyung muses slowly, glancing at where the two men had been sitting. "but Jimin...I don't think he has a clue."

"Leave it," Seokjin says, crossing his legs in front of him. "I kinda wanna see Joonie suffer."
"Jimin, you alright?" Namjoon asks quietly once they are a good distance away from the summer home. "Are you too cold?"

"Mm, no. I'm OK. I think the fresh air is helping," Jimin answers with a dopey smile. "Oh, I owe you a wish now."

"A wish?"

"Yeah, you took a shot for me. I owe you a wish now...just, uh, I don't have that much money..."

"Jimin, I'm not going to ask you for money."

"OK. Good. Umm, then what?"

"...I don't know, but I wouldn't worry about it. Are you sure you're OK?" Namjoon asks again, noticing the way Jimin is sort of wobbling now. He hovers a cautious hand on the back of Jimin's back, knowing that the terrain isn't exactly accommodating. There's wilted patches of grass, rocks and gravel beneath them, and even while sober, Namjoon has tripped on something particularly bumpy before.

"Ohh....." Jimin lets out his eyes now shut, and Namjoon figures that this is probably a cue for him to take the man to bed.

"Jimin, lets get you inside."

"Umm...wow...everything is...spinning...I think...I think I'm just...sit down....a little..." Jimin slurs, feeling his world starting to rotate a little around him, and lowers himself onto the ground. Namjoon catches him before the smaller man can lie down on dirt and pulls him into his arms. Clearly, Jimin is no dainty little thing. He may be a bit on the shorter side, but he's still a full-grown man, and Namjoon finds himself letting out a small groan as he holds the man up in his arms.

"...Boss," Jimin calls out softly, his eyes still closed.

"...Yeah."

"How...how come you didn't kiss me....?"

"...What?"

"You didn't...kiss me...or Yoongi...why...?"

".....Jimin, you're drunk."

"...Why? Are you...mad at me...?"
"Jimin, no. Why would you think that."

"Then....why...?"

Namjoon says nothing as he continues to walk towards the summer home, the soft light coming from the inside creating an almost mirage-like appearance. His eyes are fixated on the golden glow as he keeps his lips sealed tight, hoping that Jimin will just fall asleep so he doesn't have to answer.

He doesn't have an answer as to why. Not one he can give Jimin anyway. He's told himself that it's because Jimin looked uncomfortable, but he knows he'd be lying to himself if he were to say that was the only reason. He knows Jungkook's a good guy. Hell, the kiss wouldn't have meant anything to begin with, and Jungkook wouldn't have turned it into some creep-fest. If anything, he prefers Jungkook over....anyone else really, but it didn't stop him from taking that shot.

Because maybe, just maybe, he didn't want to see Jimin kissing anyone else, but deep inside, he's a coward, because he keeps telling himself that he did it for Jimin.

Chapter End Notes

Day 1. Two more to go. Good luck to you, Namjoon.
Chapter Notes

Hey um yeah, remember that thing about wishing Namjoon good luck? Yeah...about that...

Anyway, so many people have told me how much they enjoy this story and...man, it just makes me so happy to know that there are Minjoon shippers out there who enjoy this as much as I love writing it! :)

"Is he dead?"

Namjoon sighs lowly at the sound of Taehyung's voice coming from behind him (What kind of a question-). He had been hoping to sneak into one of the bedrooms without any of them seeing him carrying Jimin in his arms. Not because he's embarrassed or anything, but more because he knows that they were going to make a big deal about it. He's not dense by any means. He's perfectly aware of the teasing glances and quips everyone at the bar comes up with to insinuate a blossoming relationship of sort between him and Jimin (which there isn't, by the way).

Most of them are probably doing it for the fun of it. He knows that Seokjin especially is having the time of his life getting on his nerves about it, with Taehyung quickly catching up to the other bartender. And really, he doesn't want it to get out of hand and end up embarrassing Jimin somehow, because while he himself may be rather impervious to merciless teasing, the smaller man clearly isn't.

"No, he's not dead," Namjoon replies with another sigh, quickly heading towards the nearest bedroom. "He's had too much to drink."

"Oh. You think he's going to be OK?" Taehyung asks with a serious frown, and Namjoon appreciates the change in mood.

"He should be. He just fell asleep."

"Yeah...well, he did say that he didn't get much sleep, because he was too excited about this whole retreat."

"Hn," Namjoon lets out quietly before pushing through the door and making his way towards the queen-sized bed inside. Again, Jimin may be smaller than him, but he's quite heavy, and he doesn't think his arms can take much more of the strain. Taehyung enters the room as well and turns the light switch on, shedding much needed light into the cozy space.

"You sure he's OK?" Taehyung asks again, and Namjoon flashes him a small reassuring smile as an answer. He understands where Taehyung is coming from. The bartender has seen too many people basically poisoning themselves with alcohol, and sometimes they had to be hauled off on an
ambulance (Everyone at the bar have seen too much of people experimenting with drinking for the first time and coming very close to dying).

"He's fine. He's breathing fine and was talking just fine. We should let him get some sleep first," Namjoon replies as he sets Jimin gently on the bed. Jimin frowns and mumbles a couple of incoherent syllables before falling back sound asleep.

"That's good, cause I think we should all be sleeping anyway. We were already cleaning up."

"Have you guys decided on rooms yet?"

"Mm. Well, Hoseok's basically called dibs on Yoongi, and Seokjin and Jungkook said they're going to share with me in the big room. Jungkook says he feels claustrophobic in the smaller rooms."

Namjoon narrows his eyes in suspicion. He doesn't remember Jungkook ever complaining about small space, yet he doesn't argue against the notion, primarily because he knows that no one is going to listen to him anyway. Plus, Seokjin is clearly in on this as well, which means it will be impossible for him to make them backtrack on anything.

"Fine. Let's finish cleaning up first then," Namjoon says with yet another sigh instead, making his way towards the door.

"No need," Taehyung chirps, effectively stopping the bar owner from exiting the room. "We're basically finished. I'll see you and Jimin in the morning!" he finishes before rushing out and even closing the door behind him. Namjoon almost wishes that they wouldn't be so damn obvious, because now he's feeling rather conscious about the fact that he and Jimin will be sharing a room and sleeping in the same vicinity.

Which shouldn't bother him so much, if he really thinks about it. Jimin has fallen asleep both in his car and in his apartment. In fact, Jimin seems to have a habit of succumbing to slumber in his presence, so it shouldn't even be a big deal...so why is it that he is now hyper-aware of the barely audible puffs of oxygen leaving Jimin's slightly parted lips? The sound is almost jarring in its ability to make Namjoon feel out of place. It makes him scratch his own arms as it continues to play on repeat besides him.

Jimin stirs in his sleep, and Namjoon almost jumps at the sudden movement. Something is wrong. Something doesn't feel right about the way he's standing next to Jimin. Everyone must be sharing the spacious bed located in each of the bedrooms, probably clinging onto each other for warmth or for more emotional reasons. But not him. He doesn't think he can fall asleep next to Jimin with how uncomfortable it feels ...because Jimin never gave him consent to do so. He doesn't want the smaller man to wake up the next morning and start screaming or act all fidgety besides him for the rest of the day.

So Namjoon turns the light off and briskly leaves the room to head for the living room, figuring that he can live with sleeping on the couch for one night. It beats getting no sleep.

He's surprised to find Jungkook already on the couch, lying flat on his back with his phone casting an almost eerily light across his features. His eyebrows are furrowed in concentration, the tip of his tongue sticking out to one corner of his mouth.

"....What are you doing out here," Namjoon asks, praying that Jungkook hadn't decided to sleep in the living room, because he has nowhere else to go.

"I wanted to...beat this stage," Jungkook begins to answer a moment later, his thumbs darting quickly
over the screen. "but they said the...light and...tapping was- ah shit! Damn it!" the bouncer hisses in frustrating before throwing his phone onto his own stomach. "They were complaining it was getting annoying so they kicked me out, and I lost again," he continues, giving the bar owners an almost resentful look at the interruption.

"Aren't you even tired?"

"Not really. What are you doing out here? Thought you'd be sleeping considering how tired you get after driving."

"I am going to sleep. Here."

"Here where?" Jungkook questions with a frown, already looking displeased with the possibility of being displaced and sent back to the bedroom with the two bartenders.

"Here, on that couch," Namjoon answers blightly, pointing at the furniture with his index finger for emphasis.

"Why? Is Jimin making weird noises or something?"

"...No."

"Then why are you taking this couch from me?" Jungkook asks with a pout, ready to start another round of his game. "I really, really want to beat this stage today, boss."

"I'm kicking you off the couch. Play on the floor."

"The floor is way too cold...and plus, shouldn't you be making sure Jimin doesn't choke on his own vomit or something?"

"He didn't drink that much."

"Well, it was enough to make him pass out. I'm sure you don't want a death on your hand, boss."

Namjoon narrows his eyes, trying to figure out if Jungkook is doing this to force him into the same room as Jimin or if the bouncer is hell-bent on beating whatever mobile game he's playing. It's really 50:50 with Jungkook, because one, the man is a little addicted to games and has a tendency to be insanely competitive about it, and two, Jungkook isn't really someone who bothers to make this much effort to tease someone just because the bartenders want it to happen.

Now, he can obviously send Jungkook back to the room and Jungkook would have to oblige, yet he finds himself just returning to the room with Jimin in it, because he does think that the bouncer has a point about Jimin potentially dying in his state of alcohol-induced sleep. He does remember to fetch a glass of water from the kitchen before re-entering the room, just as Jungkook switches out of the game and begins typing into his device.

[Wow]
TaeTae [See I told u hell be back in the living room]

TaeTae [So predictable]

Jin [HAHA]

Jin [GDI KIM NAMJOON]

[Can I go back inside now?]

Jin [No]

TaeTae [No]

[??????????]

[WTF WHY]

TaeTae [Just in case]

TaeTae [he tries to sneak back out]

Jin [What he said]

[.......]
When Namjoon is back inside the room, he finds Jimin in a significantly more dishevelled state, with his hoodie magically on the floor and his shirt ridden halfway up his torso. Jimin lets out a guttural sound before flailing his arms and legs a little bit and then falling dead silent again. So Jimin was one of those people who undressed themselves when drunk. Great. Excellent.

The summer home may be well insulated, but it was far from being warm, and while the alcohol in Jimin's system may be keeping him hot, it is bound to wear off and nights quickly turned cold in the area they are in. Namjoon sighs and makes his way towards the bedroom, knowing that he is going to have to tuck the smaller man in if he wants to prevent Jimin from freezing in his sleep or something close to it.

"Jimin," he calls out gently, and the other man lets out a small noise that borderlines annoyance more than anything else. "Jimin, let's get you under the blanket." Jimin doesn't budge. Instead he just frowns for a split second before going still again. Namjoon is starting to see that the man is a heavy sleeper, which means that he's going to have to somehow physically tuck the man in.

So he pulls Jimin's upper body and cradles him against his chest with one arm before pulling the blanket from underneath him. Jimin makes small noises of protest but remains in slumber, and Namjoon works quickly to drape the now loose blanket over the small figure.

The more he thinks about it, the more ridiculous it all seems. He, Kim Namjoon, is tucking someone in. He can't remember ever having done something like that. He's had plenty of people sleep on his bed, but never has he tucked someone in like this, and now he's not sure what to make of all the "firsts" he's done since Park Jimin entered his life.

He sits on the floor by the bed, ignoring how cold it feels against his bottom. He leans against the bed and and folds his legs towards him before resting his wrists over his knees. Only the sound of Jimin's soft breathing serves as a lullaby as he lulls his head against the mattress. He's just going to have to fall asleep like this for the night. Hopefully, he won't fall too deep in sleep and will hear if Jimin needs any help or starts to choke or something.

Namjoon isn't sure how much time has passed, but he hears murmuring coming from behind him, so he raises his head again and turns to face the smaller man, who's letting out gurgled noise while wearing an impressive frown on his face. Jimin continues to murmur something, and the bar owner leans forward to better make out the words. It doesn't take him long to figure out that Jimin is basically begging for water at this point, so he gently shakes the smaller man with his hands, hoping to wake the man up enough to let him have a drink.

"Jimin, have some water," he says quietly, and Jimin finally opens his eyes, peering from heavy eyelids as he blinks to focus his eyes in the little light available in the room. "Here, I'll help you up," the taller man announces before pulling Jimin into an upright position. Jimin groans in protest, looking absolutely frazzled as he lets his body be controlled by the other. Namjoon makes a mental note to himself to never let Jimin drink so much again, because good god, the man has such dismal alcohol tolerance.
Namjoon reaches for the glass with the other hand and places it gently against Jimin's lips. The smaller man lets the liquid slowly seep into his mouth, down his throat, and makes a small noise of appreciation.

"Would you like more?" Namjoon asks after pulling the glass away, and Jimin shakes his head slowly.

"M good..."

"Go back to sleep."

"Mm...my head hurts..."

"I guess you're already experiencing a hangover. Try to get more sleep though."

"...How come you're not sleeping?" Jimin croaks, finally understanding what's going on. He vaguely remembers taking a walk with Namjoon, but he can't remember how he ended up in the bedroom. His guess is that his own boss must have carried him all the way into the house, and now he's feeling embarrassed. He really shouldn't have taken in so much alcohol knowing how bad he is at it.

"Don't worry about it."

"....Are we roommates?" Jimin asks innocently, blinking slowly at the bar owner, and Namjoon looks away briefly before nodding and letting out a quiet "Yeah, I guess so."

"Oh...let me just move to the side," Jimin says nonchalantly before scooting to one side of the bed and lying back down. He flashes Namjoon a small smile as if he's content with the idea of giving the bigger man some space to sleep on, and the bar owner watches the other in silent, wondering if Jimin is still too drunk to process what he's doing.

So he waits. Waits for Jimin to break out blushing or start stuttering, but none comes as Jimin only watches him curiously, as if to ask why the man isn't climbing onto the bed next to him. Namjoon grits his teeth momentarily and tentatively sits on the bed besides the smaller man. Jimin is right. Technically, there is no reason to be flustered or nervous, because everyone is doing the same thing in the other rooms. It's always been bar tradition to do so and Jimin already knew about it. Jimin probably doesn't think it's that much of a big deal, but the notion somehow snaps something inside Namjoon.

No, it feels more like a heavy pressure inside his gut which threatens to snap something. He has no idea what the particular sentiment indicates, but he forces himself to ignore it as he carefully forces his limbs to move so that he's lying next to Jimin.

"I've never really had a sleepover," Jimin says suddenly, and Namjoon turns his head around to face the smaller man, who is now lying on his side, facing the other with a small smile gracing his sleepy features. "So this is kinda cool."

Namjoon wonders if he's the only one feeling somewhat...unnerved by the sleeping arrangement.

"Thank you for inviting me," Jimin continues, his words starting to slur a bit. Namjoon only blinks back in response before replying with a sincere "It's great to have you here." Jimin laughs softly, burying his head further into the pillow.

"If I snore, please wake me up," Jimin lets out with a dopey grin before closing his eyes..

"....Sure."
"I probably don't snore though. I'm not sure."

"OK."

And in no time, Jimin is sound asleep besides him, leaving Namjoon to stare into the dead of the night, listening to the sound of his own heartbeat ringing in his head.

"What in the...Namjoon, what the hell happened to you?" Seokjin asks the moment he sets his eyes on Namjoon, who is trudging out of his "assigned" bedroom. The bartender, being the first one up, is out in the living room, playing with his phone while waiting for others to get up.

"...Why."

"Did you get any sleep at all?" the other man questions, narrowing his eyes to get a better look. He pulls himself into a sitting position and then flashes the bar owner a knowing grin, the game long forgotten before him. "Well, well, well...are you telling me that Kim Namjoon lost sleep because a certain someone was lying besides him?"

"I didn't say anything."

"You don't have to."

"Jin...cut it out. It's not like that."

"What's not like what?" Seokjin asks gleefully, crossing his legs in front of him. Namjoon only shoots him a pointed look before marching into the kitchen to grab himself a glass of water. The lack of sleep is somehow really taking a toll on his body, and he knows for a fact that he's going to regret it real soon. He should've just kicked Jungkook off the couch and slept on it. Hell, he could've slept on the floor and probably would be in better state.

"Joon, do you want to take the bed with Taehyung and Jungkook? Or I can just wake them up and you can catch some shut eye," Seokjin offers, taking pity on the poor soul standing in the kitchen. All teasing aside, Namjoon does look extremely fatigued, and he suddenly feels bad about letting this happen. Not that he knew this was going to happen. Hell, how was he supposed to know that the great Kim Namjoon would ever lose sleep because he's sleeping next to one of his employees...

"I'll just take a nap later," Namjoon answers gruffly before taking a long swig of his water. He himself isn't sure why he was on edge the entire night. A part of him kept anticipating Jimin's "Oh my god! What are you doing here!" which definitely played a role in preventing sleep from taking over, but it was more so that Jimin's soft snoring was too loud against his ears..the heat radiating from Jimin's body too warm for him. Logically, Jimin being a near-silent sleeper should've aided in his catching some quality shut eye, but something about the dead silence of the room and the sound of Jimin's breathing made it impossible for him to rest.
"Joon, want to sit here for a minute?" Seokjin asks, tapping the space besides him on the couch. Namjoon throws the other man a wary glance before obliging anyway. He drags his feet against the wooden floor beneath him and plants himself right on the furniture.

"So," Seokjin begins casually, leaning against the arm rest. "Let's not kid ourselves here. What exactly is going on between you and Jimin?"

"Jin-"

"I'm not here to be some stern dad about it. I'm just asking, as a friend," the bartender interrupts with a hand up. "I can't care less who you date or sleep with. You know that."

Namjoon says nothing as he chooses to stare at the blank screen of the TV in front of him.

"I've seen you fuck a different man every day during that phase you went through a couple years back," Seokjin continues in a light tone. "And I didn't care because I knew you wouldn't do anything to get yourself in trouble. I know you can take care of yourself just fine."

"Then why are you asking about Jimin?"

"I dunno. It's different," Seokjin answers with a shrug. "And OK I'll say it. It piqued my interest. I'm curious. That's all."

"Why."

"Oh come on, are we really doing this? We've known each other for way too long for you to pull that shit on me."

"....What do you want to hear?"

The first thing Jimin says when he wakes up is that he's hungry. His hair is a complete mess, now sticking out all over the place. Jimin doesn't seem to notice his disheveled state as he marches into the living room, his eyes puffy and his usually pouty lips even more prominent.

"Morning Jimine," Taehyung greets with a toothy grin, looking up from his half eaten bowl of noodles. "How're you feeling? Your head doing OK?"

"Yeah," Jimin answers, peering around the kitchen to scavenge for food. "Surprisingly I don't have a headache or anything...but I'm starving."

"A bit of tradition to have lamyeon for breakfast. We have a box of it so help yourself," Taehyung
explains, pointing to one corner of the kitchen. Taehyung marches over and pulls out a bag before reaching for the small pot already on the stove.

"Where's everyone else?" Jimin asks, noticing that it's just the two of them as he begins to add water to the pot.

"Um, boss man and Jin are outside getting something. I can't remember what. I wasn't really listening. JK is taking a shower. Yoongi and Hoseok are...well, still sleeping," Taehyung relays, putting air quotations around the last word.

"What do you mean?"

"Who knows what the two are doing," Taehyung replies with a shrug, returning to his bowl. "By the way, we're all going on a walk after breakfast so you should get ready."

"A walk?"

"Yup. Another retreat tradition. There is this trail that leads us towards this river. We always take a walk together to...I dunno, to strengthen our bond or whatever."

"Oh. That sounds nice."

"I guess so. The river is nice to look at, but it can get a bit chilly so make sure you dress warm."

"Can we go in the river?"

"In this weather? Are you out of your mind?"

"...So no?"

"Unless you want to challenge death. Do you even know how to swim?"

"Yup. I'm from Busan."

"...Fair enough."

By the time Namjoon and Seokjin are back at the house, Jimin's already finished getting ready, dressed in a thick winter jacket with a scarf covering most of his lower face. Namjoon makes his way towards the smaller man and stops in front of him, and Jimin naturally looks up in surprise, his eyes almost questioning.

"How are you feeling?" Namjoon asks in a gentle tone and Jimin flashes him a small smile before answering that he's perfectly fine.

"I'm guessing Taehyung explained to you about the hike."

"Yup! I heard we're going to this river."

"We are...if you're tired though you can sit out. It's not mandatory," Namjoon offers, and Jimin thinks that if anyone should sit out, if should be the boss man himself, who looks as if he didn't get a wink of sleep last night. He doesn't voice it however and settles for putting on a reassuring smile instead.
"Nah, I wanna go. And I think some fresh air sounds really good right now."

"Wow," Jimin lets out breathlessly as he looks down at the river flowing rapidly across and over rocks which have been smoothed down over years of the water's movement. When Taehyung had spoken to him about the river, he had been expecting a dainty stream, but he was now facing something a lot more impressive and significantly more intimidating. They were standing off to the side of the river, which was made up of rocks and gravel, and while it is clearly not the safest spot to be standing on top of, Jimin makes the effort to get as close to the river as possible to get a better look.

He's always loved water. Perhaps it's the Busan blood in him, but something about watching bodies of water always calmed him down. He could stare at the ocean for hours on end without getting bored, and this river proved to not be an expected.

"It's beautiful," Jimin murmurs under his breath, hopping to another boulder. "I didn't know rivers like this exists in Korea."

Yoongi glances at him from besides him, his feet already secured on top of a particularly flat rock.

"This river isn't all that popular, because it's difficult to access," the DJ explains slowly, taking in the scenery once more. "And no one wants to bring their kids here I guess. Too dangerous."

"Yeah, it does look a bit dangerous," Jimin agrees, looking around him. There isn't any sandy area people can sit around and the water definitely doesn't look suitable for swimming. "It's a bit slippery too."

"You gotta be careful. I don't know if you swim but...I hear even professional swimmers struggle with currents like this."

"...Do you swim?"

"No. I mean, I've been to the pool a couple of times, but that's about it. I think only Seokjin and Jungkook know how to swim."

Jimin nods and hops to another rock to get a closer view and then slowly lowers his body so that he actual sit down. It's far from comfortable, but he figures the particular boulder he's sitting on is the best he can manage for the time being. He wants to dip his feet in the water, but even from where he's sitting down, he can see that would be a bad idea. He can practically feel the frigidity radiating from the river.

So he settles for taking in everything with his eyes instead. He feels at peace. Serene. When he does look around, he sees Yoongi and Hoseok sitting down a small distance away from him, and they seem to be just as content to take in the scenery in silence. Taehyung is throwing tiny pebbles into the water besides Jungkook as Seokjin searches for his own to throw.

And Namjoon is standing in silence. He's facing the river, but his mind is clearly drifted elsewhere. Jimin tilts his head slightly, wondering what the man could be thinking about. He doesn't look sad or angry, which is a good sign, but the bar owner doesn't look all that happy either, and Jimin finds it
difficult to just brush it off and return his attention back to the passing water.

Jimin isn't sure how much time has passed since he's placed himself conveniently on one of the boulders, but Seokjin announces that they should get back inside before any of them freeze to death. Everyone agrees, figuring they can always get some fresh air later. Plus, the wind was starting to pick up as well, and Jimin doesn't think his cheeks appreciate the harshness of it all.

Jimin gets up slowly, his steps calculated as he makes his way away from the current. The rocks, despite zero rainfall, are still quite slippery, and the rest of the group are all helping each other to make sure no one hurts himself. Jimin is taking another step forward when he hears both Jungkook and Yoongi yelling from ahead of him, and he instinctively looks up to see what the commotion is about. And then less than a split second later, he hears rock hitting rock, followed by a loud splashing noise ringing over the sound of speeding current. When he turns around to locate the source of the sound, he sees Namjoon flailing in the river.

Without a second thought, Jimin finds himself pulling the scarf off of his own neck before shedding his jacket off. All he hears is white noise. He doesn't register any of the shouting and yelling, because Namjoon is carried down the river with his head barely kept above the current. The man's arms are flailing helplessly, and Jimin only takes a second to process a haphazard risk assessment in his head before he finds himself jumping in, the scarf in one hand and his eyes locked on the other man.

The water is cold.

For a moment, Jimin freezes up. It feels as if he's trapped in ice. Water has never hurt so badly in his life, and in that very moment, he regrets having jumped in. It hurts. God, it hurts.

But survival instinct quickly kicks in, and Jimin begins to swim, using the current to his advantage as he rushes towards Namjoon, who looks completely panic-stricken as he tries to figure out which way is up or down.

"Take the scarf!" Jimin screams as loudly as he can manage, throwing one end of his wet scarf towards the other man. Namjoon, however, appears completely oblivious to all noise surrounding him as he gurgles the water trapping him. Jimin grits his teeth and move closer, kicking his feet and making sure to keep his head above water. He continues to yell Namjoon's name, praying that the other will just listen to his voice. he knows better than to grab the man, knowing it might end up with both of them drowning. The river is a lot deeper than he had anticipated, and at this point, standing in the middle of it is clearly not an option...which means that Namjoon's going to have to hold onto his scarf so that they can both swim to the side.

And with the temperature of the water, they both don't have much time.

Jimin throws the scarf again, and this time, Namjoon takes it with both of his hands, his eyes staring back at his in utter fear and panic. Jimin pulls the scarf tightly towards him and then begins to kick again, taking both their bodies towards the nearest land. Luckily, the river is relatively narrow compared to its depth, and with the adrenaline coursing through his body, Jimin manages to hold onto a sturdy branch hanging over the water.

He doesn't waste time quickly draping his end of the scarf over the branch and then holding it securely with one hand to make sure that he doesn't lose hold of it. At this rate, he can't afford to let the current take him again, and his fingers are already shaking violently despite how numb they feel. Jimin struggles to pull his body closer to bed of rocks and stones, but the strain is too great with Namjoon's weight pulling him away.

"Hold on!" Jimin screams and tries again, clenching his jaws tightly as he reaches for something else
to hold on with his free hand. And then he hears Jungkook and Seokjin rushing towards them, hopping over the rocks beneath them and not even caring that they might all trip and crack their heads against one of them. Jungkook is the first to reach them, and he takes Jimin's free hand tightly, and with a strained noise, Jimin finds himself being pulled into safety. Seokjin helps Namjoon back to land, and Jimin just remains lying down for a moment, his eyes darting around frantically as he tries to figure out if he's made it or not.

"Jimin!" Taehyung is yelling now, pulling him into a sitting position, and Jimin says nothing as the man drapes over layers of jackets over his body. Suddenly, the coldness is unbearable and he's shaking uncontrollably, his teeth chattering against each other incessantly and his limbs vibrating violently against his torso. When Jimin manages to finally turn his head around, he sees Namjoon in the exact same state, huddled with layers of jackets as well. Everyone except the two of them are standing without a jacket on, the cold air of late-Novembers seemingly forgotten as they fret over the two men.

"Kim Namjoon! What did I tell you about being careful!" Yoongi is full blown yelling now, pulling the jackets even more tightly against the bar owner who looks too shaken up to even formulate a response. "Come on, we need to get both of them inside, quick. Jungkook, can you run back and prepare a hot bath and turn all the heaters on?" he asks, and the bodyguard doesn't waste a second darting back towards the trail. Taehyung and Hoseok hoist Jimin off the rocks and help him steer away from the river, just as Seokjin and Yoongi do the same to Namjoon.

By the time they get back to the house, the bathtub is already filled with hot water and the heat blasting from the heaters hit Jimin hard.

"We're going to have to get you both in the tub," Yoongi announces rapidly as the two men find themselves being shuffled towards bathroom.

"T-to-geth-ther?" Jimin stutters out, unable to regain full control of his own facial muscles. At this point, he's worried that he's going to shatter his own teeth from chattering so badly.

"Yes together," Yoongi replies back rather impatiently. "This isn't the time to think about that shit. Get in before both of you die from hypothermia!"

Jimin obliges, needing heat, because the jackets weren't doing all that much to make him feel like he's not going to freeze to death. He's guided into the tub, his wet clothes still on and only the jackets pulled off, and he buries himself in the tub, welcoming the warmth it provide. Namjoon is placed inside the tub as well, and while it is hardly big enough for two grown men, Hoseok turns on the shower and begins to spray hot water over them as well.

Jimin can feel his muscles starting to relax, and it's only then that he realizes that the both of them could've very well never have made it out of the river. Subconsciously, Jimin reaches out and takes Namjoon's hands into his, suddenly overcome with the urge to make sure that the other man is OK, and Namjoon squeezes back tightly, his eyes still focused on his own knees.

They remain holding each others' hands as they let the warmth of the shower thaw their frozen bodies, and for the first time, nobody comes up with a witty joke or a teasing remark.
Chapter 12

Wheee I've managed to update relatively quickly this time! :D I know I don't get to reply to all comments...and trust me I really do want to but I want to get chapters up for you guys ASAP! I do read all of them and I LOVE YOU GUYS FOR IT. Thank you for allowing me to stay motivated to continue with this fic. You guys are the real MVPs behind this fic!!

Jimin watches Namjoon from the corners of his eyes as he takes a slow sip of the hot tea provided by Hoseok for the two of them. The initial numbing sensation of frigid water against his skin is now gone, instead replaced by a blanket of warmth which slowly lulls him to a dream-like stance. He can physically feel the hot liquid traveling through his body, and he welcomes it after the gulps of river water he had inadvertently swallowed while shouting for Namjoon's attention.

The bar owner is almost alarmingly silent on the bed they are currently sitting on, his knees pulled towards his chest and his eyes fixed into a blank stare at his own feet. His fingers are curled tightly around his own knees, grasping them as if he's still depending on them to keep him from drowning, and his shoulders are hunched, making himself appear much smaller than he is. There is a sense of vulnerability Jimin did not know possible, and he finds it quite jarring to say the least.

Namjoon, ever since they first met on the one fateful night at the bar, had been the very definition of strong in every sense of the word. And Jimin isn't talking about the hard punch he threw or his ability to fight just about anyone off if he wished to or his commanding presence which had people groveling at his feet more often than not.

No, Namjoon was more than that. Namjoon was able to take care of more than just himself. He had people follow him for his compassion and loyalty. He was also strong in that he was always proud and confident. He didn't let things get to him or change him. He had a fixed set of morals he stood by no matter what the circumstances are...and all in all, in Jimin's eyes, the man had been someone who stood in the realm of perfection that Jimin could only dream of.

It's not to say that Namjoon looks weak by any means. Not at all. Namjoon's had a near death experience, and after hearing from Taehyung that the bar owner can't swim to save his life, Jimin's almost surprised by how calm he's taking the entire experience.

But there is something different. Whatever it is, it almost makes Namjoon seem more real. Like an actual human being, if that makes any sense, and Jimin inexplicably feels closer to the other man as he witnesses first-hand a side of Kim Namjoon he didn't know existed.

Jimin pulls the blanket around his shoulders more tightly. They were told by the rest of the bar to get some rest, and while the original plan was to sleep in separate rooms, Jimin opted for staying with
Namjoon, because in all honesty, he's worried about the taller man. Sure, the man may be acting calm and collected, but Jimin doesn't miss the fear lingering in his eyes. And well, he himself isn't in the mood to be cooped up in a room by himself. He's really not in the mood for nightmares in which he will inevitably succumb to the river and wake up with cold sweats covering his entire body.

So he decided to stay in the same room as his own boss, and the rest of the bar left the room with a stern reminder to call for any of them if they need anything. Everyone, even the usually boisterous and flippant Hoseok and Seokjin seem quite shaken up by the event, so Jimin tells them to not worry and get some rest as well. Afterall, it's become a tough day for everyone, even the ones who didn't almost drown.

"Do you need anything?" Jimin asks quietly, inching towards the taller man on the bed, and Namjoon finally looks up, his shoulders still tense.

"I'm sorry," Namjoon croaks out instead of an actual response, and Jimin blinks back at him, confused by the sudden apology.

"For what?"

"You could've died trying to save me," Namjoon explains in a hushed tone, curling into an even tighter ball. It does take a minute for Jimin to truly process the words, because he can't believe what he's hearing. He had jumped in because it was simply the right thing to do. What was he supposed to do? Watch the man just be swept by the current to never see him again?

"Don't apologize for that. We're fine."

"Why did you do it?" Namjoon asks, and something about the question sounds all too familiar to Jimin's ears. The smaller man shifts on the mattress so that he's now sitting directly in front of the other man. Namjoon watches him with a weary eye, the oversized blanket engulfing him almost comically.

"Did you expect me to not try to save you?" Jimin questions back instead, wondering if that's what the bar owner is truly thinking. He hopes not. He would like to think that he's led a righteous enough life for people to think that he's the kind of person to help someone in need. And plus, he really does care about Namjoon, and it'd sort of...break his heart to think that Namjoon doesn't see that kind of bond between them.

When Namjoon doesn't answer, Jimin flashes the other man a small smile before reaching out and pulling the blanket tighter around Namjoon. The bar owner jolts in surprise before returning to just watching the smaller man.

"I really do care about you, you know," Jimin continues, figuring he won't be getting a solid answer to his question. "I know I'm a nuisance half the time and that I can be super annoying but...you've always been so nice to me and...yeah, I guess, I just want you to know that I really do care about you...so um...so of course I'm going to jump in that river and try to save you."

Namjoon listens to the words carefully, taking in every dip and ring of the other man's soft voice. He takes in the way the corners of Jimin's lips are upturned slightly. Almost graceful in the way it conveys such sweet sentiment of genuine caring and selflessness.

The first time they met, Namjoon had believed the man to be nothing more than a pathetic, naive, run-of-the-mill gay man he's seen too many times to count. To Namjoon, Jimin was...the odd one out. The outlier. The kind of guy he didn't associate himself with, because really, he would normally
not waste a second on someone so bothersome.

Yet, time passed, and Jimin proved to be different. He was still helpless and naive, needing protection in just about everything he did, but there was something about him that Namjoon couldn't just overlook. Something about Jimin had stirred up a previously non-existent streak of protectiveness inside him, and he had taken on the role of a guardian of sort. Almost like a big brother figure who, um, taught Jimin how to date guys and kiss them properly.

But when it came to the most frightening moment of his life, Jimin had saved him without a moment of hesitation. Jimin, the same Jimin who stuttered around his dates and took stupid notes on seducing men, didn't even fear death itself to jump into ice cold river and pull him back to land.

Would he have done the same? Would he have been able to risk his own life to save Jimin? What he finds terrifying is that he doesn't think that he can give a definitive "yes" to the question. He had always been cautious of taking risks. Everything he did was quite calculated to reach the best outcome possible. Afterall, he didn't succeed in running Bulletproof based on his reputation alone.

But Jimin. Jimin had jumped in. They weren't even family or lovers. Namjoon doesn't think that they can even qualify as friends. They worked together and sort of helped each other. They sometimes spent time together outside of the bar, but that was it.

And suddenly, out of nowhere, Namjoon feels scared. Not because of what had happened to him mere minutes ago, but because now he's asking himself questions he had been hoping to keep locked up somewhere in the darkest corners of his brain.

What if they were to become something more than just...co-workers? How would Jimin treat him then? Will they be able to make it work?

What if he were to fall for someone like Jimin?

The math is right there. Someone like he can't be falling for some like Jimin. Jimin was too good. Too honest. Too earnest and too loyal. For the better part of his life, Namjoon had trampled over and defiled the very concept of commitment or human connection which exceeds anything more than fulfilling each others' carnal desires. At this point, after so many years of having detached himself from the idea of actually being with someone for more than a single night of mindless sex, he doesn't even know if he's capable of anything more platonic.

What if this is all just his mind and body reacting to a new "target" which has somehow managed to pique his interest? What if he ends up hurting Jimin because his body begins to seek someone else? Really, is there any way of telling? Namjoon wants to almost laugh at the irony. He's never truly worried about hurting anyone's feelings, having told himself countless times that all those men knew exactly what they were getting themselves into...but now he's worried about hurting Jimin's feelings when Jimin probably doesn't think of him as more than his employer.

But the real irony is that he's worrying about falling for Jimin when he's already fallen for the man.

He can deny it all he wants, but Namjoon doesn't bother. The fact that he's even asking himself these
questions can only mean one thing.

He's managed to utterly, oh-so-completely fuck himself over.

"Are you sure you're OK?" Jimin asks softly, placing the back of his hand against Namjoon's forehead, and the bar owner almost jumps at the sudden contact. "I don't think you're running a fever...should I go get someone?" he continues, genuine concern evident on his features. Namjoon raises his own arm and wraps his long fingers around the other man's wrist, almost marveling at how small and thin it feels in his own hand.

"...Boss?"

"I'm fine," Namjoon answers softly before gently guiding Jimin's hand back down and releasing it. Seokjin had always teased him, saying that he will one day find that special someone and pay for all the heartbreaks he's caused. He had brushed it off with a roll of his eyes, telling his friend that he'd never be stupid enough to fall for someone. Afterall, relationships were just a waste of time, and everyone was too predictable for him to pay close attention to.

Namjoon drops his gaze and smiles ironically to himself. God, he's really done it. He can almost hear Seokjin laughing maniacally in his head, his tone mocking as he tells him "I told you so!"

Of all the people he could've possibly fallen for, he has to go for the one man who's off limits. The one man who is...in fact, too good for him.

"Would you like to sleep? I can go to another room if-" Jimin continues, suddenly looking worried as he takes in the other man's strained expression. Namjoon looks up and opens his mouth, pushing the painful thoughts to the back of his head for Jimin's sake.

"Jimin."

"..Yeah?"

"You should be worried about yourself too, not just me. You need a good rest just as much as I do," Namjoon says, unable to take Jimin trying to take care of him anymore. He doesn't need any more reminder of how selfless and generous Jimin is.

"Oh. Umm...I'm really fine though," Jimin murmurs back, suddenly looking quite sleepy as he blinks owlishly at the other man.

"Would you like to sleep?" Namjoon asks quietly, getting ready to vacate the room to give the other space to sleep. However, Jimin reaches out and wraps his fingers tightly around the blanket wrapped around the bar owners' torso. Namjoon stops and watches the smaller man, his eyes questioning.

"Do you...do you mind staying?" Jimin asks, both uncertainty and fear evident in his small voice, and Namjoon lets out a small puff of air when the realization hits him like a truck that of course the experience would be just as traumatic for Jimin as it was for him. Why did he think that Jimin smiling meant that the man is perfectly fine.

"Would you like me to stay until you fall asleep?" Namjoon asks, trying to keep his voice as calm and casual as possible. Jimin nods hesitantly, so the bar owner sits back down on the bed and tries to figure out how the arrangement is going to work.

Jemin lies down slowly, the same blanket still wrapped around him. Namjoon remains seated besides him, hoping that his presence alone will be enough to bring Jimin some semblance of peace.
"Would you like to sleep as well?" Jimin asks softly and Namjoon glances at the smaller man, unsure of what to do. The truth is, now that most of the initial panic has worn off, he's tired. Especially with the lack of sleep from last night, getting some shut eyes seems rather enticing, but he's not sure if it's a good idea to sleep next to Jimin.

Yet Jimin is watching him with those eyes, and Namjoon finds himself slowly pulling himself onto the bed. The two are now staring at each other as they lie on their sides, and Jimin smiles back softly, his lashes fluttering as he blinks slowly.

"What a retreat, huh?" Jimin begins, his eyes folding in to crescents. His tone is light and airy, seemingly floating around the space surrounding Namjoon and falling against his skin like fresh snow. It tickles him in a way which makes him let out a pleasant smile.

"It's usually not this bad. I promise," Namjoon replies, reciprocating the attempt at adding some humor into their situation and to distract himself.

"I hope so." Jimin is flashing him a toothy grin now, and Namjoon swallows visibly, the way Jimin is watching him with all his guards down stirring up something within him.

"Thank you. Again. For saving me," Namjoon murmurs, reaching out to brush a loose lock of hair out of the other man's face. He hopes that the sincerity bubbling in his chest is delivered properly, because he needs Jimin to know what a noble thing he's done.

"You're welcome," Jimin answers, crinkling his nose as he breaks out into another smile. "Good night, boss."

"Good night, Jimin."

Both Jimin and Namjoon wake up to the sound of Jungkook knocking on the door to ask if they want to eat something. Normally, they would let Namjoon and Jimin just sleep for as long as they want, but the rest of the bar figured that it would be better for them to eat, spend some time up and then fall back asleep at night. Plus, they will be putting up their annual campfire, and Jimin had been too excited about it to let any of them have the man miss it.

None of them bring up what happened mere hours ago. Instead, they bring the focus back to what they will be doing for the rest of the retreat and the upcoming Christmas party. Jimin is surprised to find out that their annual Christmas party is just as big as the Halloween one. It did not get as wild or out of control, but the x-mas party was designed to bring new love together. The entire bar would be decorated in soft white and gold, with patrons given bracelets to signify if they are looking for a serious relationship or not. Mistletoe would be hung in certain places, with slow songs placed deliberately between loud beats for couples.

"That's...wow, that's really nice," Jimin muses, listening to Hoseok retelling events of last year's
Christmas party. While Halloween had been fun (minus the part about getting punched in the face), Jimin can't conceal his excitement for the upcoming party in December because...really, what's more heart-warming than seeing new love blossoming and old ones rekindling? Hopefully he'll have someone to dance with by then...because he doesn't think he'd get a chance to slow dance with anyone outside the party.

"It was actually Joon's idea," Hoseok continues, pointing at the bar owner with his thumb. "We were a bit worried that people might find it boring, but it's been a huge success since its first year."

"Oh," Jimin lets out almost breathlessly, surprised to find out that Namjoon, the biggest heart-breaker in Seoul, would be the brain behind something so romantic. As far as Namjoon had let it be known, the bar owner seemed to almost detest the idea of true love, so clearly Jimin is surprised. Pleasantly surprised.

"Do a lot of people become couples?" Jimin asks, glancing around the living room.

"I've seen a few," Seokjin answers after a moment of silence, remembering some of them thanking them for the party. Most, if not all of them, broke up a few months later, but he withholds that piece of information from Jimin, because the smaller man looks too hopeful to have that illusion shattered.

"Wow, that's so nice...."

"Maybe you'll get to kiss someone under the mistletoe this year," Taehyung teases, nudging the other man with his elbow. Jimin blushes at the thought of kissing someone with slow music playing in the background. He's only witnessed moments like such in movies, and the very notion of being given the chance to actually live it is more than enough to almost bring butterflies fluttering in his stomach.

"Are...Are we allowed to um, participate?" Jimin asks, almost stuttering as he does his best to keep the heat off of his cheeks.

"Yup," Hoseok answers, trying to not laugh at the smaller man. "Our annual Christmas party is when anyone, even including us, can find true love. Well, anyway, we should go out and get the bonfire started," he announces, realizing that he better get the fire started if they are going to spend any decent amount of time around it.

Jimin stands up immediately at the suggestion, more than ready to get the fire going. Finally a chance to sit around a campfire, surrounded by people he can laugh with. And marshmallows. Yes. Those. He's not sure what they're supposed to taste like, but Taehyung had only good things to say about them, so that's something he's looking forward to as well.

Jimin helps Jungkook and Namjoon with setting up logs and starting the fire, while Seokjin brings some cold beer outside with Taehyung, who's holding a giant bag of marshmallows. The DJ is now sitting on one of the logs with his legs in crossed in front of him, creating a small playlist to set the right mood for the campfire.

Jimin ends up sitting between Namjoon and Taehyung, the latter rationing out marshmallows to anyone who wants any. Jimin lets out a soft, content sigh at the warmth provided by the campfire in front of him, taking in the almost dream-like flickering of yellow and gold cast over everyone's faces. His fingertips tingle at the radiating heat as he holds up his stick of marshmallow over the fire.

Seokjin whacks Jungkook with the stick he's holding over something the bodyguard has said, and Jimin laughs at Jungkook's indignant expression. The man retaliates by throwing a couple marshmallows and is only stopped when Taehyung yells at him to stop wasting his precious sweets. By the time Jimin returns his attention to his own, he finds that it's been burnt pitch black, and he lets
out an almost pitiful whimper at having to roast another one.

Yet, he find himself staring at a perfectly browned marshmallow in front of him, and he looks to the side to find Namjoon holding his stick towards him. Jimin takes it tentatively, watching the bar owner curiously, and Namjoon flashes him a small dimpled smile.

"For saving my life," Namjoon jokes before returning his gaze back to the campfire.

"I'm sure your life is worth more than a perfectly roasted marshmallow," Jimin replies with a laugh and Namjoon shrugs, the dimples still visible. He takes a careful bite and lets out an appreciative moan at the sudden sweetness which feels his mouth.

"Holy- this is amazing!" Jimin lets out, eliciting a laughter from around the campfire. "Wow. This is-

"Taehyung brought like three bags. I think there's a lot more you can have," Namjoon explains, discarding the burnt on from Jimin's stick.

"I can't believe I've been missing this all my life," Jimin groans playfully, one side of his cheek puffy with marshmallow. "I'm going to miss this when we go back to Seoul."

"Well, you can technically cook them over any stove too. It might not be as fun as doing it over a campfire, but it's going to taste basically the same," Namjoon explains, remembering how Taehyung had cooked some over the bar's kitchen last year and ate enough to make himself sick for the rest of the week.

"Oh man, don't tempt me. I'm going to get so fat if I-

"Jimin," Namjoon says in mild warning, noticing that the smaller man is talking about his weight again. The more he thinks about it, the more infuriating he finds that some douchebag had stressed Jimin out to the point of his becoming this self-conscious about his weight. He would never, ever say something so horrible to Jimin. Jimin is perfect the way he is.

He really needs to stop. He's not helping himself here.

"Okay, okay," Jimin says with a hand up and then picks up another white puff from the bag. "No more of that. I'm having as many marshmallows I want today."

"Good."

They spend the next couple of hours talking about whatever comes to mind. Jimin learns that Yoongi hopes to become an in-demand songwriter one day and that Taehyung does the vocals for his demo tracks. He listens to stories of how Seokjin used to be a pretty popular and infamous heartbreaker as well, but the phase only lasted about a couple of months before he realized that he's way too lazy to keep it up. Jungkook tells the story quite well, complaining about how he had to basically work twice as hard to keep people off of Seokjin and Namjoon, and Jimin laughs at the story, trying to picture the usually goofy Seokjin acting like the boss.

"Well, Taehyung right here's got an impressive track record too," Seokjin counters, throwing a marshmallow at the other bartender.

"Me!? What!" Taehyung huffs with a snort, doing his best to look innocent. The act quickly disappears when Hoseok opens his mouth.

"Kim Taehyung, don't even," the manager begins will a roll of his eyes, and Jimin leans forward
with his eyes practically twinkling in interest. "We used to keep a record of how many times he got bitch slapped in a week."

"OK, that's not even fair, that was like three months," Taehyung tries to defend himself, but Hoseok refuses to have any of it.

"That lasted at least 6 months."

"Man, you're not helping me here," the bartender mutters lowly, and Jimin laughs besides him.

"I didn't know you were like that!" Jimin lets out, nudging the other man with his elbow. Taehyung looks up innocently, and Jimin can almost see puppy ears drooping from the sides of the bartender's head.

"I was going through a phase after a bad breakup!"

"And let's hope you never go through that again," Yoongi quips with a grin, and everyone around the fire laughs.

"Alright kiddies," Seokjin interrupts after letting out an impressive yawn. "I'm getting too old for this shit. I'm going to sleep."

"Me too," Yoongi murmurs before getting up, and Hoseok, as expected, follows suit after wishing everyone some quality sleep. Taehyung and Jungkook get up as well and darts off back into the house, leaving Namjoon and Jimin to sit around the fire in silence.

Jemin listens to the distinct cackling sound of logs burning for a solid minute or so before turning his attention to the taller man sitting besides him.

"Do you want to sleep as well?" Jimin asks softly, and Namjoon shakes his head, wanting to remain exactly where he is. The nap was more than enough to keep him alert, and he likes where he is. Sitting next to Jimin. Just the two of them, with fire dancing in front of his eyes.

"Can I ask you something?" Jimin continues, pushing around the dirt beneath his feet with the heels of his sneakers.

"Of course."

"Why a bar?"

Namjoon looks up at the sudden question to find Jimin staring at him curiously. The man's cheeks are tinged red from the heat of the campfire, and perhaps the small sips of beer he took just because Taehyung offered some.

"What do you mean?"

"Did you always want to own a bar? I mean, the place is amazing, but I was just wondering."

Namjoon mulls over the question for a bit. It's been so many years since he's operated the bar, he's sort of stopped thinking about why he has the establishment in the first place.

"I wanted to create a place where gay men like me can just come and have fun...without thinking about all the bullshit in their lives," Namjoon answers honestly, remembering how difficult it had been for he himself to be dragged to bars and clubs with friends, just to have to pretend to be straight
to not draw too much suspicion. It's not that he was scared of being outing or anything. He had always been proud of who he is, but he didn't want to deal with the aftermath of people finding out. It was too much trouble, too much drama, and worst of all, it blinded people with prejudice, which stopped him from getting anywhere in life.

Seokjin, his oldest friend, and he had pondered over the possibility of creating a space safe and fun for gay men like themselves. Then they met Hoseok, who happened to be taking the same course as Namjoon in college, and the idea became more than just a passing thought. Hoseok introduced Namjoon to Yoongi, who was a DJ looking for a club or a bar who wasn't going to be constantly on his ass about everything. At this point, Namjoon began to look at buildings to rent out to turn into a bar.

They had to start small, and for the first couple of months, everyone had worked for free, each wanting the bar to become a living reality for everyone. Taehyung, who had run away from home after being accidentally outing, joined as a sort of an apprentice to Seokjin. Jungkook was the last to join after visiting the bar as soon as he turned of age. They were a close-knit family who made Bulletproof possible. For them, the bar was more than just a place for drinks and one-night stands...and Namjoon can't believe that he had forgotten about how it all started.

"Wow...that's so...noble..." Jimin Breathes out, looking touched by the other man's response.

"I wouldn't say noble."

"It is! People have so much fun at Bulletproof, you know?"

"Maybe. It does make it easier for them to find potential boyfriends or...you know."

"But it's more than that, right?" Jimin continues, playing with the stick in his hands. "Thanks to you, people like me can just...be ourselves, even if it's just for one night."

"....."

"Wow. I can actually see stars from here," Jimin muses suddenly in a marveled tone as he looks up into the sky and takes in the bright specks of illuminations against the pitch-black dark of the night. Jimin hasn't realized just how much he's missed seeing stars until now.

"Yeah...it's actually one of the reasons why I built the house here," Namjoon explains, staring into the beautiful arrangement of stars as well. Jimin lets out a small "oh" at the piece of information.

"Really?"

"Yeah. I have this habit of star-gazing whenever I have too much on my mind."

"Oh..." Jimin Breathes out, for some reason unable to picture the other man staring up into the sky while trying to clear his head. It's not to say that Jimin thinks Namjoon isn't capable to deep thoughts or worrying over things like any other human being. It's simply that he can't imagine Namjoon ever needing to brood over anything. The man was so well-kept and in perfect control of his life, which is something that Jimin had almost been envious of.

"Is anything on your mind right now?" Jimin asks, noticing the way Namjoon is suddenly looking contemplative again.

"....Maybe," Namjoon replies, turning to face Jimin again. The smaller man continues to watch the other, trying to read the other man's thoughts. He wants to be able to help Namjoon for a change (sure, he's saved the man's life once, but...). Namjoon had always been able to make him feel better,
so maybe they are now close enough for Jimin to finally connect to him on a more emotional level.

"May I ask what? I mean, you don't have to if you don't want to, but sometimes it helps to, you know, let it out and-" Jimin jumps with a small gasp when he feels a hand reaching out and taking his. He looks down and finds Namjoon's slender fingers wrapped around his much smaller ones.

"....Boss?"

"Just for a little while."

"....Okay."

They continue to watch the stars above them, their entwined hands providing them with the only warmth they need.
Why am I so busy?? I just wanna write damn it!
Im so sorry I can't reply to any comments from the last chapter *cries* I did read em all it's just that I can't seem to find the time to sit down and really reply to each one (no matter how much I want to!!! BECAUSE I LOVE EVERY ONE OF YOU). Forgive me!!
AND YEAH! DNA!! YEAH!!!!!!!
But finally an update!! aka. Let's torture Namjoon some more.

"I want to live here forever," Jimin whispers a good few minutes later, and Namjoon slowly lets go of the man's hand, suddenly aware of their adjoined fingers. He's hesitant to let Jimin's hand go, but he pulls his fingers away, feeling that he's overstayed his welcome in a way. Jimin hadn't made any attempt to unlock their fingers or given him any indication of displeasure, but Namjoon figures Jimin's just being... Jimin. Being too nice and considerate as always.

"Any more than a few days and it gets boring," Namjoon replies equally quietly, scanning the nearly dizzying array of stars above them. And he's not lying. A few days away from Seoul is what his soul needs on a regular basis, but any prolonged period of time here and he grows almost restless at the stillness surrounding him. Perhaps he's grown too accustomed to the bustling city life or the loud bass of Bulletproof, but he can't imagine staying here for any more than week.

But maybe not Jimin. Jimin seems to be the type to keep himself busy in that cozy summer home, going out of his way to fish something out of the nearby river and sitting huddled in front of a small fire every night before going to sleep. The thought is strangely endearing, and Namjoon is barely able to stop the puff of laughter threatening to escape his lips.

"Yeah?" the smaller man lets out with a hint of a pleasant ring in his voice. "I can't imagine ever getting tired to seeing something this beautiful," he continues, as expected, and this time, Namjoon lets himself smile back. "Maybe I'm not made for all that big city living."

"That's not a bad thing. Honestly, nothing all that good about living in the busiest part of Seoul," Namjoon tries to comfort the other with his nonchalant tone and shrug. And again, he isn't lying. As much as he doesn't think he can live here for more than a week, he doesn't exactly love living in Seoul either. He's yet to find a middle ground, if it even exists in the first place.

".....Yeah, maybe..."

"....."

"Boss?"
"...Yeah?"

"Can you tell me about what you were like when you were in...I dunno, high school?"

"....What do you mean?"

"Well...I guess I'm just curious what you were like as a student. I just...I can't really picture you as anything other than what you are now," Jimin continues, glancing at the bar owner sitting next to him. Namjoon returns the look before staring at the cackling fire in front of him.

The bar owner purses his lips, uncertain of how to answer the particular question. The fact of the matter is, Namjoon hadn't thought about his past much since leaving it behind. That's not to say that his life as a student was horrible. No, nothing like that. It's just that there existed a clear division between his life back then and his life now, and his current status as a bar owner had kept him too busy to revisit that part of him.

And he's not exactly sure what Jimin wants to hear from him.

"Oh, I didn't mean anything bad by it, I swear!" Jimin blurts out in a panicked tone, mistaking the other man's silence for something else entirely. "I mean, you're just so cool and...grown-up? Does that make sense?"

"I wasn't offended," Namjoon replied, forcing a smile onto his face in an attempt to calm the other down. "I'm just not sure what to tell you. I didn't really stand out all that much. Wasn't anyone that special."

"I can't really picture that...."

"I didn't have blond hair back then, obviously," Namjoon says with a lopsided grin, pulling at his own pale strands with his fingers for emphasis. "I just studied a lot. Liked to read. Didn't talk all that much in class."

"Oh..."

"Why?"

"N-nothing."

"You can be honest with me," Namjoon says with an almost teasing grin, and Jimin relaxes into it, his eyes folding into crescents.

"OK, fine. I just...I know you're super smart, but I can't really imagine you being that student? Did you wear glasses?"

"No. Surprising, considering how much I used to read all cooped up in the corner of my room," Namjoon answers, and even as the words leave his lips, he's surprised to find himself relaying information he had deemed almost too intimate to let anyone know. It's silly, he knows, that he would keep something so trivial hidden, but he can't help it...and it makes him wonder if he's spent perhaps too many years forcing a certain image onto everyone else.

"My mom would've loved you," Jimin comments idly with a short laugh. "She'd always complain about how much I should read and said I needed better friends."

"Don't tell me you were one of those kids," the bar owners teases and Jimin lulls his back in laughter before recovering.
"Me? Nope, I was just your average run-of-the-mill high school kid who liked to play games and sports," Jimin explains, images from his high school years flashing through his mind, and suddenly he can’t hide the sharp pang of pain shooting through him.

"...What's wrong?" Namjoon asks, noticing the change immediately, and he waits patiently for Jimin to either answer him or tell him it’s nothing.

"Well, it was tough going to an all boys school as a gay guy, you know?" Jimin answers after clearing his throat, and Namjoon doesn't miss the constant flicker of pain radiating from the way his shoulders are hunched over. "There was this guy...class president, really good at sports and everyone liked him, because he was super nice and funny."

"...."

"I didn't get outed or anything like that," Jimin says hurriedly, noticing the small frown on the other man's face. "We just talked sometimes and even hung out a few times with other people. But man...I had the biggest crush on him. All through high school," he continues with a bitter laugh before kicking the dirt under his feet. "Can you believe it? All three years, I was pining after him like some crazy person."

"...Three years."

"Yeah. I'm hopeless, I know."

"You're not hopeless."

"You don't have to sugarcoat it."

"I'm not sugarcoating it. It's...nice."

"What do you mean?"

"It's nice to hear that it's possible to, I dunno, like someone for that long," Namjoon mumbles in response, surprising himself with the words flowing out of his mouth. He can almost hear Seokjin laughing at him, fingers pointed and everything, because he himself has a very short expiration date for all relationships (if any) and everyone close to him knows that.

Truth be told, before meeting Jimin, he had scoffed at the very idea of lovesick puppies like Jimin. He thought they were pathetic, sad losers who will forever be slaves to their naivety. However, meeting Jimin and spending time with him has taught him better. There was nothing wrong with people like Jimin, who liked people at the purest level and were able to sacrifice their own happiness to be true to their feelings. Sure, they probably aren’t the smartest, per say, but at least they were honest.

Yes, there was nothing wrong with people like Jimin. *Something was wrong with people like him*, and he'd been too deep in self-denial to see it until now.

Namjoon glances at Jimin and almost reels back to find the smaller man staring at him with wide eyes. Then Jimin breaks into a gradual smile, his eyes disappearing into familiar crescents, and a second letter, Namjoon is listening to the sound of the other man's giggling ringing along with the cackling of the campfire in front of him.

"I didn't think I'd ever hear you say something like that!" Jimin lets out before breaking into another fit of giggle.
"It's not that surprising..."

"It is! I thought you were going to tell me how stupid I was!"

"You're not stupid."

Jimin is smiling softly at him now, and they remain that way for a brief moment before the smaller man opens his mouth again.

"Did you...you know, go through anything like I did?"

"....No."

"No? You knew you were gay in high school though, right?"

"Of course," Namjoon answers with a small nod. "But I also knew there wasn't much I can do about it in high school."

Namjoon had always been perhaps too mature for his age, which meant that he didn't have too much of a problem coming in terms with his sexuality in the first place. By the time he realized that he was not attracted to girls like everyone else around him, he had already familiarized himself with the concept of homosexuality through books, so he didn't struggle with it too much. He simply accepted that he will be leading a life different from most people and that he was going to have to be patient. High school was a shitshow anyway, and he was way past the stage of trying to impress anyone other than himself.

Jimin peers at Namjoon, almost in awe. While high school wasn't horrible by any means, it was not without self-denial and self-hatred and a lot of "why me" on Jimin's part. Yet, Namjoon had taken everything in stride, seemingly completely at ease with himself.

"So you didn't have anyone you liked in high school?" Jimin asks, suddenly curious. Namjoon had briefly mentioned some kind of a relationship back in college, but nothing about anything before that.

"...Hmm, I mean, I was like any other guy that age. Hormonal. Horny. Whatever you call it. I was attracted to a couple guys, but that's about it."

"Oh."

"Yeah. Nothing too interesting to tell you."

"What? Everything you told me was interesting," Jimin counters with wide eyes, playing with his own hands. "I wish I had someone like you around when I was in high school."

"...What do you mean?"

"You know...just someone I could talk to. Keep me grounded and tell me everything will work out. But then again, who knows, I might've had the biggest crush on you and you might've had to deal with me for three years," Jimin finished with a light-hearted laughter, but Namjoon can't bring himself to reciprocate it.

How can he, when Jimin is drawing such a clear line between the two.

Would things have been different if they had met under different circumstances? If Jimin had met him before he was this fancy bar owner who had a reputation of breaking hearts? Would Jimin have really developed a puppy-love crush on him?
Would he have turned out into a different person if he had met Jimin then...?

"I think I'm going to head in now," Namjoon says softly and brushes against his own arms to pretend that it's getting too chilly for him outside. Right now, he needs to retreat to a space of his own, away from all the thoughts plaguing him, and he doesn't want Jimin to read into him.

Jimin glances away from the fire to look at him, a ghost of a smile playing on his lips. Namjoon blinks slowly, taking in how the dim illumination from the stars and the moon above them are casting a soft glow against Jimin's features, highlighting his small nose and his pouty lips.

"I think I'll stay out a little longer," Jimin says after a moment of silence, and Namjoon is glad for the response.

"OK...do you want me to get you an extra coat?"

"No, I'm good," Jimin replies with a toothy grin, and Namjoon nods slowly before turning on his heels and making his way towards the house. He has to fight the urge to turn around and get a second glimpse of the smaller man, who's probably still sitting huddled across the campfire. He wonders what Jimin is thinking. If Jimin is thinking about him at all.

Once Namjoon enters the house, he's surprised to find Seokjin sitting in the living room, his legs crossed delicately in front of him and his phone in his hands. The bartender looks up when he hears the other man entering, and Namjoon quirks an eyebrow back at him.

"What are you doing here?" Namjoon asks, surprised to find Seokjin of all people still up at this hour. He had been expecting the bartender to be cooped up in one of the rooms with Taehyung and Jungkook, dead asleep as he is around this time.

"Waiting."

"For what?"

"For you."

"...Um, OK?" Namjoon says uncertainly, scratching the back of his neck as he tries to recall any event which may warrant the other man waiting for him this late into the night. Seokjin better not be about to give him a lecture on safety or tease him about Jimin, because he's not in the mood for either of the two.

"You're sleeping with Taehyung and Jungkook tonight."

"...What?"

"I know you get zero sleep with Jimin around, and I'm not about to let you drive back to Seoul sleep-deprived," Seokjin explains with a roll of his eyes before shoving his phone back into his pocket and getting off the couch.

"And...what about you?"

"I'm going to talk to Jimin and have him room with me."

".....Why."

"Joon, please tell me you're not jealous."

"I'm not jealous," Namjoon answers with an indignant snort.
"Good. Now go get some sleep," Seokjin says with a grin, and even though the man is smiling at him, Namjoon finds it difficult for him to argue as he watches the bartender making his way out the door. He knows that the other man has a solid point. He won't be getting any sleep with Jimin around, and he will probably crash the car and kill all three of them if he lets that happen.

And plus, he really needs some time away from Jimin anyway.

"Hey Jimin."

Jimin almost jumps out of his skin when he hears his name being called out. He whips his head around to find Seokjin making his way towards him, his lips curved into a soft smile and his head tilted slightly to the side as if asking him what he's doing.

"Oh, I thought you were sleeping," Jimin breathes out with a hand over his chest.

"Ah, sorry, didn't mean to scare you," the bartender apologize, holding both his hands up. He takes a few more steps forward until he finds a spot on the log besides Jimin. "What are you doing here all by yourself?" he asks softly, watching the fire flickering before him.

"Just wanted to see the stars and enjoy the campfire for a bit longer," Jimin answers with a smile, looking up at the sky again. They sit together in silence before Jimin remembers something and turns to glance at the bartender again. "How come you're not sleeping?"

"Mmm, too much napping," Seokjin replies with a shrug, hoping that the smaller man doesn't see through the lie. The truth is, he's tired. He spent the entire day freaking out about almost losing his best friend and Jimin, who he's come to adore just as much as everyone else, and that had definitely taken a toll on his body. Yet he can't think of any better time to speak to Jimin one-on-one, which is something he's been meaning to do for a while.

And really, now that he can physically see his best friend falling for Jimin, he doesn't think he can wait any longer. Don't get him wrong. Seokjin normally stays clear of meddling into people's affairs. He's always been a firm believer in letting shit happen, and if it really does go to shit, then tough luck, shit happens...but not this. Not because he doesn't trust Jimin (the man probably can't even hurt a fly without guilt tripping himself for a solid week) or because Namjoon is reckless (if anything, the man is a complete opposite of that), but because...well, despite Namjoon's track record, he doesn't want his best friend to hurt himself inadvertently.

"So, Jimin," Seokjin begins inconspicuously, choosing his words carefully. "It's been a while since you started working at Bulletproof. How are you finding it?"

"It's amazing. I mean...I didn't I would like it so much but...everyone's so nice and it's always so fun, you know?"

"Even with the getting slapped and punched in the face?" Seokjin jokes with a grin, and Jimin lulls his head back in quick laughter.

"Yeah, even that I guess."

"I...want to thank you."

"Hmm?"
"Thank you for saving Joonie."

"Oh, that, that's just-"

"No Jimin. You don't understand. Namjoon is my best friend. He's like a brother to me...and I can't imagine ever losing him like that. I almost did...but you saved him. You risked your own life to save him, so thank you."

"....."

"Namjoon may seem tough and...even distant sometimes," Seokjin continues slowly. "but he's a really great guy. Probably the best guy I've ever seen."

"I know," Jimin replies, and the certainty and degree of conviction in the man's tone puts Seokjin's mind at relative ease. He knows how easy it is to overlook the person Namjoon is when he's so clouded in his reputation he had built for himself. He will never force Jimin or Namjoon to give each other a chance. That went against every fiber of his being, but he wants Jimin to truly know who Kim Namjoon is before making any kind of decision.

"You do?"

"Yeah. I know he's a bit of the whole...tough love kind of guys sometimes. Only _sometimes_...but...he's always helping me out and watching over me and everyone else, you know? Sometimes I wonder why he doesn't let more of himself show...." Jimin muses quietly, now speaking more to himself than anyone else.

Seokjin raises his eyebrows. So Jimin's pretty much gotten his friend figured out.

"He's changing," the bartender begins after a moment of silence, and Jimin turns to look at him.

"Hmm?"

"He's also changed a lot since you came to the bar. He's...more himself."

"Oh..."

"Well, anyway, I made Joonie room with Taehyung and Kookie, so you're stuck with me tonight!" Seokjin adds immediately, not wanting them to dwell on the subject any longer. He got the answer he wanted, and that's all he's willing to do for the time being.

"Oh, how come?"

"Hey now! Are you disappointed? You should be honored!"

Jimin laughs loudly, slapping his own knees in the process. "You're right! I'm honored!"

"Good. Now let's get to sleep. Help me with this?" Seokjin continues, pointing at the campfire in front of them. Jimin nods and gets up, staring into the night sky one last time before reaching over to help the bartender.
It's Friday night, which means that Bulletproof is bustling with gay men eager to wash away the stress of their week with alcohol and sex. Jimin makes his way from table to table, clearing them of empty glasses and napkins and even greeting patrons who frequent the bar.

"At this rate, we're going to have to hire another person," Taehyung muses idly as Jimin takes one of the stools in front of the bar for his break.

"This place is getting really popular," Jimin comments, scanning the crowd and stifling a laughter when he spots Jungkook rolling his eyes at a particularly handsy couple who's basically having intercourse on the dance floor.

"Yeah. I'm starting to think that we're going to need an extra set of hands, but I really don't want to have to go through the whole bullshit process of finding someone who isn't going to try to get into boss man's pants," the bartender whines before taking one of the bottles back onto the shelf. Jimin laughs before taking a glass of water for himself.

"Maybe we should hire some heterosexual guy?" Seokjin suggests with a shrug and Taehyung throws him a look.

"Really? And what straight guy wants to work at a gay bar and watch guys eyefucking each other?"

"Well, we don't really have that many options now, do we?"

"We're so glad you're here, you have no idea," Taehyung continues once he's facing Jimin again. Jimin smiles back, his cheeks tinged pink at the sudden compliment. Just then a man leans over the bar, shouting an order of 3 tequila shots, and Taehyung makes an OK sign with his hand before pulling out shot glasses.

Jimin watches Taehyung working with ease, flipping the tequila bottle in his hand before pouring it over the line of glasses, and he only turns to glance at the man standing besides him once Taehyung is finished.

And suddenly, he can't breathe again.

Afterall, how can he, when the object of his futile, pathetic affection for a good three years of his life is standing right next to him, looking even more handsome than he had ever been in high school.

Memories of all the embarrassing daydreams and pining and rushing towards him, threatening to practically drown him. Jimin used to watch him play basketball from a distance, taking in the way he moved with such fluidity and how he flashed a toothy grin every time he scored. He used to watch the man stick his tongue out the corner of his eyes whenever he was focused during class. And now here he was, dressed in a crisp white shirt and slim fitting black slacks with his raven black hair a
ruffled hot mess.

He was taller, more chiseled. The sweet boyish charm replaced by something a slight more dangerous and that much tantalizing. And from the looks of it, he recognized him too, which meant that Jimin had nowhere to hide. And before he can even process the fact that they are meeting each other for the first time in years at a gay bar, where men who like men come to meet men, the former object of his affection is calling out his name.

"...Park Jimin!?"

".....Kim Mingyu!?!"
Jimin really shouldn't be surprised, considering his track record. Of course Kim Mingyu was bound to pop out of nowhere and enter his life less than a week after he talks about him to his boss. Of course. Trust his streak of bad luck to land him where he is, with a somewhat tipsy Mingyu watching him with a toothy grin that somehow, to this day, is making his stomach do flips.

"Holy shit, Park Jimin? I didn't expect to see you here. Wow, how long has it been?" Mingyu begins, his tequila shots forgotten on the bar counter. Jimin can vaguely make out Taehyung and Seokjin watching their interaction curiously, but he can't even bring himself to look away from Mingyu.

Oh god, the man asked him a question.

He should answer.

He should really move his lips and say something.

"Um...years?" Jimin blurts out almost stupidly, but the taller man doesn't seem to mind too much. Perhaps it's the alcohol or maybe its his innate good-natured personality. Whatever it is, one thing Jimin is glad for right now is how dim Bulletproof is, because he's certain that his cheeks must be burning scarlet by now.

"I didn't know you were..." Mingyu trails off, waving a hand around the sea of people and then flashing one his lopsided grins again. "But then again, here I am too, right?"

"...Yeah. I...I really didn't...oh wow," Jimin replies slowly, and suddenly everything is slapping him right across the face. Mingyu is in Bulletproof. A gay bar. Mingyu is gay. And he had pined after a gay guy thinking that he'd never ever have a shot, because lets face it, Mingyu was way too popular to begin with anyway, and well, if his memory serves him right, Mingyu always had girlfriends. Sure they never lasted long and it was always the girls who asked him out but- oh...ohhhhh...

"Man, I can't believe this! I never expected to see anyone from high school here," Mingyu continues, and Jimin lets out a nervous laughter he hopes is doing a good job of concealing the storm of emotions coursing through him.

"Yeah....I didn't either...?"

"You come here a lot?"
"I um...sort of...work here?" Jimin answers, flashing the red band around his wrist, and Mingyu raises his eyebrows in surprise.

"This is my second time here, I wonder how I missed you?"

"Oh, I mean, I'm not really an official employee here, if that makes sense. I kind of help around here and there. Taking a break from college," Jimin explains hurriedly, doing his best to not trip over his own words. There is no question that he's feeling extremely nervous at this point. Can anyone blame him? His crush of three years is leaning almost dangerously close to him, his insanely handsome features basically radiating under the dim lighting of the club.

"That's cool. Hey, I'm with my friends right now if you want to come join?" Mingyu offers with a tilt of his head towards the tables, and Jimin swallows hard. Is Mingyu seriously asking to hang out with him??

"I...can't," Jimin manages to squeak out. "Not when I'm working." At this point, Jimin isn't sure if he should be disappointed or glad. Probably the latter, because he's sure that he's going to end up embarrassing himself somehow if he were to hang out with Mingyu and his friends (who by the way all seem to be just as ridiculously hot as Mingyu from where he's standing).

"That makes sense. Hey, let me get your number. We should definitely catch up and just hang out," Mingyu offers with a lopsided grin as he hands Jimin his phone, and Jimin takes it gingerly, trying to wrap his head around the situation. Mingyu is asking for his number, and yeah OK, he shouldn't flatter himself because Mingyu is probably just being friendly, but....but what if the man is too drunk to remember the encounter? Oh god, he doesn't even want to think about that.

Jimin enters his number anyway and hands the phone back to Mingyu. The tall man squints at the screen for a brief moment before pressing "call" and Jimin almost jumps out of his skin at the sudden vibration in his pants.

"And now you have mine!" Mingyu announces almost gleefully with a wink, just as Jimin pulls his own phone out and scans the series of numbers on the familiar screen. "Hey I should go back to my friends but...feel free to come say hi when you can. Or we can just text," he continues before picking up his shots and disappearing into the crowd.

Jimin is so, so confused right now. Is he dreaming?

He wouldn't be too surprised. He's had some bizarrely realistic dreams before. Especially about his love interest and hot guys.

"Ohhh, Jiminnie, who's that? He's hot," Taehyung teases, leaning over the bar, and Jimin nearly jumps out of his skin for the second time that day.

"J-just someone I used to know from high school."

"Dang, you went to school with something like that? Did you guys bang??"

"Kim Taehyung, calm down," Seokjin jumps in with a dramatic roll of his eyes and smacks the other bartender with the towel he's holding. "And nobody says bang."

"Well, I'm sure Jimin knows what I'm talking about either way," Taehyung retorts before turning his attention back to the other man. "So did you?" he continues to tease, although he knows already for a fact that Jimin hasn't done the deed with anyone yet.
"No, no, nothing like that...I used to have a crush on him. For like...three years," Jimin explains with a defeated slump of his shoulders, suddenly regretting the words out of his mouth. Great, he's going to sound like even a bigger loser.

"Three years!!" Taehyung squeaks, his already big expressive eyes even bigger, to the point where Jimin almost winces. "How does anyone have a crush for three years!!? That's like- ow!" the bartender yips when he feels Seokjin's towel smacking him upside the head.

"There's nothing wrong with having a crush for three years," Seokjin counters, leaning against the counter as well. "It's cute!" the bartender continues in his efforts to encourage Jimin to continue to spill. He knows by now that this is going to be good, and he's been dying for some gay gossip at the bar. Especially because Namjoon is now involved in the equation. Yes please, keep 'em coming.

"Well, I mean, I guess if you're crushing on a guy that hot, it sorta makes sense," Taehyung mumbles, drumming his fingers against the smooth surface in front of him. "I saw you guys exchanging numbers," he adds with a devious smirk and watches as Jimin drops his gaze to his own hands.

"Oh. Yeah, he wanted us to...catch up."

"Hmm, and what about you? Are you still interested in that guy?" Taehyung asks point blank, and Jimin scratches his chin nervously, which is, in all honesty, a solid enough answer for the bartender. He gets it. Jimin is that kind of guy. The kind of guy to crush on someone for three whole years and then fall right back to that as soon as the guy is back in his life.

The only problem is that he had been rooting for Namjoon, but man, Mr. Hot Ass comes in and takes the lead with ease, and from what he knows of boss man, Namjoon is most likely to take a step back if Jimin so much as goes on a date with Mr. Hotness.

And honestly, he's not about to meddle and try to make Namjoon and Jimin a thing. God no. He knows better than to try that shit...but maybe...just maybe, this is the push Namjoon needs to make a damn decision already. Frankly, he and everyone else is getting quite sick of Namjoon tip-toeing around Jimin, with what is probably a closet full of self-deprecating and philosophical bullshit running through that crowded space in his head, so yeah, maybe this is what the man needs.

Honestly, he doesn't care all that much who Jimin ends up with, as long as Jimin is happy, but a rather vocal part of him wants that someone to be Namjoon, a person he respects as a human being and knows will treat Jimin right.

But hey, if Namjoon wants to be all confused and weird about it, then well, tough.

"I-I think my break is over," Jimin squeaks, realizing how Seokjin and Taehyung are both staring at him silently. He hops off the stool and rushes to the table furthest away from the bartenders, leaving the two men to glance at each other simultaneously.

"Well, things just got really interesting," Taehyung muses, and Seokjin nods in agreement.

"Not for Namjoon, but for us, definitely interesting."

"God, I love working here."
"Come in," Namjoon murmurs when he hears a series of knocking on his office door. He only tears his eyes away from the laptop screen in front of him when he hears the door open, surprisingly revealing Seokjin instead of Hoseok.

"What are you doing here?" Namjoon questions, a small frown forming on his features as he tries to figure out what the bartender is doing. He glances at the time and sees that it's already nearing their closing time. He's been too absorbed in his work and calculations to realize that so much time has passed already. Come to think of it, his neck and his shoulders are killing him now.

"I work here?"

"You know what I mean."

"Well, a little birdy told me something very interesting and I thought I'd share," Seokjin continues after a low chuckle and glides towards the couch in the office. He takes a seat, crossing his legs delicately in front of him, and Namjoon already doesn't like where this is going.

"You mean Taehyung."

"Nope."

"....Do I really need to know?" Namjoon asks with a sigh, not knowing what Seokjin has up his sleeves and almost scared to know. He knows that look. Nothing good has ever come from that familiar smirk, and he's way too tired to be dealing with it.

"Oh, I'm sure you'll want to know," the bartender replies in a sing-song voice, even waving his fingers around for emphasis. Namjoon stares at the man long and hard before throwing his arms out in defeat. Seokjin won't leave him alone until he gets what he came for, so he has no other choice than to engage.

"What did Taehyung do this time..."

"Jesus, Joon, it's not about Taehyung."

"Surprise, surprise," the bar owner mutters with a roll of his eyes, and Seokjin narrows his eyes at him.

"You're awfully cynical today."

"Sorry. Just...I've been on my laptop for too long. What is it?"

"So, I was bartending, like I do everyday."

"Jin..." Namjoon lets out a long, low sigh, signalling his current state, and Seokjin relents.

"-OK, fine, fine. So I saw Jimin talking to this ridiculously good-looking guy and they exchanged numbers, and when I asked him about it, guess what! It's his crush from high school and apparently
Jimin had a crush on him for three years. Can you believe it?” Seokjin fires away rapidly, his eyes practically twinkling as he retells the event of the day. He's grinning now, looking unashamedly giddy as he waits for the other man's reaction.

Namjoon, however, says nothing as he mulls over the words and quickly makes the connection to what Jimin had told him over the campfire.

"Why are you not surpri-oh, wait, you knew about the guy! How do you know about him? Did Taehyung tell you already? I swear I didn't see him leave the floor. Damn it!” Seokjin almost looks disappointed, and Namjoon wonders if this is an appropriate time for him to sever their ties, because wow, what a bro.

"No, it's not Taehyung. Jimin already told me about the guy..." Namjoon explains honestly instead, suddenly feeling a lot more tired than he had been less than a minute ago. He doesn't even have the energy to be aggravated at this point, let alone get into a whole spiel about how Seokjin probably shouldn't even be telling him these things in the first place.

"Oh...when?"

"During the retreat."

"Hnn. Interesting. Well, anyway, Taehyung and I actually got to see him, and holy hell, he was hot. Like hot. Like-"

"Jin..."

"Anyway, thought I'd share, because it seems like the two's planning on catching up! OK, off I go to clean up!” Jin finishes with blowing a kiss into the air, and Namjoon says nothing as he watches the other man leave the office.

By the time Namjoon is back downstairs, ready to just go home and hopefully pass out in his bed and forget the day ever happened, he finds Jimin standing idly by the speakers, playing with the phone in his hands. Jimin looks up when he hears the footsteps and rushes towards the taller man.

"Jimin, why are you still here?” Namjoon asks, doing his best to not let his fatigue show.

"I was waiting for you!

"....Did you need something?”

"I just wanted to talk to you about something, but...Oh, I'm sorry. You look tired. We can talk about it some other time," Jimin apologizes once he really takes in the state the other man is in. Namjoon however shakes his head and puts on a (hopefully) reassuring smile.
"...It's fine. Just a lot of computer work. What is it?"

"Remember the guy I had a crush in high school?" Jimin begins, perking up as he starts talking about Mingyu. Namjoon does his best to seem unaffected as he listens to Jimin's words, although he wants nothing more than to just...walk away.

"...Yeah."

"I saw him at the bar today. Can you believe it? All those years, I was pining after him thinking that I was an idiot for falling for a straight boy and he's gay!"

"I see."

"And he remembers me! We exchanged numbers and he just texted saying that we should definitely hang out sometime next week," Jimin continues and then bites his lower lip, his cheeks tinged pink, and Namjoon, despite his efforts to not notice, can't help but see how excited and happy the smaller man seems with the idea of spending time with this crush.

"....."

"And I'm kinda nervous again. I thought I was completely over him, because I haven't seen him for so long, but...it was crazy! Do you think I have a chance with him? Should I just go for it this time? Since I know he's gay now?" Jimin looks hopeful. An expression Namjoon had been hoping not to see in association with this said crush ever since Jin decided to barge into his office.

"....."

"You're always telling me that I should be more confident. So should I?" Jimin asks, looking equal parts shy and eager, like a puppy waiting for a praise or a pet on the head, and Namjoon knows that he doesn't have a choice but to say what Jimin wants to hear. No matter how much he doesn't want to say the words.

"...Yes, you should. If you want, that is."

"I do. I think I really do. You'll help me, right?"

"...Of course," Namjoon answers, and he hopes that his smile is as convincing as he's forcing it to be. Because right now, it hurts to smile, and he's not stupid or delusional enough to think that it's the fatigue.

"OK good, thank you. Gosh, I dunno why but I just had to tell you and ask for your advice. OK, I'll let you be now! I'll see you tomorrow boss!" Jimin finishes with a genuinely excited smile before bouncing out of the building.

And Namjoon remains where he's been standing, suddenly unsure of where to go.
"Hi!"

Namjoon doesn't know how to react as he stares at Jimin standing in front of his apartment again, a paper bag held securely in his arms. Jimin had asked if he can come over because he wants to talk about his hanging out with his ex-crush a couple days ago. Namjoon had contemplated coming up with some bullshit excuse, because he doesn't want to partake in his own abuse, but as it goes, he who has fallen in love first is at a disadvantage, because he can't say no to Jimin.

So he doesn't even fight it.

Instead, he stupidly tries to persuade himself that perhaps listening to Jimin rambling on and on about this blast from the past will somehow aid in the disintegration of his current feelings for the smaller man.

"I brought takeout! I know you don't probably eat junk food like this but...I promise it's really good...?"

"...Sure. Come in," Namjoon steps aside to give room for Jimin to make his way into the apartment. He gets a quick waft of the food the smaller man is holding as Jimin beelines straight to the living room to place to bag securely on the coffee table.

"I feel like I haven't been here for a while?" Jimin muses, looking around the familiar space and flashing the bar owner a toothy grin. "I missed this couch."

Namjoon doesn't say anything to that. Instead, he takes his usual place on the couch and watches as Jimin unpacks the small plastic and paper containers in front of him. He eventually finds himself sitting in front of dumplings and ddeokbokki and even some spicy noodles, and Namjoon inexplicably finds himself stifling a soft laughter once he realizes just how...Jimin the menu is.

"Man, I'm starving," Jimin murmurs before digging into the meal in front of him with a pair of wooden chopsticks that came with the containers. "Oh...I should've asked if you're OK with any of this," he trails off, noticing how Namjoon is watching him in silence.

"I've had junk food before, Jimin," Namjoon jumps in softly, and Jimin sighs in relief before continuing with his first bite.

"I'm sorry. I just keep thinking that you're...you know...into more...fancy stuff."

"I was an ordinary kid in high school. Even in college. I like junk food, I just generally choose to eat better for health reasons," Namjoon answers honestly, and Jimin looks relieved by the piece of information.

"Oh, and I also brought these!" Jimin announces with a clap before pulling out cans of beer from the other bag he's been holding. "I'm not sure if it's something you'd like but...I kinda wanted to just grab a drink with you I guess?"

"Those are fine."

"Whew, good."

"So...what did you want to talk about?" Namjoon begins halfway through their meal. It's strange eating on the couch. He can't quite remember the last time he had been so sloppy in his own
apartment, and as much as he's supposed to hate it, he finds himself strangely comforted by the informality.

"Well, Mingyu, my crush from high school, and I went for a quick dinner and a drink," Jimin starts to explain, playing with the chopsticks in his hand. "And I'm not really sure what's going on."

"...What do you mean?"

"He was really nice, as always. And we talked about what we've been up to and all that stuff...and then he said we should watch a movie together this weekend," Jimin continues with a small frown, and Namjoon sets his food down, his appetite vanished from his system as he pictures the two men together. "So I said yeah, sure, and um he walked me home?" he finishes, the last part almost sounding like a question rather than a statement.

"And?"

"I'm just not sure if this is a friend thing or...or...is it possible that he might be, I dunno, interested in me that way?" the smaller man asks shyly, nibbling at his lower lip again, and Namjoon, for the first time in a while, is at a loss of words.

So Kim Namjoon is a man of many talents, and rhetoric has always been one of them. He had always been good with words, and the particular skill had come in handy when it came to his rise as a notorious heartbreaker. That is not to say that he's manipulative. God no, he'd never stoop so low. But it's there. He's fully capable of dissuading Jimin from seeing Mingyu by telling him that Mingyu is just being a friend and nothing more. Hell, Jimin would make such an easy target. Afterall, Jimin's gullible and naive nature is what brought them together in the first place.

But he can't do that. Not even if he wanted. Not because it goes against his personal set of morals, but because he wants to be honest with Jimin. Especially when Jimin looks so hopeful.

"I haven't seen the guy, but I'd say he's into you," Namjoon finally answers quietly, his voice as calm and collected as always, and he almost hates how perfectly genuine he sounds as the words leave his mouth.

"Yeah? You really think so?" Jimin asks, practically beaming, and Namjoon pretends to be engrossed in his food to avoid making eye contact. He mechanically shoves food into his mouth, even though he can no longer even taste the damn thing. "OK, that's good, because I was worried that I might be reading into it too much."

"So you'll be watching a movie with him?"

"Yup! Oh man, I have a good feeling about this! Three years and this!" Jimin continues with a lopsided grin, and Namjoon does his best to reciprocate it even though all he wants is to be left alone. For the next hour or so, he listens to Jimin talk about the details of their "date," and Namjoon, despite his best efforts, doesn't remember 90% of the conversation by the time Jimin is swaying on the couch, his face red and his eyes hooded with alcohol.

"Jimin, let me take you home," Namjoon offers, realizing that the man is probably too tipsy to be left alone outside to make his way back home by himself. Given his track record, Jimin might end up sleeping on the pavement, and Namjoon definitely doesn't want to risk that happening.

"I'm not drunk, I promise!" Jimin says with a cute frown before taking another long swig of his beer.

"Jimin-"
"No, but I'm having so much fun! I like drinking with you," the smaller man interrupts with a lopsided grin, and Namjoon finds himself just watching the other silently, unsure of what to say. "Actually, I just like spending time with you," he continues, following by a small sneeze and Namjoon almost jumps off the couch in surprise. Jimin pulls the can towards his lips, and the bar owner reaches out to gently stop him.

"Jimin, I think you've had enough," Namjoon warns as gently as he possible can, doing his best to ignore the look of disappointment on the other man's face. Jimin has his lower lip jutted out almost petulantly, and it takes a lot of willpower on the bar owner's part to not give in.

"How come you don't drink that much? You never get tipsy or even drunk around anyone," Jimin mutters, giving up on the idea of trying to pry the can that's now in the other man's hands. Namjoon's not sure what to say to that. He's not in the habit of being anything other than completely composed around people. Even around his closest friends. Something about losing control around others unnerved him, and both Seokjin and Yoongi had commented on it on multiple occasions.

Sometimes, Namjoon got pleasantly buzzed. Only if the mood strikes him and he was in comfortable company. It happened very rarely, and even then, he made sure to never get actually drunk. Perhaps it's come from years of learning to not trust others. He's heard enough horror stories of botched one-night stands to put himself in such a vulnerable position...especially when men were constantly lurking around him to take some kind of advantage of him.

"Jimin, let me take you home," Namjoon tries again instead, starting to feel a little uneasy as he mulls over the question. Jimin shakes his head defiantly and then drapes his arms around the taller man, his eyes closed and his lips stretched into a soft smile.

"I'm so glad I met you," Jimin slurs, one cheek smooshed against Namjoon's chest and making it harder for the taller man to really understand him. "I really, really like you. You're so amazing...and so nice," he continues to purr, blissfully unaware of how Namjoon's arms are now hovering around him, unsure of where to go.

"...Jimin, you're drunk," Namjoon states the obvious rather dumbly, not knowing what else he can say. He knows where Jimin lives, but he doubts that he will be able to go inside when Jimin probably can't even hear him properly anymore. "Jimin," he tries again, but ends up sighing lowly to himself when he hears soft snoring coming from his chest. Jimin is now slumped lifelessly on top of him, his mouth agape with little puffs of air escaping his pouty lips.

Namjoon lulls his head back, leaning it against the couch. Jimin feels too warm against him. They've kissed before for heaven's sake, so why is it that he finds himself frozen still, his arms now lying uncomfortably to his sides in some lame attempt to get as far away from Jimin as possible?

It takes a good ten minutes for Namjoon to decide that it would only be reasonable for him to take Jimin to his bed and let the man sleep there. Normally, he'd keep Jimin on the couch, but tonight, the man looks so small and peaceful that he can't bring himself to abandon him on the particular furniture. Plus, the weather is getting quite chilly, and he knows for a fact that the air in the living room isn't all that accommodating during the night.

So Namjoon carefully pries the small arms off of him and gathers the man into his arms, not sure if he wants Jimin to wake up and go home or if he wants the man to remain asleep. Hell, only days after he finds out his feelings for Jimin and the man has to go and do this. He can't decide if Park Jimin is the bane of his existence or a gift, but what he knows for a fact is that Jimin has been his only source of headache and trouble for the past few weeks.

Yet, Namjoon can't help the stupid smile creeping its way to his lips as he watches Jimin protesting
the sudden movement with incoherent noises and a frown on his face. In all honesty, Namjoon
should feel offended that Jimin is so lax around him. The man is always falling asleep around him,
sprawled all over the place and not giving a damn how he presents himself.

Namjoon sighs in defeat once the realization hits that it's probably that particular trait that has
garnered his attention in the first place. Not that Jimin is playing hard to get or anything. That, he'd
be able to see through in a heartbeat, but Jimin seriously had no interest in impressing him in that
way, and the thought, as strangely titillating it is, is borderline depressing.

The bar owner waits for a minute to give Jimin some time to fall back into sound slumber. When the
incoherent noises come to a stop, Namjoon slowly gets off the couch, the smaller man still in his
arms. He makes his way slowly to the bedroom, paying careful attention to ensure that he doesn't
slam Jimin's head or limbs against a wall or a door. His bedroom is always warm, thanks for the
automated heater that goes off at the same time every day, and Namjoon remains tentative as he
slowly places the other man onto the mattress. He feels every dip. Hears every rustling of the duvet.
Sees the way Jimin's lips curl into a hint of a smile as his head lies perfectly on top of the pillow.

Namjoon watches in rapture when Jimin begins to curl himself into fetal position on the bed. The
man's soft hair is now sprawled against the pristine white pillow, his lashes casting a small shadow
against his cheeks. The bar owner swallows hard and then shakes his head before pulling the blanket
over the figure, tucking him in securely although the air is probably already warm enough.

"What the fuck are you doing," Namjoon mumbles to himself as he finally musters enough
willpower to leave the room. A few hours later, Jimin will wake up and ask him how he fell asleep.
Tomorrow, Jimin will be all smiles again, excited about the idea of going to that movie date with his
high school crush.

In a few hours, Namjoon will have to pretend as if he's happy for Jimin.

So for now, he's going to let his own sighs and thoughts lull him to sleep in the cold living room.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

An update in less than a week! So proud of myself. And more Joonie torture :D

The next morning, Namjoon is already sitting at his dining table with a half empty coffee mug in his hand by the time Jimin decides to make an appearance. The smaller man is a complete mess from the looks of it, with his hair sticking all over the place and his face swollen to the point where his eyes are barely visible. Namjoon hides a small smile as he pretends to take another sip of his coffee as he watches Jimin dragging his feet across the floor.

"Oh God, how much did I drink last night?" Jimin mutters under his breath before plopping onto the chair across from Namjoon. He proceeds to then rest his head against the wooden surface of the table, and perks up only when Namjoon offers to fix him a cup of coffee as well.

"Yes please," Jimin murmurs with a lopsided grin, and Namjoon gets out of his chair to make some for the smaller man. He waits for the water to boil in silence, opting to remain quiet instead of making an attempt at small talk. Jimin seems to be struggling as is, and he doesn't want to push the man until the man's had at least some caffeine in his system. The smell of fresh coffee wafts through the spacious kitchen, slowly bringing the smaller man to his senses, and when Namjoon does set a mug down in front of him, Jimin takes it gratefully, sipping at the warm liquid slowly as if it's going to magically cure his hangover.

"I'm sorry...I took your bed," Jimin apologizes once he's finally somewhat functioning again, and Namjoon only shakes his head in response. "Where did you sleep?" he asks, looking around the kitchen and the adjoining living room. Jimin doesn't remember there being another bedroom in the apartment.

"On the couch."

"Oh..I'm really sorry. I don't know why I drank so much," Jimin apologizes again, his cheeks turning red at the thought of having been such a horrible guest. He's usually not on such behavior, but he had been so pleasantly buzzed last night, he just continued on drinking.

"It's fine," Namjoon reassures the man, even putting on a small smile in an attempt to calm the other down. Sure, his back might be hurting a bit, and the relatively colder air of the living room hadn't been all that accommodating, but hell, it wasn't as if he was going to be getting decent sleep with Jimin in the house no matter where, so in the end, he doesn't think it matters too much.

"Is my face puffy? I feel puffy," Jimin whines suddenly, pressing his palms against his cheeks and making his pouty lips jut out like duck beaks, and this time, Namjoon lets out a small puff of laughter.

"Little bit," the man answers honestly and Jimin lets out a sheepish grin in response.
"Great...Didn't you drink? How come you're OK?" Jimin wonders out loud, taking in how extremely composed the other man seems to be (as always). He does remember the bar owner sipping at his can the entire night...

"I guess I didn't drink that much. Would you like some breakfast?" Namjoon offers, figuring that Jimin can now probably take in some solid food without throwing up all over the kitchen. Coffee may be good. But it's a temporary fix, and he doesn't want Jimin to make the mistake of relying on caffeine on an empty stomach.

"Breakfast? Oh god no, I mean, yes I'd like to eat, but I'll cook something. I already took your bed and you made me coffee. Let me at least fix you some breakfast?" Jimin's voice is almost pleading, and Namjoon comes very close to relenting but shakes his head slowly instead.

"It's fine. Maybe next time," Namjoon says instead before getting out of his chair again. "You should take a quick shower and in the meanwhile, I'll fix some breakfast."

"No, don't do that. I feel horrible already. I swear I can make something quick!" Jimin nearly shouts as he jumps from his chair.

"Jimin. It's fine," Namjoon says softly before placing a gentle hand on Jimin's head and then pulling it back immediately once he's realized what he's done. He shouldn't be touching Jimin like this. He studies the smaller man's expression and relaxes only when he sees that the other seems to be completely oblivious to the erratic behavior.

"Go take a shower. Fresh towels are in the cabinet."

"Are you sure? Or maybe you can wait and then I can make something or I dunno, we can make something together?"

"Go take a shower first. I'll get started."

"OK...Thank you. I'll be right back!" Jimin announces before making his way to the bathroom, looking a lot more awake than he had been mere minutes ago. Namjoon watches the retreating figure and then lets out a sigh when he hears the familiar click of the bathroom door closing. Really, what is he doing to himself? How smart is it for him to offer to make coffee and cook for the man and have him stick around even longer?

He can almost hear Jin laughing at him. Way to take part in your own abuse, Kim Namjoon. So much for smart thinking.

Namjoon gets the water boiling in a pot and starts chopping vegetables, figuring some stew will help calm the other man's stomach down. It's crazy to think that this isn't the first time he's cooking for Jimin. Not to mention that this is probably the first time he's cooked for someone on more than one occasion.

It's strange. Despite the fact that he has no chance with Jimin, he's coming more and more in terms with the fact that Jimin has this power over him. He's becoming one of those people he used to make fun of.

Iironically...he's becoming more like....Jimin.

And he should hate it. He really should. Really, who wants to be tied up to some unrequited love and be tortured for it? But he can't stop it, because every time Jimin is near him, the fact that he's pushing himself deeper into a hole sort of becomes...forgotten.
All the confusion and frustration disappear when Jimin is smiling at him or even sitting at the kitchen table with his hair all over the place and his face puffy.

And he can't help but wonder if this is what it feels like to be Jimin.

To be someone who does hopeless things.

Namjoon lets out another low sigh as he continues to chop vegetables, using the sound of blade hitting wood to distract him from the fact that Jimin is taking a shower in his apartment right now. People didn't take showers in his apartment unless it was right before sex. He's made sure that people didn't stick around longer to take one in the morning.

But here Jimin is, and here he is, thinking about Jimin again.

Namjoon pours the vegetables into the pot and stirs slowly, hoping that the way the colorful pieces are circling around may be distracting enough. He stirs and stirs, watching them bob up and down as water continues to boil.

"Oh man, that was a good shower," Jimin announces as he re-enters the kitchen, his hair still wet and a towel slung around his shoulders, and Namjoon jumps at the sudden voice. Alright, so the vegetables did an amazing job of keeping him under hypnosis.

Jimin does look a lot better now that he's been under warm water, but the way his cheeks are now tinged pink isn't help Namjoon at all. Something about the relaxed, almost lazy, expression on the man's face, added with wet hair and pink cheeks are making Namjoon see the other in a light that he shouldn't. What is it with Park Jimin and catching him off guard all the time?

"You should dry your hair. You might catch a cold," Namjoon suggests, tearing his eyes away from the smaller man.

"Nah. It's not that cold. Can I help you with anything?" Jimin offers obliviously, standing right besides Namjoon with his eyes hopeful. The bar owner clears his throat to buy time before asking the smaller man to set the table, and Jimin happily obliges, looking rather pleased that he can do anything to help.

"Man, is there anything you can't cook?" Jimin asks as he eyes the stew boiling on the stove.

"This is only the second time I've cooked for you," Namjoon says with a small laugh. "And you haven't even tasted it."

"But it smells amazing. I can already tell this is going to be good," Jimin muses, glancing up at Namjoon with a twinkling in his eyes. "Man, I wish I lived here," he jokes playfully, and Namjoon has to pretend to be looking for salt as he swallows hard. He knows Jimin is only joking, but it doesn't help when his brain is now flooded with images of living with the other man.

Waking up every morning like this and eating together...

Snap out of it, Kim Namjoon.

By the time the table has been set, Jimin is more than ready to dig in. Namjoon motions for the other to start, and Jimin goes right for the stew to take a spoonful.

"This is so good, oh wow," Jimin murmurs with an appreciative moan that almost makes Namjoon flinch. Jesus. What is with him today. The two continue to eat, with Jimin complimenting the food every 5 minutes and Namjoon telling him that it's really not that great. The conversation somehow
ends up on the upcoming Christmas party, and it's easy for Namjoon to see how excited the smaller man is about the event.

"It's going to be so nice!" Jimin chirps after swallowing his bite. "I know it sounds kinda lame, but I really like looking at Christmas decorations. Always wanted a Christmas tree at home, but...you've seen my place. It's tiny."

"You can always get a small one."

"Nah, but what's the fun in that? Are we putting up a tree in the bar?" Jimin asks with a twinkle in his eyes, looking genuinely giddy about the idea. Truth be told, Namjoon had banned it as of last year, when a couple of drunk patrons knocked it down and almost destroyed Yoongi's setup, and as far as he's aware, no one had ever brought it up since.

But now Jimin is sitting in front of him, looking more excited than the bar owner can handle, and before Namjoon can stop himself, the words "of course" is spilling out of his lips...and before he can take his words back, Jimin is smiling so widely and well, now he's going to have to talk to Hoseok.

And Hoseok is going to give him so much shit for him, but...oh well.

"Oh! Do we get to put ornaments up ourselves?"

"If you'd like."

"This is awesome! This will be the first time I put up ornaments and stuff you know? People don't really do it at homes in Korea and wow, this is great. Is it just for one day though?"

"We've only had it for eve and Christmas."

"Oh..." Jimin suddenly looks disappointed, and Namjoon quickly opens his mouth again.

"But I guess we can start early this year."

To this, Jimin immediately perks up again, and Namjoon doesn't think he will ever grow quite used to the way the smaller man is so honest with his emotions.

"We're doing what?"

".....Hoseok."

"Seriously? We're putting a Christmas tree back up? And like two weeks earlier? What in hell, Namjoon. You made me throw away our tree last year!" Hoseok hisses with narrowed eyes, and Namjoon pretends to busy himself with the laptop in front of him. The manager, however, refuses to have none of it as he pushes the device slowly out of the way.
"Alright, what's this about," Hoseok continues, leaning towards the bar owner.

"Nothing. I just think a Christmas tree would be nice for a Christmas party."

"And it is. That's why we had it. And then that happened and you were hell-bent on not risking that again. And that still doesn't explain why you want it two weeks ahead of the actual event."

"To get people in the mood," Namjoon answers lamely and pretends to not see the other man rolling his eyes so hard that he probably pulled a muscle. "Hoseok, I have work to do," he continues in an equally sad attempt to get the other man off his ass.

"So do I."

"....."

"And I'm not getting that Christmas tree until you tell me exactly why. I know you, Kim Namjoon. You're not doing this for the hell of it."

"....Hoseok."

"Are you really going to make me say it?" Hoseok asks with a snort, leaning back and crossing his arms in front of his own chest.

"....If you already know, why are you asking me?"

"Because I want to hear you say it."

"....Hoseok. Come on."

"Alright! Fine! I'll get you that tree, and I'm guessing he wants to do all the decorating too."

Namjoon only sighslowly in response.

"Honestly, Namjoon, I don't know why you're doing this to yourself. With all this effort you put into trying to keep him happy, why the hell aren't you just dating him already," Hoseok mumbles and then leaves the office before Namjoon can even come up with a response. In all honesty, the bar owner is glad that the other man is no longer in sight, because there really isn't an answer he can come up with for that question.

Yeah, really, why is he doing this to himself...
Namjoon had been very ready to continue on with the same act he's been putting on for some time now. In fact, he's gotten so used to it, it's become sort of a second nature for him. Just smile back when Jimin says something, nod every once in a while, and pretend it doesn't hurt at all every time Jimin mentions Mingyu.

Which is does a lot.

Namjoon isn't blind to how much happier Jimin becomes when he talks about the little dates they go on. This is definitely different from the time with Jaebum. Back then, Jimin seemed a little but more on edgy. More nervous. Definitely more unsure about both himself and the prospect of dating the man. But now, things were much more natural.

From what Jimin tells him and everyone else, this Kim Mingyu guy is a great guy. They go to normal dates to normal places. They watch movies together. Grab dinner together. Always texting each other during breaks. And from what everyone else tells him, he's also ridiculously good-looking. Taehyung won't shut up about it, and Namjoon chooses to ignore it.

So back to his point, Namjoon had been very ready to keep whatever it is boiling inside him nicely swept under the rug. Smile, nod and pretend. He could do that until his own feelings grow tired of his inactivity and move on.

But no.

He now finds himself running away and hiding from Jimin like some pathetic coward he'd normally hate. When he sees Jimin approaching him with his eyes twinkling and his cheeks tinged pink, ready to share stories of another exciting date, Namjoon finds himself walking the other way, thanking his long legs for being able to carry him away from the smaller man as quickly as possible. He finds himself cooped up in his office for longer hours than usual, tapping away furiously at his laptop or burying himself in filework that doesn't need second reading.

He knows he's being sad. He's perfectly aware of the fact that this is not who he is, yet he can't stop. When Jimin asks if he can come over, Namjoon lies and says that he's busy. He goes through all sorts of excuses, from meeting other people (when he's in fact just moping in his own bedroom) or feeling sick (when he's in fact again, just moping in his own bedroom). He's not sure if it's a good thing or a bad thing that Jimin doesn't suspect a thing and sends him texts like "oh ok, maybe next time" or "I hope you feel better soon!"

He had promised Jimin to help him with the date, but he finds it impossible to bring himself to do so. Plus, from what Taehyung and Seokjin tell him, Jimin is doing perfectly fine without his help, and he's wondering if this is when he starts regretting all the advice he's ever given Jimin.

Honestly, he doesn't want to be an asshole about it. He's prided himself in maintaining his status as a decent human being even when the entire world seemed to be against him. Yet a smaller, pettier, and much more vocal part of him is yelling at him for letting this happen by giving Jimin all that advice in the first place.

Yet, at the end of the day, he likes that Jimin is a lot more confident and radiant now. The smaller man is more himself, and he really can't bring himself to feel bitter about it.

Jin and Hoseok are the first ones to take notice of Namjoon's blatant hiding and running away, and while they do poke fun at him for a couple of days, they begin to understand the severity of the situation. They eventually take pity on the bar owner and do their best to either steer conversations clear of the Mingyu-Jimin date stories or distract Jimin when the smaller man tries to approach the boss man.
And this goes on for days, and no one at the bar knows what to do anymore.

"Mingyu! What are you doing here!"

Taehyung and Seokjin both whip their heads up to find Jimin bouncing towards a tall, familiar figure standing only a few feet away from them. OK, so they had been expecting something like this to happen, and normally, they'd be excited, but no. Now when Namjoon had come into work looking absolutely miserable already, lying about feeling a little bit under the weather. Jimin, of course, believed him without an ounce of suspicion, offering to get some meds, and Seokjin had jumped in to ask Jimin to retrieve something from the storage room to save Namjoon.

Namjoon had shot him a grateful look before quickly retreating to his office, and Seokjin had let out a small sigh, suddenly having a bad feeling about the evening.

And of course, Mingyu has to make an appearance. Of course.

It's not that any one them hold any animosity towards Mingyu or anything. Afterall, why would they? OK, so maybe some of them were feeling a little bit bitter about the fact that Mingyu seems like a decent guy as opposed to someone like Jaebum who Namjoon could just punch and shoo away. But at the end of the day, Mingyu was just some nice dude who made Jimin happy, and really, who can hate that?

"Hey, I wanted to drop by to see you," Mingyu greets back with a toothy grin before picking Jimin off the ground and twirling him around a couple times. Jimin lulls his head back in laughter before being set back on the floor, and Seokjin doesn't miss the way Jungkook scrunches up his features from across the bar.

Jungkook, for some reason was very passionate about not joining team "Min-Min" as Taehyung had put it, and he didn't even try to hide it most of the time.

"Aren't you tired?" Jimin asks, and Mingyu leans forward and presses his lips gently against the top of the smaller man's head with a "A little bit. But I figured seeing you for a few minutes won't hurt."

Seokjin and Taehyung flinch simultaneously at the sudden display of public affection and then flinch again when they spot Namjoon descending down the flight of stairs with his eyes glued to his phone.

Goddamn it, why now, Seokjin groans internally. So Namjoon, despite his too-obvious hiding and running away, had stuck to his daily inspection of the floor to make sure everything is going smoothly and to greet frequent visitors to the bar. It was a bit of tradition at the bar, really, and hell, some people came to Bulletproof exclusively to see the man. Yet, this is just going to bite Namjoon in the ass, and Seokjin doesn't know what to do.

"Oh, let me introduce you to those two!" Jimin says excitedly, basically dragging the taller man
towards the bartenders. "This is Seokjin and Taehyung," he introduces with an almost proud smile, leaning against Mingyu's towering figure.

"Hi, it's nice to meet you. Kim Mingyu," Mingyu introduces himself with ease, shaking his hands with both of the bartenders.

"Oh, hey, oh, that's nice," Taehyung says slowly, his big eyes doing a rather horrible job of hiding his panic. Mingyu throws the man a confused glance, but Seokjin jumps in with one of this trademark smiles.

"Well, it' nice to meet you. I hope you've been taking good care of our Jiminie. Why don't you two, you know, go dance over there for a bit," he suggests, pointing at a spot far away from the bar counter. Jimin tilts his head to the side in confusion.

"But I'm working...?"

"No, it's fine, I'm giving you an extra break. Come on, run along," Seokjin tries desperately to make Jimin leave with Mingyu, yet he finds himself unable to continue when he hears a familiar voice from besides him.

"Jin, I was looking at...."

Goddamnit, Kim Namjoon. You are your shitty fucking timing.

"Oh! This is my boss, Kim Namjoon, and this is Kim Mingyu," Jimin introduces completely oblivious, his lips stretched into a wide smile as he looks up at the tall man besides him.

"Hi, hello, I've heard so many wonderful things about you." Mingyu is surprisingly the one to initiate a handshake, extending a hand out with a good-natured smile.

And for a second, Namjoon freezes.

He had come down stairs after about a whole hour of telling himself that seeing Jimin working on the floor isn't a big deal. Yet here he is, standing directly across the man that Jimin had spent the last few days gushing over. The same man who somehow could easily navigate into the heart of the one person who somehow seemed to be out of his reach.

And Jimin is standing next to him, looking so radiantly happy that something inside Namjoon just sort of...chips off.

Namjoon manages to recover quickly enough to not draw any suspicion, and he takes the offered hand with the most professional smile he can muster.

"And I've heard a lot of great things about you," Namjoon replies politely as he pulls his hand back after a firm handshake.

"You talked about me?" Mingyu asks with a grin, looking fondly at the smaller man leaning against him.

"A little bit," Jimin replies shyly, his cheeks turning pink once more. Namjoon tries to come up with the right thing to say to excuse himself from the situation, yet he finds himself glued to where he is, killing himself slowly by watching Mingyu pull Jimin even closer towards him.
And Namjoon doesn't think he can breathe properly when Mingyu pinches Jimin's cheek playfully at something the smaller man has said.

It was never like this with Jaebum.

The two are saying something to each other, but why is it that he can't hear anything. All he feels is the vibrations coming from the booming bass of the bar, yet he hears nothing. It's as if all his senses are now focused on just watching Jimin's lips stretch into a shy smile and his eyes disappearing into crescents as he lulls his head back.

How could he have possibly known that this would hurt this badly?

He had expected it to be annoying. Infuriating even. But he had never expected it to hurt so much to see Jimin so happy with another man.

Namjoon is only pulled out of his trance when he feels a strong hand squeezing his arm tightly.

"Joon, didn't you have something you wanted to discuss with me?" Seokjin is saying to him, and Namjoon only nods dumbly, barely registering the words. "Here, why don't we go into your office and talk. Tae, you can manage the bar alone right?"

"Of course," Taehyung answers immediately, shooting Namjoon a wary look before forcing a smile onto his face.

"OK, we'll be right back!" Seokjin announce loudly, drawing everyone’s attention to himself instead of Namjoon, who looked almost shellshocked by the way he's remained silent and frozen. Seokjin links an arm around Namjoon and proceeds to drag him towards the staircase, pretending to be saying something to the boss to not appear even more suspicious.

"Kim Namjoon, what are you doing," Seokjin hisses as soon as he's basically thrown Namjoon onto the office couch. Namjoon doesn't even respond with words as he commences to wrap his head with both his hands, suddenly looking as if he's regretting his life as a whole.

"What is he doing here?" Namjoon finally manages to ask as he lets his head go.

"He came to see Jimin or whatever. Jesus Namjoon. You're a goddamn mess right now."

Namjoon only buries his face into his hands this time, looking uncharacteristically fragile as he remains still on the couch. Seokjin opens his mouth to give his friend a piece of his mind, but he finds himself unable to vocalize any of it as he takes in how miserable Namjoon looks on the small piece of furniture.

This was clearly not a joke anymore. Nothing was entertaining or fun about this anymore. Namjoon, his friend and brother for life, was now just pitifully sad and heartbroken, all because...

"Joon..." Seokjin lets out softly instead, placing a gentle hand on the other man's shoulder. "You need to start making a decision, Joon. You can't keep this up."

"....."

"I'll let you be for now, but...if you need anything, text me, OK?" Seokjin offers quietly, and Namjoon barely nods in response.

"I care about Jimin and all but...you know you're like a brother to me, right?"
"...I know."

"OK...I'll be downstairs."

"...Thanks, Jin."

And Namjoon can't decide if the silence which follows is comforting or suffocating.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

It's getting so cold.
I hope everyone's staying nice and warm and safe :)

It's about two weeks until their annual Christmas party. Hoseok, despite all the complaining, does manage to pick out a decent sized tree for decorating, despite how difficult it is to purchase one in Korea on such a short notice. Jimin nearly crashes into the tree in excitement as soon as he sees it inside the bar, and luckily, it's Jungkook who catches the man right before he runs straight into it.

"Wow! This tree is so much bigger than I expected!" Jimin says with a giddy grin once the initial excitement has worn off. In all honesty, he'd been expecting a small tree barely the size of himself standing sadly in a corner, but no, it was much bigger than him. Right now, it was barren, but he knows for a fact that there are boxes of ornaments waiting to be hung up. Afterall, he picked out most of them alongside Taehyung, who seemed to be just as intrigued by shiny things.

"When do we get to hang them up?" Jimin asks, turning to look at Hoseok, who is busily writing something down on a notepad. The manager barely glances up as he answers, his hand still moving rapidly across the paper.

"We usually take volunteers to work on it on a day off or just work on it after business hours. You interested in volunteering?"

"Of course. I mean, I can get started on it today. After work."

To this, Hoseok does look up, with raised eyebrows and all. "Wow, you really are into the whole Christmas thing, aren't you."

"Yeah. I know, it's silly, but...I've always wanted to try this."

"Well, that's good for us, I guess," the manager replies with a grin. "We'll see who else wants to stick around and help then," he finishes before flipping to the next page and then rushing off elsewhere. Jimin turns back to the tree in front of him and stares at it in awe. There is something beautiful about the way it is standing to one wall of the otherwise modern bar. Jimin can picture all the lights and sparkly ornaments adorning it. Now his only question is if there will be Christmas carols.

"Wow this is the biggest one we've had yet."

Jimin jumps slightly at the familiar voice behind him and finds Taehyung eyeing the tree as well.

"Really?"

"Yup. Usually, it's not this flashy. I suppose this explains why our manager made us pick out a lot
"more ornaments this year."

"Oh..."

"Not to mention that we weren't even supposed to have a tree this year," the bartender continues, scratching his chin.

"What do you mean?"

"Last year, a couple of drunk people almost knocked it down and it was really close to getting Yoongi, who was, well as you know, DJ-ing. I think he was more pissed about that fact that his equipment almost got destroyed...but yeah, boss man banned it because he didn't want to risk killing someone this year around."

"I...didn't know that."

"Oh. So you don't know why we have a tree again this year."

"No..."

"Hmm, well, I'm glad it's back either way," Taehyung says with a shrug and then rushes off when Seokjin yells for him. Jimin glances back at the tree with a small, confused frown. How come Namjoon hadn't told him anything? Perhaps the man had made a decision to put the tree back up before he even asked. Yeah, that must be it. It's not like he himself has that much power in decision making to begin with anyway.

"Alright, Jimin's volunteered to decorate the tree after work today, who wants to join? And just a head's up, I'm going to make Joonie stay as well, because he made me get that tree," Hoseok announces as he approaches the two bartenders and Yoongi, who are lingering around the bar counter and getting ready to open shop.

"Uh, I think we all know the answer to that question," Taehyung replies, drumming his fingers against the hard surface of the counter. "I don't think anyone in their right mind is going to become a part of that mess."

"I agree," Seokjin murmurs with a slow nod. "Plus, I feel like JK is going to punch whoever even tries," he continues, pointing at their bouncer with his chin. The rest turn to glance at Jungkook, who is on his phone, playing some game with his tongue sticking out of one corner of his mouth.

"Yeah, I've noticed," Hoseok murmurs, remembering the faces the bouncer had made the day Mingyu decided to drop by. Jungkook was on the other man like a hawk, ready to pounce the moment the man fucked up. Unfortunately for the bouncer, Mingyu was on perfect behavior during his stay, well-mannered and friendly to all.

"So I think we can all agree that we're leaving it up to boss man and Jimin?" Hoseok finalizes, and everyone else nods.

"Is that really a good idea?" Yoongi asks as he leans against the counter, and he doesn't need to specify what he means.

"I love Joonie and all," Seokjin begins slowly, placing an empty glass on the counter. "but he really
does need to figure it out, and well, maybe this will make him think things through."

"Isn't his problem that he thinks too much?" Taehyung questions with a small frown.

"It is. But maybe he needs to be pushed past this tipping point. Somehow. I dunno, I'm guessing. Nothing else is working and it's not fun watching him mope anymore. Plus, he can't run away forever," the other bartender answers with a shrug, and the rest nod in agreement.

"So who's going to tell him?" Yoongi questions, remembering that Namjoon probably isn't going to be all that on board with the idea of spending alone time with the one person he's been trying to avoid all along.

"No one," Hoseok replies with a grin. "Trust me, no one is going to have to."

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Namjoon glances at the numbers to the bottom of his screen and then presses both his palms against his eyes. He had been staring at his laptop as if his life depended on it, only so that he wouldn't conjure up the image of Jimin with Mingyu by his side. It's been days. Days. Yet all Namjoon can think about is the two of them standing next to each other. With gentle touches. Little knowing smiles.

It's well past their closing time. Hoseok had already done the whole "OK, we're leaving now" spiel and left him to himself since. It's been a good half an hour. Everyone must have gone home already, which probably makes it safe for him to leave the confines of his office as well. Namjoon lets out an almost pained groan as he begins to shift in his chair. His neck and shoulders are screaming at him to stop moving, but he takes the pain as a welcomed distraction.

Namjoon stretches his limbs slowly. Rotating his neck and rolling his shoulders back slowly before moving onto massaging his wrists and back. He's going to go home, take a bath or whatever to hopefully calm his nerves down enough for him to get some shut eye for a change. Sleep had been scarce since that day. Namjoon would return to his apartment after work and sit in the living room, mindlessly watching re-runs on his TV or scrolling through random news articles on his phone for hours on end until his body becomes too tired to stay up. He'd then collapse onto his bed and give into slumber until waking up a couple hours later, high-strung and miserable again.

He makes his way downstairs, one step at a time in fear of taking the wrong step and tumbling down. God forbid he cracks his head open on top of everything. Wait, no that doesn't sound all that bad. Maybe he'll forget about this stupid-

Namjoon stops dead in his tracks.

He's not the only person inside the bar.

How does he know this?
Because he sees the back of an all too familiar figure standing in front of the tall, green Christmas tree that seems almost out of place in the modern bar.

Jimin.

What the hell is Jimin still doing here.

Decorating it seems.

Of course.

Of course he would be.

Why did he think that Jimin was going to wait to do this with everyone else.

And why did he think that other people at the bar would actively try to avoid this from happening.

Namjoon contemplates sneaking out of his own bar undetected but decides against it once he realizes how ludicrous the idea is.

"Jimin," he calls out softly instead as to not startle the smaller man. Jimin jumps anyway and then whips around quickly enough to almost give himself a whiplash. He clutches at his heart and then just as quickly relaxes once he sees who it is.

"Hi boss. I don't know why I forgot that you're still around. I've...I've just been decorating. Hoseok said I can. I hope you don't mind me sticking around, but oh, you must be leaving now. Hold on, let me just clean this up and-"

"Jimin."

"Yeah?"

"You can stay."

"Oh, but...don't you have to go? I mean, I can always close up shop if you teach me how."

Namjoon says nothing. Instead, he slowly makes his way towards where Jimin is standing and reaches out to brush his fingers against one of the gold, round ornaments hanging on the tree. The tree is only halfway finished by the looks of. There are still unopened boxes of ornaments lying next to the tree, alongside ropes of light piled on top of one another.

Jimin peers at him curiously, and Namjoon doesn't miss the hint of hopefulness in the other's eyes. Sometimes, he wishes that Jimin wasn't so easy to read. The man clearly wants to finish the tree as quickly as possible, and Namjoon, being the sucker that he is, can't help himself from giving in.

"I'll help," he says instead of his intended "OK." He hates himself as quickly as the words leave his mouth, but then Jimin smiles, and it's as if nothing else exists in the world.

"You will?"

"....Yes."

"Awesome! This is even better!" Jimin says with an even bigger smile, reaching into the half empty box and pulling out an ornament shaped like a candy cane. "Aren't these cute? It's got tiny ribbons on 'em. Tae bet money that someone drunk will be eating one of 'em," he continues with a wrinkle of his noise before hanging it on one of the branches.
"I wouldn't be all that surprised," Namjoon replies with a small smile back, and he surprises himself by the ability to do so. He can't remember the last time he's actually smiled in the past few days, unless he was forced to greet some of the patrons at the bar.

"I hope not. It's plastic. Wait, can people digest plastic?" Jimin asks, looking suddenly worried, and Namjoon lets out a huff of laughter.

"I'll tell Jungkook to keep a close eye."

"That sounds like a good idea. Drunk people do really strange things," the smaller man muses, reaching for another ornament just as Namjoon does the same. "I mean, I do stupid things when I'm drunk too, as you probably know already, but I've seen some crazy things, you know?"

Namjoon peers at the smaller man, trying hard to not think about how Jimin had fallen asleep in his arms in his apartment.

"One time, I had to stop a guy from drinking out of the vase over there. He was so drunk he thought that was his glass or something, and we all know that the water's been in there for way too long."

The bar owner chuckles lowly. He can imagine the smaller man rushing towards the drunk man, frantic.

"And like a lot of people fall asleep in the bathroom. I know we clean the place all the time, but still kinda gross."

"That is."

"Oh, and yesterday, one of the people tried groping Jungkook, and wow, I've never seen anyone get slammed onto the floor so quickly in my life. I mean really, how drunk do you have to be to try groping Jungkook of all people?" Jimin says and lets out an adorable "hehe" as he hangs a gold, glittery star on another branch.

"I don't know if anyone told you, I mean, I'm guessing you already know everything that goes on in the bar, but Tae taught me how to make couple of the Christmas cocktails! He says I should help them serve some, isn't that so cool? I get to make the one with the peppermint sticks. He says I'm pretty good," Jimin continues to ramble on, not noticing the way Namjoon is silently watching him.

Namjoon, for one thing, had no idea that was going on in the bar, but that doesn't matter, because Jimin just seems so happy to be given the chance to make drinks. He knows that Jimin had always been fascinated by the way their bartenders served up gorgeous cocktails of all colors and flavor. Now he wishes that he would've given Jimin the opportunity to do so earlier.

"I guess I'll come down and try one of your creations."

"You will?"

"Of course."

Jimin beams, and Namjoon has to remind himself to breathe. To appear normal.

"But what do you mean come down? Aren't you going to be around the party the whole time?"

"...."

"Come on! You have to! It's Christmas!"
"...Maybe."

"Taehyung tells me it's going to be really fun. Will you be wearing a santa hat as well? I heard we all are."

"Forgot about that..."

"You'll be wearing one too right?"

"...Sure."

"Oh, have you seen these? Taehyung and I were so surprised to find these and we had to get em shipped in. These-" Jimin says with newfound excitement as he pulls a box towards the space between them. "-are alcohol themed ornaments! Aren't these perfect?" he continues and takes out a shiny ornament shaped liked a tequila bottle with a tiny gold ribbon on top.

Even Namjoon's a bit surprised with this one.

"I didn't know something like this was a thing," the bar owner muses, taking the ornament from the smaller man's hand and examining it.

"Yeah! And it's not just tequila. We've got em all here."

Namjoon peeks into the box and indeed sees miniature versions of familiar bottles packed nicely in a set. He pulls out a whisky bottle and studies it momentarily before putting it up.

"This is nice," the bar owner muses. He's never really enjoyed the process of decorating trees. Sure he's partaken in it, because everyone else at the bar had, but...this was different. There was something almost sacred about the way each ornament was being hung up in its own place, sparking and glittering under the lighting of the bar.

And Jimin is standing right next to him, his small fingers working delicately to make sure that each piece is where it belongs, a smile perpetually playing on his lips and his eyes shining just as brightly as the ornaments themselves.

And Namjoon wants nothing more than to reach out and touch the man.

"How old were you when you found out that Santa isn't real?" Jimin asks as he pushes an empty box to the side and pulls out the last one. It's filled with miniature Santa hats and golden bells.

"I wish I could tell you 8 or 9, but....never was a believer."

"What! How? I only found out when I was like 10 and that's only because someone in my class spoiled it for me. I was so mad that day, you have no idea. So what happened?"

"My parents never tried. Santa never quite came home, I guess."

"....?"

"My dad was a bit of a workaholic. Didn't have time for all that nonsense or protecting my childhood," Namjoon elaborates quietly. "And mom well, Christmas season was the busiest for her. All those parties and events to attend to."

"Oh....Did you at least get gifts?"

"I did. Well, nanny took me. I pick something out, she paid with mom's card. I grew tired of it after a
while and sort of stopped doing that too."

"...That's...I'm sorry."

"Nothing you need to apologize for," Namjoon says with what he hopes passes as a playful grin. Jimin is watching him with so much sadness in his eyes, and Namjoon hates it. He hates seeing the expression on the other man's face.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have. I mean...it's just...all kids should be allowed to be...kids, you know? And it just...sucks, I guess, that you didn't get to enjoy that."

"Well, at least I didn't have to go through the whole being disappointed that Santa isn't real, right?" the bar owner says in an attempt at humor, and Jimin cracks a hint of smile at that. "I think we're done with the ornaments," he adds, realizing that the last box is empty as well.

"Yup. Time for lights!" Jimin says with a single clap and then reaches for the coils next to the tree. "Got the plain ol' white ones. Thought it'd look the best."

Namjoon helps Jimin wrap the lights around the tree, working around the branches and making sure to not knock any of the ornaments off. The bar owner circles around the tree in the direction opposite of Jimin, and he continues with a small, focused frown, until he trips over one of the boxes and goes stumbling down. He lets out a rather embarrassing "agh!" as takes a hurried step back and ends up tripping on another empty box. Namjoon braces for impact, instinctively letting go of the light in his hands as to not pull the tree down with him.

Yet, he finds himself leaning against Jimin, who has an arm wrapped around his waist and another holding tightly onto his arm.

"Oh man, you OK there?" Jimin asks with wide eyes, slowly moving his limbs to place the bigger man back on his feet. "You didn't sprain anything, did you?" he continues, scanning the other's ankles with a concerned frown.

"...Yeah, I'm fine...just tripped on the boxes."

"Yeah, I should've put them away better," Jimin murmurs almost apologetically, and Namjoon waves both his hands around.

"No, that was my bad. I should've been watching where I'm going," the bar owner jumps in hurriedly. "I guess you just saved my life twice now," he continues with playfully and then relaxes when Jimin breaks into laughter, his mouth wide open and his eyes disappearing into the familiar crescents Namjoon's come to absolutely adore.

"I do what I can," Jimin says between chuckles before finally letting go of the bar owner. "So, let's put this around here, and voila. I think we're done. I'm just going to plug this in and see if it works!" he announces as he darts towards the plug with one end of the cord in his right hand. Jimin pushes it in, and instant, there is a burst of light coming from besides Namjoon.

The bar owner turns around to face the tree, brightly lit with ornaments twinkling in an almost mystically way. The colors all fade together under the white and golden light, and Namjoon finds himself just staring at the beautiful display, unable to move as he lets it envelope him.

"Pretty, right?"

Namjoon almost jumps at the sound of Jimin's voice coming from right besides him.
"I can look at it all day," Jimin continues with a rather wistful sigh.

Namjoon watches.

Watches how the light shines against Jimin's face.

The way Jimin's eyes are twinkling just as brightly.

How his pouty lips are curled into a smile of genuine happiness and bliss that makes Namjoon swallow hard.

Namjoon wants to reach out.

They're so close, aren't they. He can just reach out and pull the man into his arms.

How would that feel.

To have Jimin in his arms.

There is only one way to find out, yet Namjoon does nothing. Does nothing as he continues to just take in the man that has somehow managed to enter his life and become something more than a passerby.

Namjoon shoves his hands into his pockets in a physical effort to not reach out.

"We should start heading home," he says instead, eyes back on the tree in front of him.

-  

Jimin pulls his phone out for the 40th time in the last 10 minutes or so, checking his reflection in the small black screen in front of him to make sure his hair is where they are supposed to me and nothing's in his teeth. He's not even entirely sure why he's checking his teeth, considering he hadn't eaten at all today. Mingyu and he were scheduled for a dinner date, and Jimin had been cutting down his meals because he's sure that he's gained a little weight over the past couple of weeks.

He had spent a good half an hour on his hair. It looks excellent. He had picked out something nice and safe to wear (something the boss man had approved of before). Mingyu had texted him saying that he's running a little late, and while it would make sense for Jimin to wait somewhere inside in his cold weather, he chooses to remain outside the subway station, just in case Mingyu's phone dies or if he arrives like a second later.

Jimin shoves the phone back into his pocket and rubs his hands together briefly before shoving them into his pockets. Dang, the weather has become relentless as of late. He should invest in a good pair of gloves or something.
Jimin ends up waiting for another ten minutes before Mingyu arrives, and the tall man is quick to apologize as soon as his eyes land on the smaller man.

"So sorry for being late. You should've waited inside somewhere!"

"No, I'm good. So uh, should we get going?"

"Yeah, of course," Mingyu says before he begins walking again, and Jimin trails besides him. They arrive at a rather crowded restaurant specializing in Korean barbecue, and Jimin almost flinches at the sheer level of noise in the place. There are men who are surprisingly already drunk (and its only 7 something on a Monday) and more screaming than conversing pleasantly. Jimin does his best to pretend he's comfortable where he is. He had been hoping for a quiet dinner somewhere a little bit more...romantic, just so that they can get to know each other more, but hey, at least they are spending time together right?

"You come here often?"

"Yeah, but usually on weekends with my friends. I didn't know the place would be this crowded on a Monday," Mingyu muses, waiting for one of the tables to be cleaned so they can be seated. Jimin doesn't miss how basically every woman seated are watching Mingyu intently.

They are eventually taken to their table, and while Jimin is not at all pleased to be seated right behind a table filled with drunk people currently in a heated political debate, he keeps a smile on his face and does his best to focus on the taller man seated across from him.

They talk about what they have been up to since graduating high school. Jimin finds out that Mingyu has a side job as a model, doing photoshoots for online apparel shops. They talk about the weather and how everywhere is so crowded these days with all the end of the year events happening.

"So, we've been preparing for the annual Christmas party," Jimin begins halfway through their meal. "Yesterday, I even got to decorate a Christmas tree with these alcohol themed ornaments."

"Yeah? I didn't know the bar did a Christmas party every year. But then again, I've only been there a couple of times."

"Yup. Apparently it's a pretty big deal. There's even going to be mistletoes where people can kiss under, and the whole thing's supposed to be quite romantic. Nice, right?"

"It is," Mingyu answers with a fond smile before taking some rice into his mouth.

"I think you'll like it," Jimin continues with a smile and then falters once he sees that Mingyu is staring back at him with an expression that closely resembles confusion. "Oh I mean, I uh...I should've asked first," Jimin blurts out hurriedly, suddenly feeling extremely self-conscious now that he realizes that he had just assumed that Mingyu would be accompanying him to the party.

"Oh...I'm guessing the party's on Christmas day," the taller man asks, his lips already pursing apologetically.

"Yeah...You probably have plans..."

"I do. I'll be hanging out with my friends that night."

"Oh, your friends."

"Yeah. I can't really be going to a gay bar without drawing some kind of suspicion. It's either them or
a girlfriend, and well..." Mingyu explains, making vague motions with one hand.

"Oh...so...I'm guessing no one knows...about, you know," Jimin trails off uncertainly, not knowing what else he should've expected. He had spent too much time lately with people seemingly so comfortable with their sexuality that he had forgotten about what it's like to be outside that bar.

"Of course not. Don't want to give my mom a heartattack," Mingyu says with a shrug, and Jimin forces a smile back onto his face. Yeah. Of course. That's understandable, right?

"So um, what are....what are you doing with your friends on Christmas?" Jimin asks, not wanting to linger on what he's heard.

"Ah, I see. That sounds fun."

He shouldn't be disappointed. Mingyu had his own life, and it would be selfish of him to expect the man to come to a party at a gay bar with him. He really needs to stop getting ahead of himself.

- 

"It's snowing!" Jungkook announces to the rest of the bar, who's busy cleaning up after another busy night.

"Ugh, I can't believe I have to watch this year's first snow with you losers," Seokjin mumbles playfully and Taehyung lets out a quick "Oh come on, you know you want a piece of this," before rushing out to play with snow.

"Kim Taehyung! You're not done here!"

"Let him be," Yoongi says, approaching the bar counter with his headset slung around his neck. "Did you really expect him to get anything done when there's snow outside?" he continues with a lazy grin, and Seokjin lets out a sigh of defeat. The bartender knows exactly what's going to happen now. Taehyung and Jungkook are going to go on their annual "lets smash each other's face in with snowballs" fest, and Yoongi and Hoseok are probably going to be gross as fuck cuddled against one another while gazing at the snow falling down from the sky. Ew.

He peers at Jimin, curious as to how the man will react to the news, and of course he finds Jimin rushing outside as well, yelling something about how much he loves snow. It's as if Jimin loves everything. Everything except Kim Namjoon, unfortunately, Seokjin's mind provides unnecessarily in a bitter tone, and Seokjin shakes his head to make the voice go away.

In no time, everyone is outside, running around like dogs on crack. Yoongi and Hoseok are spending more time cuddling each other than throwing snowballs, but everyone else are too preoccupied with protecting their own safety to take much notice. Jungkook is a machine, somehow managing to sprint at full speed and simultaneously gathering enough snow from the ground to create snowballs the size
of a grown man's head. The two bartenders are somehow the worst recipients of the bouncer's brutal attacks, and Jimin laughs hysterically as the two men scream for mercy.

Jimin takes a snowball to the back of his shoulders and immediately bends down to roll one to throw back at Taehyung. Yet he stops when he sees the bar owner standing by the bar's entrance, his arms crossed him front of him and watching the entire display with a faint smile on his face.

Jimin grins and throws it straight at the boss, hitting the tall man right in the arm. Namjoon whips his head to stare at Jimin, his eyebrows raised and one corner of his lips crooked upwards as if he's impressed by what just happened.

"Come on boss," Jimin begins with a grin, marching towards the other man. He grabs the other by the arm and proceeds to drag him towards where the real fight is happening. "You have to join us! Maybe you'll be the only person who can really go up against Jungkook over there."

"I don't-"

"You never know when it's going to snow again!"

Namjoon tries to pull back but relents eventually. He can't remember the last time he's ever thrown a snowball. In fact, he isn't entirely sure if he's ever done it or if he's imagined it all in his head as a child. He does reach down and spends a second marveling at the cold sensation against his fingertips before rolling a small snowball for himself. He pulls his arm back and throws it right at Jungkook, who's been charging at Seokjin as if he's trying to bulldoze right through the poor soul.

Jungkook stops dead in his tracks at the sudden impact and then makes an exaggerated look of surprise when he sees where the snowball came from.

"Boss man!?"

Namjoon, instead of a verbal reply, throws another one at Jungkook, hitting him squarely in the chest.

"You started this, boss man," Jungkook taunts playfully before rolling much bigger than his fist and throwing it at Namjoon. The bar owner manages to duck just in time, only to get hit by another one Seokjin throws his way.

"Oh, it's on," Namjoon growls, and in a blink of an eye, the snowball fight becomes even crazier. There is laughter and shouting everywhere, and none of it dies down until both Jungkook and Namjoon are lying defeated on the snow-covered ground.

"Truce?" Namjoon suggests, and Jungkook replies "truce" raising a hand up.

"Alright, both of you, off the ground," Seokjin says with a clap of his hands. "We need to close up shop and you better not leave water everywhere on the floor."

Everyone makes their way towards the bar, and Jimin is just about to enter when he feels a hand on his wrist. The smaller man stops and looks over his shoulders to find Namjoon holding him back.

"Your hands."

"Hmm?"

"Your hands are red," Namjoon says softly and then takes both of Jimin's hands in to his. Jimin is surprised to find the other man's so warm despite all the snow he had balled up with his bare hands.
"They're freezing," the bar owner murmurs, massaging them slowly as Jimin looks up to study his face.

"..They'll be fine..."

"Here. Wear these." Namjoon lets go of Jimin's hands and reaches down to the pockets of his coat and pulls out a pair of leather gloves. The smaller man remains still, puzzled by the offer.

"But then what about you...?"

"My hands usually stay warm."

"Oh...."

"Take 'em. I don't want your fingers freezing off," Namjoon says with a playful smile. "The least I can do for someone who's saved my life twice."

"Thank you. I'll return 'em tomorrow. I promise."

"You should start bringing your own gloves. In case you get into another snowball fight."

"Oh. Yeah, maybe I should go buy a pair. I always forget," Jimin says with a grin and then wiggles his fingers into the gloves, relishing the warmth they provide. "Wow, these are amazing."

"I'm glad. Alright, we should close up shop quickly so we can go home."

Namjoon watches as Jimin enters the bar and doesn't miss the withering look from both Yoongi and Hoseok.
Hey everyone! I know I've been gone for some time now. Life has been crazy. Drastic and exciting changes finally happening in my life which means I can finally write without getting constantly distracted by not-so-fun things. Oh man, even I lost track of where this story was going since I've been away from it for so long....so bear with me as I slowly get back in the right mood! This chapter probably isn't super exciting but hopefully I'll get back on track ASAP! :)

And as always you know I read all the lovely comments you guys leave! Sorry I can't get back to you guys with this chapter! AND YEAH HIXTAPE

Lastly, I finally have twitter! @helloitsRagi
I'll probably post stuff about update schedule etc on it so come and say hi!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ever since the Christmas tree decorating incident, Namjoon had been extra careful about accidentally spending additional time around Jimin. As a result, the bar owner constantly finds himself staying cooped up in his office well past business hours, seemingly hiding from the rest of the world. As much as he trusts everyone who works at the bar, he doesn't trust them to keep Jimin away from him, so now he has no other choice but to protect himself somehow.

Sure his body is paying the price for it, but he's willing to sacrifice sleep and his physical well-being if it means avoiding any situation which may force the two to spend time alone with each other. Fortunately, Jimin hadn't picked up on this blatant evasion tactic and has been treating him the more or less the same, complete with toothy smiles and all.

Does he want to spend time with Jimin? Yes. Of course he does. He's well past the stage of trying to deny it. If Jimin would allow it, he'd do much more than just spend time decorating a x-mas tree with the other man. He'd pull the smaller man into his arms and hold him for hours on end. He'd hold Jimin's hand and take him all across town and show him what the city has to offer, just to see the man smile. He'd take Jimin to count stars again. He'd kiss every corner of Jimin's body and tell him how beautiful he is every single night without fail.

But from what his employees tell him, things are going quite well with Jimin and Mingyu and the couple's been spending a lot of time with each other so why would he actively place himself in the path of self-torture?

Namjoon presses his eyes with the palm of his hands, no longer able to keep his eyes fixated on the computer screen in front of him. It's been almost an hour since Hoseok had announced that they're done for the day, which means that the bar has to be completely empty by now. His sore muscles are yelling at him to just go to bed already, so Namjoon caves and finally peels himself off the chair.

"What the fuck are you doing," the bar owner mutters under his breath, a sudden sense of stupidity
hitting him like a slap in the face as he mulls over his current state. Who would have thought that
Kim Namjoon would come to this. He used to fear nothing. He didn't have to hide from anyone. But
now this. Cooped up in his office when he has a perfectly fine apartment waiting for him. Hiding
because of someone who's not even interested in him.

The absurdity of it all almost makes him laugh.

Namjoon slowly makes his way out the office, cracking his neck and massaging his own shoulders.
He needs to find a way to distract himself other than by being on his laptop, because at the rate he's
going, he won't be able to stay upright before the year's over. He can't wait till he gets home. He's
willing to bypass taking a nice warm shower if it means he can just pass out on his bed.

Yet, because the world has suddenly decided to punish him for all the heartbreaks he has
inadvertently caused, he hears the familiar sound of glass hitting each other as soon as he sets his foot
on the 1st floor. And he sees Jimin standing behind the bar, holding a metal shaker in one hand and
an empty martini glass in the other.

Namjoon holds his breath, wondering if he can just sneak back up the stairs without being noticed.
However, the thought quickly dissipates when he witnesses Jimin pouring a ruby-colored liquid into
the glass in front of him, the fluidity of the liquid almost hypnotizing as it continues to pour from the
shaker.

Jimin sets the shaker down and pulls the drink towards his nose, slowly inhaling its scent. After a
quick tilt of his head, Jimin takes a small sip and then sets the glass down as well, something akin to
disappointment evident on his usually good-natured features. Something is bothering the man, and
Namjoon finds that he can no longer bring himself to remain in hiding.

"Jimin."

"Oh my- Oh, boss, hi," Jimin sputters out with a hand pressed against his chest, and Namjoon
immediately puts his hands up in apology.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you."

"No, I'm sorry. I guess I didn't hear you coming down. What time even is it? Have I been staying too
late again? Because I can-"

"It's fine," Namjoon cuts in as he takes the stool across from the other man. Jimin peers at him
curiously, both the shaker and the glass still filled with red liquid forgotten.

"What are you still doing here?" Namjoon asks, folding his hands over the bar counter. He does his
best to keep his voice casual as to not sound accusatory, and that's when Jimin jumps slightly and
eyes the glassware and utensils in front of him.

"Right. Well, I got permission to practice making drinks for the Christmas party. I actually had a
couple of new drink ideas and both Taehyung and Jin told me that they wanted to taste it first thing
tomorrow so here I am," Jimin explains rather shyly, waving a hand over the glasses and bottles
lying across the bar. Namjoon glances at the arrangement, not missing the bottle of cinnamon sticks
lying to the side. He's never seen that around the bar.

"Cinnamon sticks?"

"Yup! They were kind of hard to come by, but nothing screams Christmas drinks like cinnamon
sticks, right? I mean, I think so anyway."
"I suppose so. How's the practice going?" Namjoon asks, returning his attention back to the smaller man standing in front of him.

"Honestly? Not really going anywhere. I've been trying out different ratios and different liqueur but something's just...off," Jimin answers honestly, scratching the back of his hand. "I don't know how Taehyung or Jin does it..."

"Years of practice," Namjoon replies in an attempt to comfort the other man. "If you want, perhaps I can help?"

"You...know how to make cocktails?"

"Well, I do own a bar," the owner says with a dimpled smile, and Jimin immediately perks up at the suggestion.

"Wow, you'll help me? But it's so late? Are you sure?"

"A few extra minutes won't kill me," Namjoon answers and gets off the stool to make his way next to Jimin. Jimin steps aside and watches as the other man picks up the concoction he had just made.

"May I?"

"Of course. It's probably horrible though."

Namjoon takes a slow sip of the cocktail and rolls it around his tongue, studying each individual flavor. Now, many people may be surprised to find out that he's a bit of a cocktail connoisseur, especially considering that people don't get to see him behind the bar these days, but the truth is, Namjoon had been the one to test and confirm most of the drinks currently being served at Bulletproof.

When he first created the bar, it had been Jin and Namjoon who worked side by side. As the bar started growing, Namjoon decided to focus on management and leave the drinks up to Seokjin and Taehyung. He does miss making cocktails from time to time. It had been a sort of an outlet for his innate creativity.

"Chambord, vodka, I'm guessing, and creme de cacao...also cranberry juice and lime? Oh, and some simple syrup." Namjoon lists off once the liquid's been washed down his throat and he has to make a physical effort to not laugh out loud when he sees the utter look of surprise on the other man's face.

"How did you...?"

"I guess I've had this bar for far too long," Namjoon says instead, setting the glass down.

"So...what do you think? Absolutely horrible?"

"No. It's definitely headed towards the right directly. I think perhaps simplifying will bring out each taste more. Right now you have too strong of a mixture of sweet and sour, which does work in some cases, but here it might be overpowering each other," Namjoon explains, pulling out a clean shaker from one of the shelves. "Do you mind if I...?"

"No, please. This is great. I can really use some help right now."

"So we will start with the chambord and vodka," Namjoon begins to explain, quickly adding ice to the shaker. "Although chambord and vodka are good choices, I think we can do with less vodka. It's overpowering the chambord a little bit, so we probably only need this much," Namjoon explains as he pours some vodka onto the jigger in his hand. He flips it around expertly in a single, fluid
movement, and Jimin lets out a small "woah" from besides him. "Now, was your original idea creating something more sweet or something more citrus?"

"Sweet, but I wanted it to have a fresher aftertaste, if that makes any sense."

"I'm guessing that's why you added the lime."

"Yeah..."

"OK. Now for the creme de cacao, let's try it with white chocolate liqueur," Namjoon suggests, reaching for a white bottle with gold label behind him. He opens it and pours some of it into a shotglass before handing it to the smaller man next to him. "Here, why don't you have a taste first and tell me what you think? You can choose between the two."

Jimin sniffs at the white liquid before taking a slow sip.

"Oh wow. This is much more creamier. Is...there vanilla in this too?"

"Yup. Now, if you add this, the color will undoubtedly change as well, since this isn't clear like the creme de cacao you were working with. Which one do you personally prefer?"

"I think I want to try it with this," Jimin says, pointing at the white bottle on the counter. Namjoon nods curtly before reaching for the bottle and the jigger.

"Now, by this point, the drink is probably sweet enough for you to skip any additional syrup or sugar. I know you added cranberry juice, but I think the strong taste of the juice might be masking the raspberry in the chambord so for now, let's try without. And for the fresh aftertaste, I would suggest using a bit of creme de menthe. Technically, you can muddle fresh mint beforehand, but I know how busy it can get, so let's take the easy way out for now," he continues with a crooked grin before reaching for another bottle.

Once everything is in, Namjoon closes the shaker and begins to shake it around slowly, and Jimin continues to watch in awe. He shouldn't be too surprised, considering how beautifully the man works in the kitchen, but he still is. It's as if the man in front of him is of infinite talents.

Namjoon strains the drink into the glass in front of him and slides it towards Jimin, forming a dimple with his smile.

"If you'd do me the honor?" Namjoon jokes playfully, effectively snapping Jimin out of his reverie. Jimin takes the glass and takes a sip, ready to be blown away, and he isn't disappointed. The cocktail has fewer ingredients, but suddenly there is more depth to the flavor. There is underlying sweetness that isn't too powerful, but it leaves a warm, comforting sensation in his stomach. It continues to linger, just playful enough in its fruity base to be enticing. And the subtle hint of mint he picks up later holds everything back from becoming dull, and Jimin finds himself just staring at the man in front of him.

"This is...amazing."

"It's your work. I just gave you a few pointers, that's all," Namjoon replies with a soft smile, taking another empty glass out. "Now you try. You can add or subtract whatever you'd like. Feel free to ask me anything."

Namjoon spends the next few minutes just observing Jimin. He takes in the way Jimin pokes the tip of his tongue out when he tries to pour the exact amount. The way he scrunches up his face in a sheepish smile when he spills something. The way he juts his lower lip out and droops his eyebrows...
if he's not completely satisfied with something. Namjoon's quite amazed by how the man's expression switches on a nanosecond basis, continuously fluctuating and equally animated, and he finds himself watching Jimin rather than the drink itself.

"Voila. Here's my first attempt," Jimin finally lets out as he pushes a filled glass towards the bar owner. Namjoon takes a sip without a moment of hesitation, carefully mulling over the taste. He wants to give the other man an honest feedback, even if it ends up being negative, because Jimin seems genuinely hell-bent on perfecting his cocktail making skills.

"Well done," Namjoon comments after a brief silence. Jimin was a quick learner, that much is for certain. The man had both talent and drive. "I think this is ready to be served."

"Oh good. I was a bit nervous. OK, whew," Jimin breathes out, letting his shoulders relax. "Do you mind if I try out another idea. I just really want to make something using cinnamon, or we can do this some other time. You must be super tired."

"Jimin. I don't mind," Namjoon replies gently and then makes his way around the bar to take one of the stools again. "This is fun. I haven't been involved in mixology for a while now."

Jimin flashes the other a toothy grin before giving him a quick nod. The man begins to work, his hands flying around the bar, grabbing bottles, reading labels, sniffing some of the ingredients and going into mixing. Namjoon watches the man's efforts carefully, taking a mental note of what's going into the shaker and doing his best to not smile so blatantly at the way Jimin keeps poking the tip of his tongue out the side of his lips in concentration.

He's always taken notice of how small Jimin's hands are. In fact, it was one of the most endearing things about the man. He watches the way Jimin's small fingers move around animatedly as he continues to work, and Namjoon has to fight the impulse to press his lips against each fingertip. Has to make an effort to stop imagining what it'd be like to have those small hands against his much bigger ones. Against his own body.

You're making a huge mistake here, Kim Namjoon, he tells himself, but he keeps himself glued to the stool, because really, what else can he do? He's somewhat accepted the fact that he will remain as the other man's prisoner for as long as his masochistic heart decides to be in love with Park Jimin.

"OK. I think I'm finished," Jimin finally breaks the silence between them as he gently places a glass filled with crimson liquid in front of the bar owner. Namjoon examines the drink with his eyes before taking in its scent. Jimin is watching him now, biting his lower lip and suddenly looking a lot more nervous than he had been mere seconds ago.

"It looks great," Namjoon says, hoping that it will ease some of the tension in Jimin's shoulders, and it does work to some degree. He takes a slow sip, trying to not focus too much on the hopeful expression on the other man's face.

In all honesty, he doesn't have high expectations, only because he knows that mixology is something that requires quite a bit of training and practice.

Except he finds himself pleasantly surprised.

The drink is sweet on its initial contact. The sugary bits mixed in with the subtle hint of cinnamon, but as the liquid travels down Namjoon's tongue and down his throat, he does pick up on the much bolder flavor. It's not just the familiar burn that accompanies all alcohol. It's something deeper. Something that piques his interest as he takes another sip to figure out exactly what it is. He can't quite pin point it, no matter how much he swishes it around his tongue. And to his surprise, the sip
leaves yet another sweet aftertaste, alongside a sudden craving for more.

In short, the cocktail is the embodiment of Park Jimin himself.

"...This...is...wonderful."

"...Really? You really think so? Come on, you don't have to be nice to me. I want to improve."

"No, Jimin. This is..." Namjoon pauses, mulling over the right word to use. His usual eloquence seems to have been thrown out the window as he struggles to convey his sentiment. "What I'm saying is, we should be serving this for more than just for the Christmas party."

"Wait. Really? Wow, I honestly wasn't expecting you to like it so much."

"You might have a unique talent for this, Jimin," Namjoon says honestly, genuinely surprised by the cocktail. Of course, it's probably too early to draw any solid conclusion regarding the smaller man's talent in cocktail-making, but he definitely sees something there. Perhaps he can speak to Seokjin about having Jimin work behind the bar.

"OK, now you're just being too nice. But wow, thank you. It means a lot that you liked it so much. I uh, I should clean up. Don't want to keep you here for any longer, unless you want me to close up shop."

"I'll help."

"Oh, no need. I'll be-"

"Jimin. I'll help."

"...Thank you. I'll get these washed first," Jimin says, pointing at the half-filled glasses and utensil in front of him.

Jimin ends up washing the glassware and utensils as Namjoon returns the bottles to where they belong and wide the bar down.

"Boss?" Jimin calls out suddenly as he turns the tap off and reaches for a dry towel. "Can I ask you something personal?"

"Of course," Namjoon answers, guessing that it's probably not even something that personal, coming from Jimin.

"I feel like um...you haven't been going on, and I'm only using this word because I honestly don't know what else to use, but uh dates. You haven't been going on dates lately?" Jimin continues with his question, fumbling with the cocktail glass in front of him as he tries to dry it with the towel in his other hand. Namjoon's hand stops momentarily before continuing to wipe down the flat surface in front of him.

"I suppose so," Namjoon answers rather lamely, not certain as to where the smaller man is going
with this.

"Oh. I see..."

"Is that the personal question you wanted to ask?" the bar owner questions with a small smile, suddenly feeling the need to alleviate some of the tension that had decided to cloud over them. A soft "cling" rings through the space as Jimin sets a clean martini glass down.

"Can I ask you why? If you don't mind, that is."

"...I just don't feel like it anymore, I guess," Namjoon lies, ignoring the way Jimin is watching him now. He's not stupid enough to admit to Jimin that he himself is the reason why all the one-night stands had come to a halt.

"Right. Of course. I just thought that maybe you were seeing someone. Someone serious and that's why you weren't seeing people. Not that it's a bad thing or anything," Jimin rambles on hurriedly, looking flustered as if he's offended Namjoon. "I was just curious. I know that it's not like you have to tell me these things, because I mean, I know I'm just an employee but-

"Jimin," Namjoon interrupts quietly and turns around slowly, finally facing Jimin, who is standing awkwardly only a few feet away from him. Namjoon takes one step forward. And then another. And then another. There is complete silence now. No sound of running water. No glass hitting hard surface.

"...Boss?"

Namjoon extends a hand out slowly and plants it gently on top of the other man's head. Jimin peers at him curiously, his own hands still clutching the towel.

"Jimin," Namjoon begins slowly with a soft smile, his voice a hint huskier than his usual tone. It inexplicably sends a shiver down Jimin's spine, and the man almost flinches visibly at the sensation. "You're not just an employee. You mean a lot more than that to me," he finishes quietly before ruffling the other's hair and returning to where he had been spending a minute ago. "Anyway, I think we're done for the day. We should start heading home."
The first thing both Namjoon and Jimin notice as soon as they push past the main door is snow. The usual dull grey pavement roads and pavement are covered in pure white, with snowflakes continuously falling with the night sky as their backdrop.

"Oh wow, I didn't realize it was snowing this much," Jimin murmurs as he steps out into the road and pushes his hands out to catch some of the flakes. "Oh, I should take a picture," he continues, quickly pulling out his phone from his pocket.

"What for?" Namjoon asks quietly as he makes sure the door behind him is locked. Normally, Itaewon is quite loud at any time of the day, no matter how late or how early, yet right now, everything is so quiet. Almost eerily silent to the point that he can pick up the sound of Jimin's shoes dipping into fresh snow.

"I don't get to see untouched snow much. I never wake up early enough to see it and usually by the time I get off work, people's been stepping all over it. And last time, I was too distracted by the snowball fight to take one," the smaller man explains, his eyes fixed on the small screen in front of him. "Wow, everything looks so pretty under that light," he muses, glancing at the streetlamp located only a few feet away from him.

Namjoon says nothing as he watches, taking in the way Jimin continues to take photos after photos in an attempt to best capture the beauty surrounding them. He can't quite recall the last time he had actually stopped to appreciate something as simple as fresh snow. Snow wasn't all that rare in Korea. In fact, it's grown more of a nuisance to people with the bad reputation it had built with the unappealing sludge it leaves behind.

But Jimin. Jimin seems genuinely happy to be a part of it, judging from the way that he's now looking around himself with his phone back in his pocket.

"I just realized," Jimin begins with a soft smile, his eyes now aimed at the sky above him. A few snowflakes land on his face, and he wrinkles his face before breaking out into an even bigger smile. "I've never seen first snow with a boyfriend."

Namjoon tilts his head to the side in question, wondering where the other man is going with this.

"You know how they say if you see the first snow of the year with someone you love, you will be together forever?"

"Ah...Yes, I think I've heard of it," Namjoon replies, vaguely recalling one of his flings telling him that. In all honesty, he's never bought into such bullshit, but strangely and inexplicably, right this moment, as he stands next to Jimin with snow falling on them, a small part of him wants to believe it.

Well technically, they're not together, so the myth wouldn't apply either way but still.
"Do you know about one with walking down the stonewall way of the Deoksu Palace?" Jimin asks, finally turning to look at Namjoon.

"Is that for couples too?"

"Apparently couples are supposed to avoid it. There's like this whole story behind it from like hundreds of years ago, but I forgot."

Namjoon listens in silence and then leans back when Jimin leans towards him. The smaller man's eyes are scanning his face, and the bar owner wonders if there is anything embarrassing on his face.

"And they say a mole by your lips means you're a player," Jimin continues with a toothy grin and then points at the spot right under the other man's lips. "But you have it here instead, so I guess you dodged a bullet with that one."

"And as expected, you don't have one there either," Namjoon says with a grin, and Jimin lets out a small laugh before going back to staring at the sky.

"I can't believe I missed this year's snow chance too," the smaller man murmurs, and Namjoon inhales sharply at the sudden ache in his chest. He knows exactly what Jimin is referring to and who the man must be talking about. Of course. How could he have blissfully forgotten for even a second that Jimin doesn't want this snow for the two of them.

"Well, next year's only a few days away. Maybe you'll have better luck then."

"Yeah?" Jimin perks up at the other man's words, and Namjoon has to physically look away. "I know you probably think I'm crazy for believing in those things. I mean, I don't really actually believe in those myths, but...I guess sometimes, I just want them to be real," he continues softly, and Namjoon agrees inwardly, having experienced the exact sentiments mere minutes ago.

Chapter End Notes

1. I know nothing about cocktails. I'm actually allergic to alcohol. hehe.

2. The myths are actual Korean myths :)) If there's any unique myths about love from your country, I'd love to know!
"Whatcha looking at?"

Jimin lets out an embarrassingly high-pitched squeak and fumbles to not drop his phone when he hears a low voice rumbling from right besides his left ear. He whips around to find none other than Taehyung standing right behind him, a few strands of his hair poking out above his otherwise perfectly styled hair.

"Taehyung!" Jimin growls accusingly, clasping a hand over his quickly beating heart. Taehyung had a tendency to sneak up undetected (Jimin has no idea how he does considering how big he is), and no matter how many time he's been a victim, he can never seem to get used to it. As always, Taehyung only flashes him an unapologetic grin and points at the device in the other man's hand.

"So, what are you doing?"

"Just...looking up gift ideas," Jimin mumbles in response, suddenly feeling rather self-conscious. With only a few days left until Christmas, he still hasn't chosen what to get Mingyu. He's always sucked at choosing gifts to begin with. In fact, he even sucks at choosing gifts for himself. He doesn't want to get the man anything too extravagant. Namjoon's already taught him to never overdo anything from the get-go...and come to think of it, it's not like he knows Mingyu well enough to get anything emotionally significant. In fact, they have never even discussed their hobbies much. Should he ask? But wouldn't that ruin the surprise!?

"Oh. So I guess Hoseok told you about our annual Secret Santa," Taehyung says, quickly drawing Jimin's attention.

"...The what?"

"Or not...Another bar tradition. We pick names out and keep the gifts under 20,000 won. It can be anything, even a gag gift. We'll probably be pulling out names later today."

"Secret Santa! I've always wanted to do it! This is great!" Jimin perks up, his concern regarding Mingyu's gift forgotten, and Taehyung doesn't know how the man manages to get excited over just about anything.

"Yeah. We get a lot of gag gifts. The most practical thing I got was a box of flavored condoms from Seokjin. And even then, they were too small for me to use," Taehyung goes on, relishing the sudden look of embarrassment on the other man's face. "You know what they say, big hands, Big-" he continues, stretching his long fingers out right in front of Jimin's face.

"Stop sexually harassing your co-worker," Yoongi interrupts, approaching the two with a cup of coffee in one hand and a lazy grin pasted onto his face. "I think Hoseok's going to go around with the names soon. He's been cutting up small pieces of paper over there, so I'm guessing that's it."

"Hey, who was your secret Santa last year?" Taehyung asks the DJ, and the man takes a slow sip of the coffee before answering.

"Jungkook. He got me a custom tee that says "Muzik is ma lyfe" with a "z" in music and "y" in life, and all of it in comic sans. It was the ugliest shit I've ever seen."
"Did you throw it away?"

"No. I wear it to sleep sometimes. Hoseok steals it all the time. I think he secretly likes it."

"So what's the deal with you two? You guys official?" Taehyung asks the man sipping on his coffee. Yoongi, only puts on a crooked grin as he pulls the cup away from his lips.

"Wouldn't you like to know."

"Why all the secrecy? We all know you two are fucking on the regular, who cares," the bartender mutters with a roll of his eyes. It's true. At this point, no one is questioning that the two aren't a thing. Especially when Hoseok seems to just be living at the DJ's place now.

Yoongi only shrugs in response and then glances at the sound of footsteps coming towards them. It's Hoseok, holding a familiar oversized, bright-red Christmas stocking in his hand.

"Gentlemen," Hoseok announces as he makes his way towards them, throwing his arms out dramatically. "The time has come for Bulletproof's annual Secret Santa. If you will draw the name of the fortunate recipient of your wonderful gifts," he continues in fake baritone, pushing the stocking towards Yoongi.

Yoongi takes one, followed by Taehyung, and Jimin takes one as well, looking awfully giddy as he takes the folded piece of paper into his hands.

"Rules, again. It's Secret Santa, not Tell-Everyone Santa. Gifts must be under 20,000 won. Other than that, anything goes. Oh, but no repeats of last year, except for you Jiminie, since this is your first one. You can buy whatever you want. Best of luck to you gentlemen," Hoseok finishes and scurries off, wandering towards Seokjin and Jungkook who are slapping each others' arms rather competitively.

Jimin slowly unfolds the piece of paper, doing his best to conceal it from the rest of the employees standing around him. He secretly wants it to be Taehyung, because Taehyung's been complaining about how most of his socks seem to go missing, which would make his life a lot easier.

Except he finds himself staring at a neatly written *Kim Namjoon*.

Jimin folds the paper, suddenly feeling a lot more unsure about the entire event now that he's going to have to get something for someone who seems to have *everything*. Not to mention that he has this feeling that he's probably not going to be witty or clever enough to get a gag gift that is funny enough to be passable. Oh no, what is he going to do. And really, what is something nice he can get for 20,000?? *Crap, crap, crap.*

Jimin makes his way towards the storage room with a defeated slump of his shoulders, and Hoseok is besides Yoongi and Taehyung in no time. Both the DJ and the bartender wordlessly place their folded papers back into the stocking.

"Well that was easy," Hoseok mumbles, shaking the stocking around with an almost elvish grin.

"Well played, sir. Well played," Taehyung says with a curt nod before making his way towards the bar.
Jimin doesn't need to know there were 7 Kim Namjoons inside the sock.

"Hey Namjoon, time for Secret Santa!"

"What's the point. There's 7 Park Jimins in there."

"....You don't know that."

"........"

"Alright! You know the rules then! Bye!"

As tradition dictates, everyone is gathered around the bar after work hours on Christmas eve for a small party of their own, and to also give their Secret Santa gifts. The drinks are out, Jimin helps the other bartenders fix up some of his original Christmas cocktails to get them in the festive mood, and soft holiday tunes play in the background. It's a stark contrast from the usual loud vibe of the bar, and Jimin revels in it, feeling warm and fuzzy from the inside.

"How come no one goes back home or anything for the holidays?" Jimin quietly asks Taehyung, who seems to be rather tipsy judging from how he's swaying slowly to the music.

"This is home to us," Taehyung answers with a grin, waving a hand around the bar and sloshing his cocktail over his one hand. "We don't really have blood-family to return to for...whatever reasons. But here. This family right here. We have this."

"...Oh..."

"My family is insanely Christian. My father is a pastor, so I was going to church every Sunday ever since I was a baby," Taehyung begins to tell his story with a faraway gaze in his eyes. "Didn't go too well when my mom found me making out with another dude, and I didn't want to lie to her. It sort of ruined the whole family dynamic and I chose to leave. They didn't stop me."

"...I'm sorry," Jimin says quietly, much of the festive mood replaced by something much heavier and heartbreaking. He's always been vaguely aware of some kind of past from everyone, but he had never expected Taehyung of all people to have such a painful history. Taehyung was a ball of energy who had too much love to give.
"Nah, no need to be. They never really understood me. Always thought I was super slow for some reason. Thought forcing me to pray for hours on would make the problem go away. I like it better here," Taehyung continues, raising his glass with a dopey grin, and Jimin smiles back because he can see that the other man is truly happy.

"Yeah, I like it here too," Jimin admits quietly, reciprocating the expression with sincerity.

"What you guys talking about?" Jungkook asks, joining their conversation.

"Was just telling him about my family," Taehyung answers casually, and the bouncer lets out a knowing "ah."

"Yeah, your family sucks," Jungkook mutters with a shrug, sitting next to Jimin. "Mine sucked too. That's why I ran away. Yoongi let me stay at his place for like two months before I could get a place of my own. Boss man pays us extra well to make sure we're taken care of....and we all appreciate that about him."

Jimin is taken aback by the utter casual tone in which Jungkook relays his own painful story.

"Anyway, enough of this sad sob story time," Jungkook says, clapping Jimin on the back. "How's it going with...that guy."

"Mingyu?"

"Whatever. That guy."

Jimin raises his eyebrows in confusion when he hears a hint of something akin to irritation in the other man's voice, but he brushes it off.

"It's...going well," Jimin answers and is further confused by the face Jungkook makes. However, he doesn't even get the opportunity to address it, because Taehyung kicks the bouncer in the leg hard enough to elicit a yelp.

"Ow! The fuck!"

"Go get me some beer."

"Get it yourself," Jungkook scowls, nursing his aching thigh, but Taehyung throws him a stern look. The bouncer eventually relents with a "fine, fine" and then walks off towards everyone else, getting the hint loud and clear.

"Does...he not like Mingyu or something?"

"No, he just doesn't like anyone not being single, because he's single and bitter," Taehyung lies and relaxes when he sees Jimin nods slowly. "Don't worry about it. So...things going well?"

"I think so."

"You think so?"

"I don't think I've been with him long enough to know if it's going to go anywhere."

"Makes sense."

"Taehyung, can I ask you something?" Jimin begins after a small pause, his tone a bit more serious than what the bartender is used to. Taehyung shifts in his seat, angling his body so that he's facing
Jimin more to let the man know that he's all ears.

"Shoot."

"You've had boyfriends, right?"

"Mmm, yeah, I guess you can say that. I mean, nothing too long-term, but I've had a few. Why do you ask?" Taehyung sincerely hopes that Jimin isn't about to ask him for relationship advice. Sure he's met plenty of men (they flock to him naturally, OK?), but he wasn't like Jimin who actually believed in relationships and all that mushy sappy shit.

"Have you ever kept any of your relationships a secret from other people?" Jimin asks quietly, and the question catches the bartender completely off guard. Especially when he has an inkling where the question must be coming from. And he already wants to punch Mingyu in the face.

"Hm," Taehyung hums lowly, rolling his eyes around with a small frown now evident on his handsome features. "No, I don't think I did," he says after a long moment of silence. "Didn't need to, I think. It's not like I stay in contact with my parents, and most of my friends are, well, gay, so I guess I never did," he answers honestly anyway, not wanting to jump to any conclusion.

Jimin slumps his shoulders in disappointment. He's not entirely sure what he had been expecting or what he wanted to hear from the other man, but the response leaves a queasy feeling in his stomach.

"Why do you ask, Jiminie?"

"...Nuthin."

"Are you sure?"

Jimin says nothing. Choosing to stare at his own feet instead and hunching over to make himself appear even smaller than he already is. Taehyung has to make a physical effort to not sigh out loud as he watches.

"While I may have not kept anyone a secret, I've been someone else's dirty little secret before," Taehyung begins slowly, drawing his knees closer to himself. There is a faint smile still lingering on his lips, but Jimin doesn't miss the hint of sadness now present in the man's eyes. "I mean, it makes perfect sense, right? We can't exactly expect everyone to accept us."

Jimin can't believe anyone as attractive and confident as Taehyung being someone's secret, but he can't doubt the honesty in the bartender's voice.

"But...if given the option, don't be someone's dirty little secret, Jiminie."

"....."

"It never ends well, and we're already playing against the worst of odds."

"Do you think that...we can ever, you know, be in that kind of relationship?" Jimin asks carefully, looking down at his own hands now folded neatly on his laps. Taehyung glances at the smaller man sitting besides him and then turns back to focus on the rest of the bar who's busy watching Seokjin and Jungkook throwing peanuts at each other.

"I think so," Taehyung replies honestly. "I know so. The chance might be a lot closer than you think."
"What do you mean?"

"Just being optimistic," Taehyung says with a shrug, stopping himself from mentioning their boss. "But yeah, have you given your gift to your Secret Santa yet?"

"Oh. No, not yet. I should. Just trying to find the right time I guess."

"Is it me?" Taehyung asks, even though he knows perfectly well who Jimin's Secret Santa is (hell, everyone knows).

"Not telling," Jimin replies with a grin, and Taehyung is comforted by the fact that Jimin seems to be in a better mood than he had been mere minutes ago. As much as he'd rather have Jimin break it off with Mingyu to be with their boss, seeing Jimin seem so heartbroken is not at all a pleasant feeling.

The party comes to an end, and everyone helps clean up. Yoongi and Hoseok are the first ones to leave, with Yoongi's arms draped over the other man. Seokjin basically drags both Taehyung and Jungkook out the building, effectively stopping them from seeing which one of them can do a sluttier version of Santa Baby, and this leaves Namjoon and Jimin to stand around rather awkwardly next to each other.

"I guess it's time to go," Namjoon says slowly, breaking the silence between them. Jimin jumps at the sudden voice and then laughs nervously, knowing that this is when he should give the man his gift.

"B-boss," Jimin begins, wondering why in hell he's so nervous. It's not like he did anything wrong, and Namjoon must be expecting a gift anyway, so why are his palms sweaty all of a sudden? He wipes his hands against his own jeans and then reaches for the pocket of his coat. He pulls out the small red box, complete with a gold ribbon, and pushes it slightly towards the taller man. "Your gift. Secret Santa. I mean, I'm your Secret Santa, and this is your gift. It's really lame though, so please don't expect too much," he rambles on, just as Namjoon takes the box delicately into his own hand.

"Would you like me to open it now?" Namjoon asks, his eyes still fixated on the red box. The ribbon is crooked. Is it weird that he finds even that incredibly endearing?

"Yeah. Sure. Again, it's super lame-"

"Jimin."

"Oh..Okay..."

Namjoon unwraps the box carefully, doing his best to not shred the wrapping paper into pieces. Inside is another box, and when he opens it, he sees what appears to be a wine bottle opener with a red Santa hat attached on top of it.

"A wine bottle opener?" Namjoon asks, rolling the device in his hand and studying it from every angle. There is already a smile on his face as he takes in the red hat and the small miniature gold ornament hanging from the bottom of it.

"Yeah. I know you said you never believed in Santa and that Christmas wasn't really a thing for you as a child," Jimin begins rather shyly. "But maybe now you can have a bit of Santa in your life...and I know you like to drink wine at home so..."

"I didn't know they sold something like this," Namjoon continues, his lips stretching into a bigger smile.

"Oh. They didn't. I made one. I kept it under the budget!"
"You...made this?"

"Yeah. I know, I did a bit of a shit job with it, and you don't even have to use it."

"Jimin. I will definitely be using this. Thank you. And I still have to give you my gift."

"Oh. You're my Secret Santa? I'm so stupid. I should've guessed, considering I didn't get anything yet. I was so preoccupied with giving that to you i completely forgot about mine! Wow, what are the odds! We're each other's Secret Santa!"

Namjoon pretends to know nothing about Hoseok's plan.

"Here, just a second," Namjoon says before retreating back upstairs. Jimin waits around patiently, wondering what the other man must've gotten him. He can't really picture Kim Namjoon of all people getting him a gag gift, although he must admit, it'd be really entertaining. Jimin spends the next couple of minutes staring at the Christmas tree and the light surrounding it, suddenly feeling a bit sad that it will have to go soon. Perhaps he can persuade Namjoon to keep it up until New Year's?

He then hears Namjoon making his way down the staircase, holding a thin box in one hand.

"I hope you like it," Namjoon says gently, handing it to Jimin, and Jimin is rather surprised to find it neatly wrapped as well. It's black with a silver ribbon tied around it. Simple and sophisticated, just like the man himself.

"Can I open it now?"

"Of course."

Jimin does his best with the unwrapping process as well, doing his best to not rip anything. He opens it slowly and has to dig through the additional tissue paper inside to pull out...mittens?

He marvels at the pair he's currently holding in his hand. It's incredibly soft and thick to the touch. Grey and khaki in color so not too eye-catching but also warm to the eyes as well.

"I-"

"I remember you telling me that you didn't have any gloves or anything. I contemplated getting you leather gloves or something like that but...I figured those would suit you better, especially if you're planning on throwing snow at Jungkook again," Namjoon explains, taking in the way Jimin is now pushing his fingers through the mittens.

"I love it. Wow, I really needed a pair because it was getting super cold. Thank you. Wow, I really, really like it." Jimin beams, his eyes disappearing into crescents again once both his hands are secured tightly inside the mittens. "Now I feel like I should've gotten you something better."

"Jimin. You handmade a gift for me. I can't think of anything that'd be better."
"We're almost done," Hoseok announces as he scans the bar and takes in the red, gold and green decorations hung around the vicinity. "Just the mistletoes left," he continues, wiggling the box in his hands. Jimin perks up and bounces towards the other man, his arms outstretched.

"Can I hang them?"

"Yeah, sure," Hoseok says with a shrug, handing the white box to the other man. "Just make sure you don't put em in dark corners, the bathroom or anywhere near th bathroom. Trust me on this."

"...Oh."

"Anywhere else is fine."

"OK. So, no dark corners, the bathroom or anywhere near it. Got it."

"Yup. Knock yourself out!"

Jimin chuckles to himself and then opens the box eagerly, revealing three mistletoes with red ribbons tied on top of it. He knows it's bar tradition to have people kiss under it, and he's strangely excited about the prospect of single people coming together or couples kissing under it. It's cute. It's sweet.

"Don't put that in the bathroom," Taehyung comments idly as he passes by Jimin, and the smaller man looks up with a tilt of his head.

"Yeah, Hoseok just told me that. Why though?"

"Kissing leads to things. Unspeakable things when people are drunk and horny. Last time we did that, all the stalls were occupied for a very long time and people were just throwing up and pissi-"

"OK. I think I got it," Jimin interrupts, making a face. He really doesn't want the whole fantasy shattered by the story.

"So, is your man coming too?"

"My- oh, Mingyu?"

"Yeah."

"No...he won't be able to make it."

"...But it's Christmas. I thought you guys were-"

Just then, Seokjin calls for Taehyung, and the bartender rushes off with a quick "have fun with the mistletoe!" Jimin watches the man rush away omentarily before looking back at the mistletoes in the box.
It's finally Christmas day.

Bulletproof is packed pretty much as soon as the doors are open to its patrons. Jimin looks rather proud that the tree is garnering so much attention and looks even prouder when some of the patrons compliment his bartending skills. Namjoon, despite his original plan to stay away from seeing Jimin with another man, does end up coming down to the floor to "enjoy" the party. He spots Jimin immediately, who is laughing alongside Taehyung and Hoseok and wearing the same red Santa hat all other staff members are doning on their heads.

The bar owner instinctively scans the vicinity for signs of Mingyu, knowing that the man must be around somewhere. Jimin had been more than excited about the idea of spending Christmas with his boyfriend, yet he can't seem to pinpoint the man anywhere.

Figuring that he must be running late to the party, Namjoon makes his way towards the trio, doing his best to ignore how Taehyung is now dry humping Seokjin to the beat of a goddamn Christmas carol (Jingle Bells has now forever been ruined).

"Boss!" Jimin shouts over the song once he spots the taller man approaching them. Namjoon nods in greeting and stops when he's standing only a few feet away from the smaller man, and Jimin doesn't hesitate to snake his arm around the bar owner's arm.

"Boss, boss, this is so much fun! Can you believe that Yoongi did all these Christmas carol remixes?"

"Jimin, are you drunk?"

"No, no, I only have one jello shot because Seokjin and Taehyung made me do it. I'm just really excited because this is so great! There are so many couples out here tonight! They're all kissing under the mistletoe!" Jimin continues animatedly, bobbing his head up and down to the beat as he speaks. Namjoon throws a withering look at the two bartenders who look completely unashamed by the fact that they pretty much got Jimin halfway drunk. He then mulls over the smaller man's words and sighs inwardly. He shouldn't be all that surprised. Of course Jimin is going to think that all those drunk men making out are people in "established relationships". Of course.

"Where's your boyfriend, Jimin?" Namjoon asks, figuring that he might as well get it done and over with...and at least be aware of the man's presence as to not be hit with it when he's least expecting it. If something is going to dampen his holiday spirits, he might as well have it happen before he starts enjoying it too much.

"Oh, he's not here."

"...What do you mean?"

"He told me he can't make it," Jimin replies, surprising Namjoon with the smile he continues to wear. "Boss, you have to dance! Can we dance?" he asks instead of sulking over the issue, and while Namjoon would normal give a flat "no" as an answer, he can't bring himself to say so with the piece of information lingering in his head. He should be happy that Mingyu isn't around (as petty as it sounds), but he's not. He's strangely bothered by the fact that Jimin's own boyfriend isn't here to enjoy the party with him. A party that Jimin worked really hard to perfect, from the decorations to the cocktails to even the mistletoes.
"Sure. One song," Namjoon says, forcing a smile onto his features. He ignores the gawking stares he gets from both bartenders standing right besides him and settles for letting Jimin drag him a few feet away from the bar, closer to where everyone's dancing. Namjoon isn't much of a dancer, both because he doesn't think he's particularly talented in it and also because he's not a big fan of it, but he sways to the beat anyway, because Jimin appears to be genuinely excited about the prospect of the two of them dancing together.

A much upbeat remix of Last Christmas starts to blare through the speakers (honestly, Namjoon can barely tell that's the original song. Yoongi did a great job), and the two begin to dance against one another, Jimin swaying his hips a lot more boldly than Namjoon had anticipated. The smaller man seems to be enjoying himself immensely, and the bar owner, in all honesty, is slightly blown away by the fluidity in the way the man moves to the beat.

It's giving him all sorts of images in his head that he shouldn't allow, but he finds it incredibly hard to block them out with the way Jimin is now watching him from under his lashes, the height difference between the two making it inevitable at this point.

"I'm so glad you're dancing," Jimin shouts over the music before doing a silly twirl. "I almost thought you wouldn't be coming down here!"

"It's Christmas. I guess I owe it to myself to enjoy it even if it's just for a little bit."

Jimin laughs at this and continues to dance, and Namjoon isn't sure if he appreciates or hates the fact that drunk people behind Jimin keeps pushing the smaller man into his arms. The first couple of times, Namjoon simply catches Jimin and helps him back on his feet. The third time around, he finds himself pulling a protective arm around the smaller man, effectively shielding him from all the pushing and shoving. The crowd is slowly losing control in the spirit of imminent holiday sex and too much alcohol, and Jimin is practically getting buried in the especially rowdy crowd standing behind him.

Jimin peers up with his eyes big in confusion, still locked tightly in Namjoon's arm, and the bar owner gently pulls the man away from the crowd, towards the counter where both Seokjin and Taehyung are staring with an expression that Namjoon chooses to ignore one more time.

"Boss...?"

"I think people are getting a bit out of control. I think we're safer here," Namjoon explains, glancing at the drunk patrons before returning his attention back to Jimin.

"Ah, right," Jimin agrees, finally seeing what the other man is on about. He'd love to dance more, but the bar owner has a solid point. Now that he's paying attention, people are more flailing than dancing, some appearing too drunk to even know that their feet are getting stepped on.

The rest of the party goes relatively smoothly. Jungkook almost gets hurt while tackling down a drunk guy who suddenly found the tree offensive, but Hoseok jumps to the rescue and they are all fine. Hoseok does get his foot stepped on pretty hard in the process and Yoongi is seething with rage when he finds out but continues with his DJing when Hoseok tells him that nothing's broken. Namjoon gets hit on continuously and aggressive by people, and Jimin finds himself in awe at both the amount of attention the man draws and the way Namjoon smoothly rejects them without being offensive.

Once the crowd clears out, everyone jumps straight into cleaning, wanting to be done with the day as quickly as possible. While the party had been fun, it had been equally draining, and Jimin works extra hard so that everyone can go home as quickly as possible. Once everything's finished, the
employees of Bulletproof leave one by one as well, looking rather bleary eyed and ready to crawl into their beds. As always, Namjoon sends them off first, telling them that he will finish up and lock the doors. Jimin is just about to leave as well when he remembers that he's forgotten about his mistletoe duties and now will have to take them down as well.

Jimin marches right back into the club, jogging his memory to remember exactly where he had hung them. He heads straight to the storage room to retrieve the small ladder and is just about to use it to get the first mistletoe when he hears the bar owner coming down the staircase.

"I thought you left already?" Namjoon asks, eyeing the ladder warily. "What are you doing with that?"

"I forgot to take the mistletoes down," Jimin explains, scratching the back of his head sheepishly. He's not entirely sure why he's feeling as if he's been caught red-handed considering he hasn't really done anything wrong. "I'll be done in a minute."

"Jimin. You could've just done it tomorrow. You must be tired. Go home."

"Nah, it's fine. Already got the ladder out."

"I'll help you then. You probably shouldn't be using the ladder all by yourself anyway."

"No need boss. It's not even that high."

"...If you say so. I'll just get the ones hanging low then," Namjoon says instead and makes his way towards the one hanging right above one of the sofas before Jimin can put up a verbal protest.

The two work in peace. Every once in a while, Jimin would hum a Christmas carol, and Namjoon would listen, amazed at the gentle sound the man is able to create. Jimin's voice had also been something that Namjoon had found fascinating. It wasn't exactly booming, but it had a way of carrying itself. Jimin's voice was always calm and relaxing, reminiscent of a kitten that is taking a nap under a spring day's sun.

It was something he could listen to all day and not grow tired of.

"I think I got all the ones hanging low," Namjoon announces once he's finished scanning the entire bar. He finds Jimin setting the ladder down near one of the walls and walks up to him, ready to help with whatever is remaining.

"Thanks, boss! I think this is the last one," Jimin says, pointing at the mistletoe right above them. Namjoon looks up and takes in the small plant, complete with a red ribbon and all, and wonders if he's ever found himself standing right underneath one.

".Boss?"

"Sorry," Namjoon lets out quietly, his eyes still fixated on the mistletoe that has fixed a smell on him. "It's just that this is the first time I'm standing under an actual mistletoe."

"Oh. I guess...me too?"

Namjoon finally looks down, taking in the way Jimin is now watching him as well, one corner of his lower lip tucked under his teeth. Since when were they standing so close? He can practically feel the heat radiating from Jimin's body. He can count the lashes. See the slight crook of Jimin's nose. Take in the way the other man's cheeks are tinged red from the heat or the alcohol, who knows.
Perhaps it's the holiday spirit. Perhaps it's the Christmas carols still strumming through his veins. It might even be because Jimin has somehow bewitched him into believing in Santa Claus and mistletoes.

Namjoon leans forward slowly, lowering his body so that their noses are mere inches apart. Jimin's eyes are searching into his, and Namjoon can't figure out exactly what it is that he sees in the other's. Is Jimin terrified? Nervous? Confused? Namjoon stays where he is, as if to ask for permission, letting the silence stretch on until he can almost hear the other's heartbeat. No. It may be his own. When was the last time he's heart had beaten loudly enough for his own ears to hear?

Jimin doesn't back away, but he doesn't close his eyes either, every muscle of his body frozen in place as Namjoon begins to lean forward again until their noses are almost touching.

It'd take no effort at all to just close his own eyes and close the distance between the two.

But Namjoon doesn't.

Instead, he cranes his neck to the side a little and plants a chaste kiss on the smaller man's cheek, relishing the warmth of Jimin's soft skin again his lips before pulling back slowly. Jimin doesn't move. His shoulders tense and his eyes wide. Yet Namjoon refuses to regret what he's done.

"Since we're under a mistletoe. Merry Christmas," he says instead, not forgetting to put on a smile he has relied on so many years to help him hide any kind of pain he may feel. He does his best to act casual, going as far as asking if he should just take it down or if Jimin wants to do it. The smaller man blinks slowly, finally coming back to life as Namjoon continues to speak.

"So...Sorry. I wasn't expecting you to actually...you know..."

"That's why you put them around the bar, right?" Namjoon tries again, hoping that his playful grin is convincing enough. Lucky for him, Jimin seems to relax into their conversation, because he flashes him a small smile with a "I guess so" before volunteering to take the last one down.

And Namjoon continues to play pretend, smiling at everything Jimin says and listening to the man talk about how this is the best Christmas he's had in years. He lets the man's voice dull the pain in his chest. Blinds himself to the fact that perhaps his lie hadn't been as convincing as he wanted it to be. Wills the illusion to stretch on for a little bit longer.

It's not until he finds himself inside his own apartment that he's not sure if the regret he's feeling comes from what he's done or not having done what he could've done.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Awww yissss managed to update again

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's the day of their highly-anticipated New Year's party.

Jimin busies himself putting up gold and silver decorations around the bar, looking just as proud of his work as he had been with the tree. Seokjin and Taehyung occupy themselves with making sure that they have enough champagne for their annual countdown just as Hoseok makes sure that everything else is ready. Yoongi is meticulous with his playlist as always, and Jungkook spends the day hoping that it's not as crazy as last year's.

Their annual "black out kiss time" was a popular event for everyone coming to the bar, but it was also a nightmare for Jungkook. Against all odds, somehow people managed to fuck up monumentally during the few seconds the lights are out, not to mention the whole accidentally kissing someone else's man, and oh boy, that always led to trouble. Jungkook cracks his neck a few times, wondering if he should just do some push-ups to get ready. He ends up working out right next to Yoongi, who tells him to take that shit elsewhere (Jungkook doesn't listen).

"So, is your boyfriend coming?" Taehyung asks Jimin in the best casual tone he can muster and regrets it immediately when the other man scratches his chin with a sad smile.

"I didn't ask."

"What!? Why not?"

"I was going to, and then he started telling me about the plans he had with you know...people."

"His non-gay friends and family?" Taehyung huffs with perhaps a bit more bite than he had intended, but he can't even bring himself to regret it when he sees the dejected look on Jimin's face.

"It's OK. I totally understand, you know?"

"Jimin..." Taehyung begins and then purses his lips. "We'll have fun. It's going to be great!"

"Yeah, I'm excited," Jimin says, brightening up slightly at the other man's words. Once Taehyung is summoned by Seokjin, he plays with the empty champagne bottle that's been painted gold in his hands, doing his best to not focus on the fact that he'll miss out on the whole black out kiss thing. In all honesty, he's been really looking forward to it. Perhaps he should've asked Mingyu. Maybe the man might have changed his plans for him...but he didn't want to be greedy and come off as needy. Didn't want to feel bad when Mingyu does in fact change his plans for him.
Namjoon, who had been watching the exchange from a few feet away, sighs lowly to himself. Again, as much as he doesn't like seeing Jimin and Mingyu together, the pained expression on Jimin's face is almost unbearable to him. Why is it that this Mingyu guy can't keep a smile on Jimin's face?

He approaches Jimin, who's still staring at the bottle in his hands and puts one hand gently on top of the other's head.

"The bar's never looked this high-class," Namjoon comments idly, looking around the bar that's been decorated in gold and silver. Jimin looks up and then flashes the other a grin.

"You really think so?"

"Yeah. You're really good at this. Everyone's been commenting on how beautiful the bar's been looking lately for all the events," Namjoon says earnestly, dropping his hand and settling for just standing in front of Jimin.

"Thanks, boss," Jimin murmurs sheepishly, appreciating the fact that Namjoon seems to pay close attention to all the work he does around Bulletproof.

The New Year's Eve is just as popular as the Christmas party, if not more. Some people are already wearing party hats, some people already scouting for someone to make out with as soon as the clock hits midnight. The bartenders aren't as busy, considering that people are more or less drinking champagne as opposed to their usual shots and cocktails.

Taehyung has taken the liberty of wearing glittery gold eyeshadow and smoking it out with black, giving his already handsome feature an almost ethereal dimension. Seokjin is wearing a gold-colored choker, while Yoongi and Hoseok are wearing matching gold bow-ties. Namjoon, on the other hand, has settled for long gold ribbons tied on both of his wrists (Taehyung made him), while Jimin has been forced to wear a giant gold ribbon tied to the back of his neck, with the straps resting down his back.

Countless people comment on how cute Jimin looks with the ribbon, and while he had been super self-conscious about it before opening shop, he feels much more comfortable by the time there's less than an hour left till midnight.

"Fuck me, this glitter keeps getting in my eyes," Taehyung grumbles, accidentally running his fingers over his eyeshadow again. Seokjin laughs from besides him and comments "well, at least you look good." Jimin agrees, kinda amazed at Taehyung's ability to pull just about anything off. More drunk patrons have hit on Taehyung than usual, which is why Jungkook is looking worn out already, and Jimin wonders what it'd feel like to draw that much attention.

"Ah," Jimin lets out when he suddenly feels the ribbon loosening around his neck. He slaps his hand over the back of his neck to stop the ribbon from coming completely undone and is just about to ask Taehyung or Seokjin to tie it back for him when he feels another pair of hands on it. He spins around in surprise, only to find Namjoon standing behind him.

"Ah sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. I saw that the ribbon was coming undone," Namjoon explains, smiling apologetically. "May I?"

"Sorry, I didn't know you were standing there. Yeah, I was just going to ask someone to help me tie it again," Jimin says, before turning back around and exposing the back of his neck. Namjoon works carefully, making sure the ribbon isn't too tight around the smaller man's neck. He lets go only once he's satisfied with the result of his work, and Jimin turns back around to thank him.
Except he doesn't, because he sees Mingyu from behind Namjoon.

"Mingyu??"

Namjoon, Seokjin and Taehyung all whip around simultaneously to spot Jimin's boyfriend approaching them, and both bartenders purse their lips in unison. *This is not good.*

They both watch Jimin run towards Mingyu and wrap his small arms around the man, and they definitely don't miss the way Mingyu laughs and plants a small kiss on top of the smaller man's head. Their eyes immediately fly to Namjoon, who is standing still with his expression unreadable, and for some reason it makes them even more worried.

"Hi! What are you doing here!" Jimin asks excitedly, his arms still wrapped around his boyfriend's waist.

"Decided to stop by. Sorry I can't stay long and I have to go back, but I was passing by the area and wanted to say HI. Sorry I can't stay till the end," Mingyu apologizes, ruffling Jimin's hair. "Wow, look at you. With a ribbon and all," he continues with a toothy grin, playing with the ribbon with his fingers. "Like a nicely wrapped gift for me."

Taehyung looks away because *ugh, what the fuck*, and then finds Jungkook staring at the couple from across the bar while giving Mingyu the mother of all stink eyes. He's with Jungkook on this one.

"This place looks amazing. Is that the tree you told me about?" Mingyu asks, pointing at the brightly light Christmas tree that is still standing in the bar. Jimin beams immediately and then nods proudly at the result of his hard work.

"Yup!"

"It's a lot bigger than I imagined. It must've taken you forever."

"Nah, the boss helped me with it so it didn't take too long," Jimin answers with a big smile, finally looking at Kim Namjoon, who has, much to Seokjin and Taehyung's surprise, remained where he is instead of retreating to his office or something.

"Oh, I see. Hey, it's nice to see you again," Mingyu says with a hand out, but there is something in the other man's expression that everyone watching him doesn't miss.

"I'm glad you decided to drop by," Namjoon greets back with a firm handshake, keeping his smile professional. "Would you like some champagne? On the house, of course."

"Ah, thank you, but I shouldn't. Already had a bit to drink and I have to be going soon."

"I see. Well Jimin, I think it's time for your break if you'd like," Namjoon says, turning to look at Jimin, who's been watching the interaction silently. Jimin lets out a meek "are you sure?" to which the bar owner replies "of course" before leaving the two to be. He retreats to the office, and the bartenders exchange wary glances before doing their best to pretend as if they're not watching Mingyu and Jimin talking animatedly to each other.

Seokjin doesn't miss the way Yoongi rolls his eyes from behind the booth or the way Hoseok makes a face towards the direction of the office. Jungkook, of course, is basically staring a hole into the back of Mingyu's head.

Alright, so he had done his best to stay fair throughout the whole ordeal. Afterall, Mingyu seems like
a genuinely nice guy who makes Jimin. Yet, the more he sees Namjoon hiding in his office for hours on end every day, and the more he sees Namjoon looking at Jimin as if he's the most precious thing in the entire universe, he's starting to side with Jungkook on this one. He wishes that there was something tangible that makes Namjoon stand out far above Mingyu because dangit, he wants Jimin to start seeing Namjoon in a different light for once.

But damn it all to hell, Mingyu is just as physically attractive as Namjoon (although not exactly in the same way). Is it weird that he wishes that Mingyu wasn't as handsome? Probably. But he can't help it. It's just how things were around here. Good-looking people got all the attention. They had the first pick. That's not to say that Jimin is shallow, but ugh, he wants Namjoon to have a definitive upper hand, alright?

"Ah, sorry, would it be possible for me to maybe get some water really quick?" Mingyu asks as he approaches the bar a few minutes later.

Seokjin pours a cold glass of water for Mingyu and slides it across the counter, and Mingyu is about to take it with a polite smile when it's snatched right away from him by none other than their resident bouncer. Jungkook takes a long swig of it and sets the glass down with a loud "clack", and when Seokjin lets out a "Jeon Jungkook, that was for Mingyu over here," the bouncer counters it with a "Oh, sorry, didn't see you there. I thought it was for me. Was thirsty." Both bartenders exchange glances, not having expected Jungkook to come out and be so blatant about his dislike towards the man. It's quite juvenile, but they can't help but find it kinda funny. Especially when Mingyu seems to not even be aware of the hostility.

Now Jungkook just looks disgruntled, and Taehyung has to turn around and pretend to reorganize a couple of the bottles to hide the fact that he's laughing silently to himself.

"So, will you be staying past midnight?" Seokjin asks, wanting to figure out if Jimin will be getting that chance to make out with someone on midnight or not. Even as he asks, he's not entirely sure what he wants the answer to be.

"Nah. I don't think I can."

"Oh, you can't?" Jimin asks from besides him, doing a rather horrible job of masking his disappointment. Mingyu smiles back apologetically.

"Sorry. I promised the guys I'd be back before that."

"Ah...I see...no way to tell them that you're going to be a bit late?"

"No. Sorry, Jimin. You know how it is."

"Right. Of course. Yeah, and I should be working anyway," Jimin says with a fake smile that makes both bartenders want to break something.

"Which reminds me, I should probably head out. I'll text you. I promise that I'll make it up to you later."

"Yeah. Of course. Um, stay safe!"

"I will. Let me know when you're done with work," Mingyu says with another kiss, this time on Jimin's cheek, and this time around, Jimin can't bring himself to be elated by it. Both Seokjin and Taehyung pretend as if they completely missed the conversation, because Jimin looks so dejected that they can't bring themselves to add potential embarrassment on top of that.
Seokjin does his best to try to understand the situation but is struggling to do so. Is it really that difficult for that guy to stick around a few more minutes and start the new year off with his boyfriend? He acts all sweet and shit, but when it comes to the things that matter, it seems like he's just really good at disappointing Jimin...and he really, really doesn't like it.

Seokjin glances at his watch and sees that there's only about half an hour left until midnight. 30 minutes. That's all Jimin wanted. What a prick.

Seokjin motions for Hoseok, who bounces towards him and immediately asks "the fuck did that guy go?" the moment Jimin disappears into the crowd to clean up tables.

"He had friends to return to apparently. Couldn't stay half an hour."

"What the hell. I thought he was here for the whole kiss time thing?"

"Apparently not. He was just dropping by."

"OK, so I admit he's a tree I'd climb if Yoongi didn't exist, but why is Jimin sticking around that guy? Any one of us and we would've told him to fuck right off."

"Well, I guess things are a lot more complicated. But that's not what I called you for. Can you just make sure that Namjoon gets his ass down here and keeps Jimin company?"

"Oh shit, are you finally on the Minjoon train?"

"The hell is the Minjoon train?"

"You know. Minjoon. Jimin and Namjoon. Jungkook is definitely on the Minjoon train. I'm pretty sure Jungkook was trying to telepathically make Mingyu combust into flames the moment he walked in. I was kinda hesitant at first, but I'm definitely on that train, and by default, Yoongi has to be too."

"You guys have a name for this?"

"Fuck Minmin," Taehyung says from besides him on his way to putting a bottle away. "Minjoon's the shit now."

"Alright, you guys need to calm down. Just, whatever, can you make sure Namjoon comes down? I know he's probably having a giant pity party up there on his own. And don't be weird about this please. I'm just looking out for Namjoon and Jiminie."

"So are we, my friend, so are we," Hoseok says sagely and then waves a hand around when Seokjin throws him a withering look. "Alright, I'm on it," he adds before heading towards the staircase.

It's not until 10 minutes left till midnight that Namjoon is back downstairs, and if the man's been throwing a tantrum or crying internally over the depressing encounter, no one can tell. Seokjin doesn't miss the nanosecond of pain that flashes across the man's eyes when he spots Jimin again, and he figures that Hoseok's explained to him exactly what's happened.

Jimin, who's been keeping himself distracted by cleaning the tables with perhaps bit more vigor and attention than necessary, sees Namjoon again and lets out a rather weak "Oh, you're back." The bar owner doesn't ask where Mingyu went or if the other man's OK. He behaves more or less the same as he had been before Kim Mingyu's arrival, and Seokjin's glad that his friend is as sensible as he is.

Jungkook does open his mouth to most likely relay what's happened, but Seokjin throws him a warning look and shoos him away, leaving the bouncer to return to his duty and spend the next few
minutes just sulking in his corner.

Namjoon bites the inside of cheek in frustration as he watches Jimin working as if on autopilot. Jimin's never been very good at hiding his emotions and was doing a terrible job of doing it right this moment.

After having heard everything from Hoseok, Namjoon has the urge to slam his fist against Mingyu's face, and this sort of scares him, not only because he's always been a pacifist, but because it makes him feel like a hormonal teenager who's not capable of controlling an emotion so petty. He's always been mature about relationships. He's always believed that they are supposed to be flawed.

So he shouldn't be surprised to find that Jimin's struggling with his, and at the end of the day, it's between two adults and he shouldn't be involved...but he's already emotionally invested in disliking Mingyu solely on the fact that Jimin can't enjoy this party (that and of course something a lot deeper, but he's not about to go into that right now).

He wishes that Jimin would at least be angry with him. Annoyed, frustrated. Just anything other than sad, because seeing the smaller's man slumped shoulders and downturned lips and pitifully dejected eyes is almost nauseating. So Namjoon makes his way towards Jimin and reaches out to grab the man by his wrist. His hold is gentle, but firm enough to urge the other to listen to him, and Jimin looks up, his eyes wide in confusion at the sudden contact.

Namjoon pulls Jimin away from the table he's currently wiping down and proceeds to make his way out the bar through the back entrance. He doesn't pay attention to the other employees or patrons watching them as he rushes out, because he can almost physically feel the sense of rejection radiating from Jimin.

Namjoon doesn't let go until they are both outside and the loud bass of the music playing only becomes dull thuds behind the closed door. Jimin doesn't say anything. Doesn't ask why they're outside. Instead, Jimin is standing with his head down, his hands clutching at the rag he's been using to clean tables.

"Jimin," Namjoon calls out gently, and Jimin flinches ever so slightly but doesn't look up to meet his eyes. "Jimin," he tries again, and this time, the smaller man does look up, looking just as dejected as he had been since Mingyu's left.

Namjoon has to fight the urge to break something. Why is it that Mingyu has so much power over Jimin, and how is it that Mingyu can't even treat someone so precious right? Here he is, willing to give the world and then some to Jimin if he so much as hints at it, yet Mingyu has decided to shove Jimin to the back of the list.

"Sorry boss, I'm just having a moment, I promise to get back to-"

"Jimin, I didn't bring you out here because you're in trouble."

"Oh...Then...?"

"I brought you out here because you looked like you needed some time away."

"....."

"Is everything really Ok with Mingyu?" Namjoon asks, holding himself back from telling Jimin to just forget about him and cut him off.

"Yeah. He just...had to go, because he had prior arrangements," Jimin explains without further
prompting, his eyes returning to the piece of cloth in his hands. "I don't blame him though. I didn't even ask him to come to the party so of course he'd have plans. And at least stopped by to see me, right?" he continues, but the last part sounds more like a question to himself than to Namjoon. "It's just that I'm still so bad at dating and not sure what to expect I guess. Maybe you're right. I should really get my head out of all those romcoms and-"

Jimin is cut short when he finds himself pulled into Namjoon's arms. He holds his breath, the moment he inhales the familiar musky scent of the man currently holding him tightly in his arms.

"No. You're perfect the way you are," Namjoon murmurs against Jimin's hair, and Jimin swallows hard at how the man's low register vibrates against his skin. "And you should be with someone who can treat you right."

"....."

"There is nothing wrong with you asking for more time, because there's someone out there who'd give every minute of his day to be with you."

"....Boss?"

Namjoon says nothing but keeps Jimin in his arms for a minute longer before letting go and taking a step back. Namjoon doesn't look at Jimin in fear. Fear that perhaps Jimin's read right through him. Fear that perhaps Jimin now knows and wants nothing to do with him. Fear that he's perhaps angry with him for meddling in his affairs.

"You deserve a lot more. Just remember that," Namjoon says instead once the silence stretches on.

Inside the bar, they hear people counting down. There is a collective 10, 9, 8, voiced filled with hope for the coming year. 7,6,5. Namjoon finally looks at Jimin, who's watching him with the corners of his eyes red and his eyes almost pleading with all the emotions filling them.

4..

3.

2.

1.

There is a loud "Happy New Year!" coming from inside the bar.

Yet Namjoon and Jimin find themselves just looking into each others' eyes, the cold air of now January forgotten.

It's Namjoon who breaks the moment that's frozen over them. He reaches out and places his hand gently on top of Jimin's head, half expecting the other to reel back. But he doesn't. Jimin remains exactly where he has been, and Namjoon, despite the tight pain in his chest smiles at him.

"Happy New Year, Jimin," Namjoon manages to breathe out through his lips, suddenly overcome with the urge to run away. To not have to see all the emotions flickering through Jimin's eyes. To not stand there feeling completely exposed with Jimin holding him by his heart.

"...Happy new year. And thank you. For everything," Jimin finally says with a weak smile, and with that, Namjoon is left to watch Jimin disappear back into the bar.
Seokjin massages his shoulders and lets out a strained groan when he hits a particularly tight spot. As much as enjoys working at Bulletproof, the end-of-the-year season could be a bit of a hell for everyone with all the parties and events and decorating, and this year had not been an exception.

And this year, everything's even worse, thanks to one Park Jimin and Kim Namjoon.

He waits impatiently for the elevator to open. With a soft ding, the metal doors slide apart, and he enters the familiar corridor leading up to his apartment. Except, instead of heading straight to his bed, he finds himself staring at a tall figure leaning against the wall right next to his door. For a brief moment, he wonders if it's one of his past flings (which is why he rarely brings anyone to his place), and then he inhales sharply when recognition dawns over him.

It's a face he hasn't seen for years. A face he's also know for many years.

The man slowly turns his head around to face him, and Seokjin lets out a "ah" when he comes eye to eye with none other than-

"Lee Wonho? Holy shit, Lee Wonho!"

"Hey, Seokjin," the man greets with a slight quirk of his lips, as if all that time hadn't passed since the last two spoke.

"What the hell!? Why didn't you tell me you were coming back to Korea?" Seokjin asks, finally regaining composure and rushing towards the other man to pull him into a tight embrace. "Are you just stopping by or? Oh wait, shit, you must be finished. You here for good then?" he fires away as soon as he pulls back to get a better look at the other man.

"Yeah. Just got in a couple days ago. It's good to see you again, Jin," Wonho says relatively calmly and Seokjin grins right back, all the fatigue gone from his system. Wonho's hair was now pitch black, as opposed to the near white blond it had been the last time they saw each other. His already handsome features were now slightly sharper. Almost more sultry even, giving off an air that makes seem him almost untouchable.

"Why didn't you just come to the bar to say hello to everyone?"

"Figured you guys would be busy with the party. Plus, I'm still too jetlagged to be dealing with Tae and Kookie."

"Can't blame you there then," Seokjin says with a small laugh. "But you are going to visit right? Do you want it to be a surprise or something?"
"Yeah, why not. Want to see everyone's reaction," Wonho replies with a shrug. "How's Joonie?"

"Oh. The same old I guess. He's going to be so happy to see you," Seokjin says sincerely, patting the other man on his shoulder. "And man, how is it that you got hotter? The hell?"

"I don't think you're really in the position to say that," Wonho counters playfully. "But yeah, it's good to be back. Can't wait till I see everyone."

Chapter End Notes

Lee Wonho is Wonho from Monsta X! I was looking for the right person to add to the storyline for a while now and came across Monsta X and I was like YES HE'S PERFECT FOR THIS. My understanding is that Wonho's real name is Hoseok...but I'm not about to play with 2 Hoseoks in a single fic (nightmare for my writing) so Lee Wonho it is! If you're not familiar with him, I do recommend googling a pic of him at least so you know what he looks like! The rest of the fic will make a lot more sense if you see his face heheheh
Come yell at me on twitter @helloitsRagi
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Enter Wonho

It's three days since the New Year's party, and everyone is starting to pick up on the slight tension between Namjoon and Jimin. They have already familiarized themselves with Namjoon pining after the smaller man and being a complete idiot about it, but they had not been ready to see the way Jimin now acts around Namjoon.

Jimin, as hard as he tries to act normal (bless him), is not good enough to bypass the sharp eyes of everyone else at the bar. It just gets to the point where both bartenders, the DJ, manager and their resident bouncer have to act as if they don't see the small changes. Yoongi complains that he didn't sign up for this shit, and everyone else sigh in unison, wondering how long they are going to have to keep this up.

It wasn't so much that Jimin was actively avoiding Namjoon or anything. In fact, the man acted more of less the same with his greetings and smiles and jokes, but following every smile he directed at the taller man was a hint of confusion lingering in his eyes. A slight downturn of lips. A barely detectable flinch every time Namjoon spoke from besides him.

And honestly, no one knows what to make of it, because they can't tell if this is a good sign or not. So far, Jimin has not given any indication that he's gravitating towards ending things with Mingyu, which just adds to the confusion, and the lack of any blushing or fumbling isn't helping Jungkook's case of being hopeful that perhaps Jimin's finally seeing Namjoon as more than just their boss.

Taehyung and Hoseok watch Jimin mopping the floor, his shoulders slumped and his head hanging low, and they get the feeling that romance isn't the determining factor behind the man's current state.

"What is it with these idiots," Hoseok mutters, and Taehyung doesn't need any clarification regarding who "these idiots" must be referring to. Jungkook approaches the two of them, looking as disgruntled as he had been during the party when Mingyu had visited.

"Hey can we just add that guy to our blacklist?" Jungkook asks, plopping onto one of the stools, and again, Taehyung doesn't need any clarification regarding who "that guy" is, considering that has basically become Mingyu's name around the bar.

"No we can't," Hoseok states matter-of-factly before ruffling Jungkook's hair. Jungkook pouts and mutters something about how he's going to do it anyway, and Taehyung silently mouths "you really should." Jungkook perks up at the fact that someone is finally agreeing with him and high-fives the bartender behind Hoseok's back.

"Look guys, I don't like him either, but Jimin's going to have to figure this out on his own," the
managers starts again, remembering the utter look of dejection on Jimin's face. Normally he didn't meddle in other people's affairs, because he's a firm believer that people are perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. After all, he himself had been subjected to a couple heartbreaks and had made it out just fine. But Jimin. He can't help that he has a bit of a soft spot when it comes to their newest. The man was too believing and too eager, which was a recipe for disaster. So yeah, he's incredibly tempted to meddle, but he feels personally responsible for making sure that Taehyung and Jungkook do not go sabotaging the relationship.

"The problem is that Jimin isn't figuring it out," Jungkook mutters, back to his disgruntled self.

"He will. Eventually."

"Are you sure? He's already letting that guy step all over him."

"Patience," Hoseok says, flicking Jungkook's nose. The bartender lets out a garbled noise of pain as he rubs at his nose. "If Jimin doesn't learn it now, he'll just make the same mistake again."

"I thought you were on the Minjoon train," Taehyung points out, narrowing his eyes accusingly at the manager. Hoseok shrugs.

"I am."

"Then why?"

"Because nothing would change even if the two were to break up."

"You lost me there."

"Do you honestly think that the two are going to automatically get together if Jimin's single? As far as I'm concerned, Namjoon isn't even on Jimin's radar, and Namjoon hasn't gotten his head out his ass enough to make a move even if Jimin's not seeing anyone. It's Kim Namjoon we're talking about. Let's not forget what happened the last time he took any risk."

Both Taehyung and Jungkook are left speechless, and Hoseok glances at Jimin one last time before making his way to find Yoongi.

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The first time Jimin sees Wonho, time slows.

And not because he falls in love at first sight or anything, although that would have been perfectly warranted given the circumstances. But no, it's because Jimin's own brain can't seem to keep up with the fact that the man walking into the bar isn't a figment of his imagination. That the person is a tangible, living, breathing human being.

Jimin would have easily believed that the man's some twisted hallucination if it weren't for their
resident bouncer, manager, DJ and both bartenders swarming towards said man, eager to pull him into a hug and ask a million and one questions that Jimin can't quite make out over the clamoring and the excitement. He picks up on the man's name immediately though. Thanks to Jungkook basically screaming the name out at a voice that is definitely at least an octave higher than his usual tone.

*Who is this man?*

Jimin watches in both awe and confusion, the mop in his hand long forgotten as he watches different emotions flickering across the man's striking features. It's as if two different souls exist within the singular body. The man switches between looking like an angel who's come to bring love to the world and the devil that promises sinful pleasure people can only dream of, with just the way he smiles.

Jimin jumps when Wonho's eyes meet his own. The man now watching him curiously and then turns to murmur something to Taehyung.

Jimin had been quite sure that he must be used to seeing good-looking people by now, considering he was always spending most of his time with people like Seokjin and Taehyung, who never ran out of admirers.

Yet, this stranger named Wonho.

He doesn't think he's seen anyone command that much charisma and sensuality simply by breathing (with the exception of Namjoon, of course). The man is beautiful. Stunning in every sense of the word and then some, and Jimin starts to feel self-conscious once the eyes are back on him.

He's eventually introduced to the man by Taehyung. He learns that Wonho is a very close and dear friend of everyone at the bar and that he had just returned from studying abroad in London. Wonho offers his hand for a handshake, and up close, Wonho's even more breath-taking. Confidence seems to be an innate part of the man and it comes off of him in waves, both intimidating and alluring.

Jimin wordlessly takes the hand, unable to form actual words yet, and Hoseok jokes that it usually takes a while to get used to Wonho's face. Wonho laughs and engages in a quick banter with the manager before asking where "Joonie" is, and it doesn't really hit Jimin who the man must be referring to until Hoseok tells him that he'll fetch him from the office.

Jimin just continues to stare at the captivating man in front of him, unable to take his eyes off of him. Drawing him in as light would a moth.

Jimin doesn't even hear Namjoon coming downstairs and almost jumps out of his skin when he hears the bar owner's voice from right behind him. A second later, Wonho has his arms wound tightly around Namjoon's neck, with Namjoon's own arms now secured tightly around Wonho's waist.

Even when Wonho pulls his head back to look into Namjoon's eyes, their arms remain where they are resting against each other, and Jimin is surprised for the second time that day, because he has never witnessed Kim Namjoon being so physical and affectionate with anyone, despite all the rumors and stories of his one night stands.

"I missed you, Joonie," Wonho says, his tone playful but his eyes honest. "Did you miss me?" the man continues, and Namjoon doesn't miss a beat answering the question with a steady "You should know the answer to that". Namjoon asks if Wonho will be staying tonight, and the man answers that of course he will be and then tells the bar owner that he wants to see the man's office again because he misses the couch. Namjoon doesn't waste a second leading the man to his office.
It's as if the two men are in a world of their own. A world that Jimin's definitely not a part of.

"Seems like nothing's changed," Yoongi comments with a lazy grin and a shake of his head, and everyone is back to getting ready to open shop. Jimin doesn't miss how everyone appears to be in a much brighter mood as they work. Even Yoongi is humming a tune to himself as he checks over his playlist. It's as if the entire atmosphere of the bar has shifted completely with Wonho's presence alone, and now Jimin is left wondering just who this Lee Wonho is.

Hours later, Namjoon and Wonho are back downstairs and talking to each other. Wonho leans forward and says something into Namjoon's ears, and Namjoon listens with a fond smile on his face before turning his head around to whisper into the other man's ear. Then both of them are laughing, with Wonho's forehead pressed against Namjoon's right shoulder.

Jimin watches the entire exchange, finding the entire situation almost surreal. Is that really the same Kim Namjoon's he gotten to know in the past few months?

"Wonho and boss man have known each other for a pretty long time," Taehyung says suddenly, noticing how Jimin is watching the two men.

"Are they..?"

"Oh, those two? Nah," Taehyung answers, leaving out any explanations about the two men's past. He doesn't feel its his place to relay the information, and frankly, he doesn't want to be the one to make whatever it is between Namjoon and Jimin worse. And at the end of the day, he's not exactly lying.

"He's....really good-looking..."

"Wonho? Yeah. But he's a really chilled out guy once you get to know him. Don't let that face intimidate you."

Jimin returns to watching the two men, who are still talking to each other while standing awfully close to one another. Namjoon, who's always made sure to leave some distance between himself and others doesn't seem at all bothered by the proximity, and Jimin is overcome with a strange, foreign sensation in his gut as he takes in how amazingly good the two men look together. Straight out of some ad for a brand he probably can't even pronounce properly. He knows for a fact that he can't be the only one in awe, judging from how half the bar seems to be preoccupied with staring at the two.

And Jimin can't help but wonder if that's the kind of men Namjoon bothered to spend his time with. Someone just as tall, handsome and mindblowingly attractive. Someone who can probably control others with just the way he blinks. Someone who's probably used to having people throw themselves at his feet.

Someone just like Namjoon himself.
Jimin ends up seeing Wonho again only two days later. The man is dressed in a light grey button down shirt that is rolled up to his elbows and a pair of black jeans that aren't doing much to hide his muscular thighs. Jimin looks down at his own body and frowns, wondering if he should seriously start working out or something.

"Hey, Jimin."

Jimin almost pulls his neck when he snaps his head up to the sound Wonho's voice ringing from right in front of him. He sucks in his breath, still not accustomed to the man's devastatingly handsome face and sultry eyes. To make things worse, the man was gifted with a voice that was equally as alluring as his face. It was velvety. Not quite husky enough to be overly masculine and just delicate and airy enough to be soothing.

Oh wait, the man just said hey. Oh god, he should say something.

"Oh, hi, hello!" Jimin blurts out and then hates himself immediately. Much to his distress, Wonho actually leans forward, putting his face only a few good inches away from Jimin's, and Jimin almost trips over his own feet.

"Careful," Wonho lets out with a small laugh when he catches Jimin by the arms with his strong hands. Jimin knows for a fact that he must be blushing now, judging from the heat rising in his cheeks, yet he's not sure if it's because of the realization that Wonho smells as good as he looks and sounds or because he's managed to embarrass himself even further.

"Tha-thank you," Jimin manages to squeak out, and the other man slowly lets go of his hold.

"Jungkook must have a tough time keeping people's hands off of you," Wonho says with a playful smile, and Jimin blinks quickly, trying to process those words.

"...Me!? Oh, no, not at all. Me? No way," Jimin rambles on rather nervously and forces himself to shut up already when Wonho pulls back to stand up straight.

"And so modest. I think Jin can learn a thing or two from you," he says with a crooked grin, and Jimin, despite his initial nervousness, sort of eases into the conversation. So Taehyung had been right about the man being nowhere near as intimidating as he looks. The man's behavior was significantly more accommodating that the aura he carried with himself.

"So are you single? I can't imagine that you'd be left alone for too long," Wonho continues, and Jimin can't tell if the man's joking or not. He must be joking right? Jimin opens his mouth to say that he does have a boyfriend but is cut off by the sound of Namjoon's voice.

"Wonho."

Namjoon's approaching the two of them, looking slightly more worn out than he usually is.

"Jin's looking for you. I think he's challenging you to a duel" Namjoon informs Wonho, and Wonho glances past Namjoon's shoulders to find Seokjin staring at the bottles of alcohol behind the bar.

"That guy never learns, does he. Wish me luck," Wonho murmurs playfully, basically pressing his lips against Namjoon's ear. He then taps the bar owner's cheeks with both hands before walking off towards the bartender, and Jimin is left slightly flabbergasted. He's never imagined that anyone would get away with doing that to Namjoon. In fact, even Seokjin rarely touched Namjoon, and Jimin knows how close the two are.
"You two must be really close," Jimin blurts out before he can really stop himself, and he's not even sure why he's even vocalizing the observation. Of course they must be close. They have known each other for far longer than he's known Namjoon, and suddenly he's feeling a bit left out even though he has no right to be. "Will he be working here?" he tags on quickly in hopes of distracting the other man from the initial outburst, because Namjoon is watching him with a small frown etched onto his features.

"Wonho? No. He'll probably drop by every now and then, but he's never worked here before either."

"Oh. He hasn't?" Jimin asks, surprised by the piece of information. He had been under the assumption that Wonho must have been one of the starting members of Bulletproof, judging from how close he's with everyone and how he seems to have no problem navigating around the bar.

"Not officially at least. He's spent enough time here to basically be an employee though," Namjoon explains with a fond smile, and Jimin feels the foreign sensation creeping up his chest again.

"I see..." Jimin falters, unsure of what else to say to that. Namjoon was close to everyone at the bar, especially with someone like Seokjin, Yoongi or Hoseok, yet no one had been like Wonho. There was a layer of something deeper and something inexplicably intense when it came to the interaction between Wonho and Namjoon. Almost as if Wonho had some kind of an upper hand when it came to the two of them.

Jimin glances at Wonho, who is standing behind the bar while stirring a shaker expertly in his hands. He watches as the handsome man twirls it and throws it around, catching it behind his back and flashing one of his devilishly charming grins at Seokjin, who playfully sticks his middle finger at him.

The man doesn't even work here and is mixing cocktails as if he's been doing it his entire life.

Jimin jumps when he feels a hand on his head again.

"Are you OK?" the taller man asks, and Jimin nods, realizing that he's been too obvious with his staring and blanking out.

"Jimin-" Namjoon starts with a sudden look of distress, yet the man doesn't get to continue when Seokjin yells for him.

"...Boss?" Jimin presses, noticing how Namjoon is tensing his jawline again. Something was clearly bothering the man.

"It's nothing. I should get going before Jin starts yelling again," Namjoon chooses to say instead, the distress gone from his eyes as quickly as it had appeared. Jimin opens his mouth to stop him but ends up just watching the man make his way to both Wonho and Seokjin.

His head is still buzzing with questions he's probably never going to ask.
The news of Wonho gets around the gay community somehow, and Jimin starts to notice how some people are now coming to the bar to get a glimpse of the legendary Lee Wonho. The man in question however doesn't seem at all to even be paying attention to the attention he's garnering, stopping by the bar just about every day to help tend the bar or to spend time in the bar owner's office.

And Jimin definitely doesn't miss the murmuring among the patrons about the rumors surrounding Kim Namjoon and Lee Wonho. Some are saying that the two had been the Gay Couple years back until Lee Wonho had mysteriously disappeared entirely off the grid. Some argued that Wonho had broken Namjoon's heart and that's why the man's been spending the last few years drowning himself in one-night stands. A few were even speculating that it was the other way around and Wonho has resurfaced just to get Namjoon back.

In conclusion, the community was already buzzing with the news of the two men seen together again, and Jimin doesn't know what to make of it.

How is it that Lee Wonho just appears and suddenly everyone is automatically linking him to the bar owner as if it's the most natural thing in the world? And why is it that both Kim Namjoon and Lee Wonho continue to spend so much time with one another in public without caring about any of the rumors and speculations?

Today, Wonho is dressed in all black, pouty lips tinged redder than the first time they met, and the lips alone are clearly responsible for at least half of the boners currently inside the bar. The man is dancing behind the bar as he mixes drinks for a poor soul who isn't even trying to hide his blatant gawking, and even Jimin finds himself staring with his mouth open at the sensual way in which the man sways to the beat filling up the establishment.

Wonho pours the man his drink with a wink and laughs when the guy basically runs off with the glass, his face visibly scarlet even under the dim lighting of the bar. Then Namjoon appears seemingly out of nowhere and leans over the counter to speak to Wonho. The two men exchange words, their faces mere inches away from each other's. Jimin can't make out Namjoon's expression, since he can only see the back of the owner's head, but he does see the way Wonho looks into the other's eyes.

"Now I see why Kim Namjoon hasn't been sleeping with anyone."

A random voice sounds from behind Jimin, and he sneaks a glance to find a couple of tipsy patrons staring at the two men at the bar still engaged in a conversation of their own.

"Shit, if I was waiting for something like that, hell I'd quit dick for a while too. I'd give my left nut for a night with him."

"I'd give up my left nut and an arm. Fuck me."

"I guess that's what we're competing against now."

"And who the hell's going to want to compete against that?"

Jemin walks off to another table, not wanting to hear the rest of the conversation. He knows that he should know better than to take all the bar gossiping to heart, but he can't help but wonder if that is really the reason behind all the one-night stands coming to a halt. If that is the case, he should be happy for his boss. He had always thought that Kim Namjoon deserved someone loving and just as amazing as the man himself, and from what he hears, Lee Wonho is exactly that and more...yet why is it that he's so eager to turn a blind eye to the rumors?
The next day, Namjoon is seated at one of those tables on the 1st floor, a small sketchpad in front of him. The bar's been growing steadily, and he and Hoseok have discussed the possibility of moving to a bigger venue. It's an idea, and a logical one as well, but neither of them think they are ready for that kind of change. They have grown too fond of the establishment to let go, which meant that it was now up to Namjoon to come up with a way to expand the bar somehow.

They do have a second floor that might be transformed into places for additional tables with the right amount of construction work. Namjoon chews at his lower lip as he works his pen, sketching what he wants the place to look like.

In reality, he doesn't need to make any changes. There is no need for him to expand the building to accommodate more people. He was already making plenty of money as is. Enough to pay all his men heftily. He doesn't want all that much more in life, but he's heard of how more people want to come to have a good time, away from the scrutiny of the rest of society, and now he feels the need to make a way to accept more people into Bulletproof.

He's so lost in his brainstorming and sketching that he doesn't even hear Jimin approaching him. He only notices the smaller man's presence when Jimin taps on the table, and Namjoon finally looks up, the pen coming to a sudden halt.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know you were working on something," Jimin apologizes as soon as his eyes land on the busy lines etched onto the sketchpad, and Namjoon pushes it slightly off to the side.

"Nothing urgent. Did you need something?"

"I just had something to ask...but um, can I first ask what that's for? That looks like the bar," Jimin asks curiously, peering at the sketches.

"Just brainstorming ideas on doing something with the second floor to expand the bar."

"Oh!" Jimin exclaims, perking up at the notion of the upgrade.

"I'm not sure if we will just yet. It's just an idea at this point. Apparently more people want to come to the bar, but there's just not enough room it seems," Namjoon explains, tapping the sketchpad with the back of his pen.

"That's...really nice of you," Jimin says, his eyes still fixed on the black lines. "That you're making this much effort to let people have a place where they can be themselves. I know that renovations can get really expensive."

"Which is probably why we won't be able to do something too fancy. We'll see," the bar owner says with a soft smile. "So what is it that you wanted to talk about?"
"I spoke to Mingyu," Jimin continues, picking at the edges of the table with his nails. Namjoon says nothing, not knowing what to expect considering the conversation they had during the New Year's party and that neither of them had brought the man's name up since. He braces himself anyway, because he gets this sinking feeling that Jimin isn't about to say anything he wants to hear.

"And he apparently planned an overnight trip next weekend to make up for missing both the Christmas and the New Year's party."

"...Ah, I see," Namjoon lets out quietly, ignoring how it feels as if there's not enough oxygen left inside the bar. He wonders if he's still smiling or not. He can't quite feel his face anymore, his nerve endings to busy zeroing in on the sensation of blood draining from his fingertips. "That's good," he adds quickly, slowly registering the mild look of confusion on the other man's face. "Do you know where you'll be going?"

"He won't tell me. Says it's a secret," Jimin answers while scratching the back of his own hand. "So um, is it OK if I take the next weekend off?"

"Of course you can, and Jimin, you know you don't actually work here, right? You don't need my permission to take days off," Namjoon explains, and Jimin smiles at him sheepishly.

"I know, but I thought I should still ask."

"Well, I hope you have fun." Namjoon says with what he hopes is a convincing voice as he begins to gather the sketchbook into his hands. "I think it's time to open shop. I will be in my office if you need anything else," he finishes before retreating to the staircase, unable to throw Jimin a final look before basically running away from the scene.

An overnight trip. As much as he'd like to believe that Mingyu is in it for the sake of an apology, Namjoon can't shake off the feeling that the man must definitely have another plan in mind. He's too old and has met too many people to think that two grownups will be going on an overnight weekend trip without hoping for sex.

He feels sick. If Jimin wants to have sex with his boyfriend, there is nothing Namjoon can do about it, but the very idea of Mingyu's hands and lips against Jimin's exposed skin makes bile rise in his throat. The jealousy is ugly. It's all-consuming and frightening, and Namjoon finds himself standing in his office, not knowing how to make it go away.
"So it seems like Jimin's going on an overnight trip with that guy," Taehyung announces to Jungkook, who's been sipping club soda, and now the bouncer suddenly looks like he's about to shatter the glass in his hand.

"He's WHAT!? And how do you know this!?"

"Jimin just told me, and yeah, I know, this is just stupid now," Taehyung mutters as he takes a seat at the bar. "But it does explain why boss man's been looking like someone told him that he accidentally ran over an abandoned puppy that just found a loving home."

"...That is oddly specific," Jungkook mumbles under his breath. Just when they have decided that Mingyu's a giant douche, the man's gotta plan a whole trip and shit to make up for his fuckup (Not that it's winning him any brownie points at this stage).

"Maybe I can get Jimin sick or...I dunno, make him go into explosive diarrhea right before the trip and get him to cancel," Jungkook murmurs with a serious expression, and the bartender shoots him a look of disgust.

"What is wrong with you," Taehyung says with a scowl but then leans closer and continues in a much lower voice. "But hypothetically, how would you make him go into explosive diarrhea."

"Uh, easy. Just mix a bunch of-"

"Why the hell are you two talking about explosive diarrhea instead of getting ready?" Hoseok says from behind them, and both men do a horrible job of pretending as if they weren't just conspiring against Jimin.

"What? You don't talk about explosive diarrhea every once in a while?" Jungkook counters with a challenging expression, and Hoseok just shakes his head before shooing the bartender away.

The two are definitely up to something, and with Namjoon looking like he's been getting acquainted with death itself, Hoseok knows shit's about to go down.
"I didn't sign up for this shit," Hoseok moans under his breath and then slams his own head with the folder in his head.

The bar decides to finally do a welcoming party for Wonho's return to Korea, and while Jimin tries to excuse himself, he's basically dragged into it by everyone, including even Wonho himself. There was something about Wonho that made it impossible for Jimin to refuse, especially considering how much effort the man's been making to befriend him. Wonho was nice. Welcoming and inviting. And most of Jimin's first impression of the man had sort of dissipated over the course of the past few days. The only thing that he hasn't changed his mind about is the fact that Lee Wonho's ridiculously and quite unbelievably attractive.

No expense is spared as they begin to open some of their finest bottles. Wonho jokes that he better not have to pay for them later before grabbing a glass for himself, and less than an hour later, everyone, including even Jimin, is pleasantly buzzed.

Wonho remains right next to Namjoon's side the whole time, leaning against the bar owner when he laughs and playing with the man's hair idly when he's listening to someone else speak. Namjoon acts as if he doesn't notice the physical contact, carrying on with his conversations as if the constant touches have always been a part of his life.

"I knew you guys were going to get together," Wonho says with a roll of his eyes, pointing at Yoongi and Hoseok. "I totally called it before I left, and you idiots-" he continues pointing at the two bartenders "-said that wasn't possible."

"Oh come on," Seokjin counters with a huff, "that's only because Hoseok's way too good for Yoongi."

"What did you say, fucker?" Yoongi growls playfully, and Seokjin pretends to hide behind Jungkook, who just hisses "you're way to big to be hiding behind anyone."

"Yeah, Jin, don't you dare talk that way about my baby," Hoseok cooes, ignoring Yoongi's protest to not call him that in public.

"If you guys don't stop," Taehyung mutters with an impressive scowl. "I'm going to puke out this very expensive champagne I've been enjoying."

"It's cute," Wonho says with a grin. "Right, Joonie?" he asks, tapping his head against the bar owner's shoulder again.

"You only think that because you don't have to deal with them all the time," Namjoon jokes playfully, looking a lot more casual and relaxed than he usually is. Jimin can't tell if it's the alcohol or Wonho's presence that's having such an effect on the usually more reserved man.

"So, how's the sex?" Wonho asks point blank, and Jimin chokes on his champagne and lets out a strangled noise as he tries to deal with both the uncontrollable coughing and the burning sensation in
his throat.

"Holy- Jimin, are you OK?" Wonho asks, pulling himself away from Namjoon to lean towards the smaller man. Jimin nods furiously, not confident in his ability to vocalize anything just yet.

"Jimin's a little shy," Taehyung cooes, putting an arm around the man who's still coughing. "But excellent question, Lee Wonho. Yeah, how is the sex? Yoongi? Hoseok?"

"Fuck off," Yoongi hisses just as Hoseok puts both thumbs up, and the DJ throws the other a withering look.

"You guys might not know this, but my baby's packing," Hoseok continues shamelessly, and Yoongi dips his head with a long, suffering sigh.

"Oh, shit, Min Yoongi, what's up," Taehyung says with a mischievous grin, and Jungkook suddenly looks a lot more invested in the conversation. "Like how big are we talking here?"

Hoseok tilts his head as he starts creating some space between his two index fingers, and Yoongi takes one of the manager's hand with a somewhat desperate "Hoseok, please," and everyone breaks out into laughter, thoroughly enjoying the flustered look on the DJ's face.

"Look what you've done." Yoongi narrows his eyes at Wonho, and the man returns the look with a lazy grin.

"So Wonho, how many hearts did you break in London?" Seokjin asks, and Jungkook whips his head to stare at the bartender with the same shooked expression he wears every time he accidentally walks into someone having sex in the bathroom.

"None," Wonho answers with a grin, and everyone else goes into a collective boo.

"Bullshit," Yoongi counters, throwing a peanut at the handsome face.

"Maybe one or two," Wonho relents, flashing a crooked grin. "But I really was on my best behavior in London," he adds, and to this, Namjoon tears his eyes away from the drink in front of him to look at the man sitting next to him. There is a fleeting moment where the two men hold each other's gaze, and that split second is more than enough for Jimin to see with absolute clarity that the relationship between the two is drastically different from the ones Namjoon shared with anyone else at Bulletproof.

They were more than friends. Shared something different than the usual brotherhood of the bar.

"Ugh boring," Taehyung cuts in, sensing the sudden tension. "But it's good to have you back," he continues, raising his half empty glass. Wonho winks at him and the bartender lets out a long groan while lulling his head back.

"You and that fucking winking. You need to stop doing that around the bar, man. I'm tired of people asking about you," he complains, and Seokjin nods in agreement from besides him. "I'm going to either hang a sign that says 'Ask him yourself,' or tell people that you ugly cry during sex."

Wonho barks out a laughter as if it's the most hilarious thing he's heard this month and lets out a loud "Oh my god, can you imagine if I actually did that??"

"Well guess who's going to tell everyone you do anyway."

"Tae, are you trying to ruin my life?"
"Maybe."

Wonho throws a balled up napkin at Taehyung, and the bartender ducks out of its way. The small party continues with more shots and playful insults. Taehyung and Seokjin even grind against each other for shits and giggles, and Yoongi is basically curled up into a ball in Hoseok's arms as he struggles to remain awake.

Jimin realizes that he might have had perhaps too much to drink and gets out of his seat in search for some fresh air. He should've taken his time with getting up, because his head starts to spin a little bit and he finds himself wobbling as he tries to regain balance.

"You OK there?" It's Wonho again, with a hand on his arms to keep him steady. Jimin lets out a meek "yeah, just a little dizzy" and explains that he's going to just go outside for a bit. Jimin hears the sound of another chair scraping against the floor and is suddenly overcome with a scent he's come to familiarize himself with. A scent that's just as warm as the person it belongs to.

"Here, I'll go with you."

Namjoon's voice almost feels like a physical touch against his skin. Jimin feels the man's hand on the small of his back, guiding him towards the exit, and Jimin lets the other lead him, away from the smell of expensive alcohol and laughter. Once they are out the backdoor, the cold air hits him hard and fast. It's almost the end of January. When Korea's winter is especially unforgiving.

Jimin blinks slowly as he stares ahead. It's silent. No one wants to be out at this time, when the sun has yet to make an appearance and add a bit of warmth to what the moon has done. It's a sharp contrast to the incessant chattering Jimin had been a part of only minutes ago, and he finds himself sobering up rather quickly.

"Jimin, did you have too much to drink?" Namjoon asks in a hushed voice, bending his back slightly so that he's eye-level with the smaller man. They're standing close. Their noses mere inches away from the other's, and Jimin forgets about the cold air hitting him from all sides.

"Are you and Wonho together?"

Jimin doesn't realize until it's too late that he's accidentally let the question escape his lips. Doesn't even recognize that it's his voice until Namjoon inhales sharply and pulls back.

"I'm sorry, I don't know why I just said that," Jimin tags on hastily, hoping that Namjoon will just brush it off as the alcohol in his system talking. Jimin knows that it's an innocent question. Hell, Yoongi and Hoseok had been asked if they are together on more than several occasions, yet he can't help feel that he's overstepped some kind of a boundary.

Because at the end of the day, what was he? He wasn't a brother like Seokjin was. Wasn't a "friend" like Wonho or anyone else at the bar who seems to know so much more about Namjoon than he does. Really, how much does he really know about Kim Namjoon?

"...No," Namjoon finally answers, a puff of white air rising from his lips, and the heavy emotion behind the voice makes Jimin's chest ache.

"I'm sorry...I just thought that maybe..."

There is utter silence as Namjoon tenses his jaws a couple times. Then something akin to pain flickers in his eyes, and Jimin wonders if he's just imagining it with all the alcohol buzzing through him. The man looks as if he has something he wants to say but can't, and Jimin's just about to tell the other man to ignore him when Namjoon's voice cuts through the cold air again.
"We were together."

"....Oh..."

Jemin suddenly finds it hard to breathe. Perhaps its the pain in the other man's voice. Maybe it's something else entirely. But whatever it is, Jemin finds himself trapped by it. As it he's become victim to some kind of poison that has begun to paralyze him from within.

"It was a relationship we both knew had an end, but I jumped into it too blindly. And then he left for London."

"...I'm sorry..." Jemin whispers, not wanting any more explanation to the rather cryptic response. There is clearly a lot more to the story. Things much heavier and deeper that Jemin knows Namjooon would never let anyone know. So that's what Wonho had been. The one person who was able to bring Namjooon that much happiness and that much pain.

Jemin reaches out with his hand, out of words to say. He's done more than enough talking already, so he settles for taking one of Namjooon's hand into his own and giving it a small squeeze. To think that someone like Kim Namjooon also had his heart broken. That he would surrender his heart to someone and be the one left behind.

"Maybe...maybe you can start over with him. He's back, right?" Jemin suggests, his own voice sounding foreign to his own ears. It hurts. Whatever it is, it's bringing him pain, but he can't stop the words spilling out of his mouth, because he can't bare to see the sadness in the other man's eyes. "I mean, that's what you're telling me all the time, right? To just go for it?"

And much to his surprise, Namjooon actually breaks into a small smile. The sadness may still lingering in his eyes, but the pain is now gone. Namjooon looks down at their entwined hands.

"...No. I'm not in love with him anymore."

Jemin can't bring himself to be entirely convinced but he says nothing. Instead, he watches as Namjooon finally looks up to meet his gaze. The two stand out in the cold in silence, each lost in their own thought until Namjooon tells Jemin that they should probably go inside before others come looking.

And Jemin agrees with him, needing to seek shelter from the cold taking over him.

Jimin finds himself frozen in front of Namjooon's apartment when he's greeted by a half-naked Wonho instead of the actual owner of the place. Wonho is all smiles with recognition the moment he sets his eyes on Jemin, one hand still busy rubbing a grey towel against his wet hair.

"Hi, Jemin, come on in!" Wonho chirps with a genuinely welcoming smile, as if he's not aware of the fact that his entire upper torso is exposed. "Namjooon's taking a shower. He should be out soon."
"Uh, um, I can come at another...time..." Jimin manages to squeeze out, not sure of where to fix his eyes, because Wonho looks like he's been sculpted, complete with a broad chest and a perfect set of abs Jimin can only dream of having one day. Good god, did this man live off protein shakes and unicorn tears or something?

"Nonsense. Come in. I actually got some fresh coffee going, would like a cup?" Wonho offers, his hand already on Jimin's back to guide him inside, and the proximity makes Jimin want to sort of run off and hide somewhere. The man now smells like the familiar bodywash Namjoon uses, and the notion somehow makes Jimin's chest tighten a little again.

Figuring that the discomfort is probably coming from the fact that he's seeing too much skin, Jimin averts his gaze towards the opposite direction. Wonho, however, seems completely oblivious to the nervousness basically erupting from the smaller man, because he just hums a little tune to himself as he makes his way into the kitchen, still half-naked.

Jimin wonders if he should be glad that the man isn't walking around completely nude.

"So, coffee?" Wonho hollers from the kitchen, and Jimin quickly answers that with a "No thank you," knowing for a fact that he won't be staying for long. He's just going to have to make a dash for it without coming off as being too weird. What excuse can he use? *Work, brain. Please.*

He's too late, because Wonho is sauntering back into the living room with a cup of coffee in one hand, its sweet fragrance tickling Jimin's nose. The man plops onto the couch, still not making any effort to put a shirt on. He now has his legs pulled up to his knees, his toes curled around the couch, and despite the constant sensual edge to the man, Lee Wonho manages to look adorable as he blows at the hot coffee.

*How in the world does this man have everything?*

Suddenly, Jimin finds it strange that Wonho doesn't even ask what Jimin is here for. Equally surprising is the fact that the man is behaving as if he's lived in this apartment forever, judging from how comfortable he appears to be. But the most baffling part is why Wonho has just taken a shower and why Namjoon is currently taking one.

It's Friday evening, only a couple hours left before work, so it makes sense that the two must be getting ready, but Jimin can't help but wonder if the two have perhaps-

"Jimin?"

Namjoon is walking into the living room now, dressed only in a pair of loose sweatpants and nothing else. And something sort of drops inside Jimin's chest. It's not painful. It doesn't make him sad. But it makes him uneasy, and he's overcome with the need to flee. Get out of the apartment.

Away from both Kim Namjoon and Lee Wonho.

"Umm...I uh...this must be a bad time. I'll see you at the bar, boss," Jimin barely manages to squeeze out before he finds himself beelining straight out the door, ignoring Namjoon's voice calling out his name.
What is this nagging feeling as if he's taken a wrong turn and he's just finding out that he's miles away from where he's supposed to be?

"I can't believe Jimin is still going."

Taehyung throws a sympathetic glance at Jungkook, who has his forehead pressed against the bar counter, air of defeat and disappointment radiating from every inch of his body.

"If you guys all let me just spike his drink with my concoction, he'll just be familiarizing himself with the toilet and not that guy's dick." Jungkook continues to growl bitterly, and Seokjin even pats him on the head a few times. "And you!" Jungkook points an accusatory finger at Taehyung as he finally peels his face off the surface. "You're supposed to find out where they're going! You can't even do that right!?"

"Well ex-the-fucking-cuse me for not have superpowers," Taehyung counters with a delicate rolls of his eyes. "That guy refused to tell Jimin, how am I supposed to figure it out?"

"See! That's fucking shady as hell too. Oh my god, what if his plan is to murder Jimin and sell off his organs!?"

"You need to spend less time on the internet," Yoongi says from besides them, appearing out of nowhere with Hoseok in tow. "So Jimin's still going huh? I kind of expected Namjoon to stop him somehow."

"He's an idiot," Hoseok mumbles, suddenly looking just as disgruntled as their resident bouncer.
Mingyu does come to the bar again. This time, he's with a string of people, and both bartenders recognize one of them immediately. The man had shamelessly and aggressively tried to get into Taehyung's pants while intoxicated, and Jungkook had to basically drag the man outside. He had put up quite a fight, screaming all sorts of profanities at the bouncer and actually even throwing a couple of sloppy punches, and for the first time in probably forever, Jungkook had to physically throw the man down onto the pavement. Considering how the man's been coming back at least once a month, they get the feeling that he probably doesn't remember much of the incident.

"Hey, I didn't know you're coming," Jimin greets, glancing at the four other men standing next to Mingyu. They are all watching him curiously with raised eyebrows, as if asking themselves why one of Bulletproof's employees is speaking to their friend.

"We weren't planning on it," Mingyu answers with a smile, draping an arm around Jimin's shoulders. "But this guy," he continues, tapping the tall man standing next to him with his fist. "just got himself a job and we thought we'd celebrate."

"Oh, that's great! Congratulations," Jimin says, trying to not be intimidated by the steady gaze of the said man.

"Thanks. So you're the one my boy's been talking about?" the man starts finally with a toothy grin, and Jimin's not sure why, but he's a bit surprised to find out that they know about him. "Shit, Kim Mingyu, dating someone from Bulletproof? Well done," he continues, and Jimin picks up on the slight slur in the other man's voice, but he can't quite tell if the man's tipsy or that's just the way he speaks.

The men eventually get settled at one of the tables, eager to get wasted. They're downing shots and ordering bottles immediately, and Jimin watches the crowd warily, wondering just how drunk they are planning on becoming. Mingyu and his friends alike ask Jimin to join, but he declines the offer politely, feeling rather uncomfortable around the rowdy bunch. Yet, by the fifth time, Jimin is running out of excuses and finds himself sitting between Mingyu and another man who's been quite persistent about Jimin joining them.

Jimin sips at some ice water he's managed to get from Seokjin as he listens to Mingyu's friends talk about their recent flings and who they would fuck in a heartbeat. He's gotten sort of used to all this talk about sex and whatnot from spending so much time with the people working at Bulletproof, but this was different. It was uncomfortable. He didn't know anything about them. Couldn't tell if all the lewd comments were meant to be light-hearted locker-room talk or something significantly more sinister.

So Jimin tries to excuse himself, ready to tell them he should really get back to working, but then one of the men, the one who's been glancing at him contemplatively the entire night, suddenly slams the table with eyes wide open and then points right at Jimin.

"Hey, you're the guy that had a thing with Kim Namjoon, right?" the man basically screams over the loud music, and the entire table goes silent. Jimin inhales sharply and the opens his mouth to deny it, except the man sitting next to Mingyu claps his hands with a loud "Ah!"

"I remember now! Man, I remember people going insane because Kim Namjoon had finally staked claim on someone, and shit, that was you!"

"Oh, no, that's not-" Jimin starts, putting both his hands up. He doesn't miss the way Mingyu is now watching him with brows furrowed, and Jimin is overcome with a nauseating sensation at the
realization that things are about to go so wrong so quickly.

"Oh shit, so I'm right," the one responsible for the initial outburst interrupts with an almost shark-like grin. "How did you manage to do that? That guy can't keep his dick in one person for more than a few hours."

"The most sought-after manwhore in Seoul," some other guy says with a heavy slur and then laughs, as if it's the most hilarious thing he's heard his entire laugh, and suddenly, it isn't nervousness or dread Jimin's feeling. "I mean, shit, I like a good, no-strings-attached fuck every now and then, but that guy. He should probably put himself on the menu. Probably make good money off that shit!"

"Probably wouldn't even cost that much. Heard he's willing to fuck anyone that's sober," another one quips, making lewd motions with his hands. "Maybe I should-"

"He-he's not like that!"

All the mindless chattering comes to a halt at the sudden outburst, and Jimin finds himself under the scrutiny of 5 pairs of eyes. Normally, he'd be self-conscious. Regret bringing so much attention to himself. But not right now, not when these strangers are defaming Namjoon and talking about the man as if they know anything about him other than what the rumor mill has claimed. Kim Namjoon wasn't just some sex-crazed man who whored off his integrity for one night of pleasure.

And Jimin doesn't know why he's so angry. He's heard patrons talking about Namjoon before. The man naturally garnered rumors with his standing as one of the most sought-after man within the city's gay community and his status as the owner of the biggest gay bar in Korea. But this....Namjoon doesn't deserve any of this.

And he can almost feel his fingers trembling out of sheer anger and frustration. How dare these people?

"Why are you defending him?" Mingyu says after a long moment of silence, his eyes hard and the usual good-natured smile wiped cleaned off his face.

"...Because it's not true," Jimin answers in a quieter tone, fighting the urge to just walk away and let them go on with the bullshit. He knows where this conversation is headed, and he doesn't want to be doing this. Not in front all these strangers, anyway.

Mingyu gets out of his seat, sending his chair scraping against the bar's floor. Jimin opens his mouth but isn't able to say anything when Mingyu grabs him by the wrist and begins to pull him away from the table. Jimin doesn't put up much of a fight, figuring that facing the inevitable outside is better than doing it in front of all these people, including the two bartenders or Jungkook, who he knows has been keeping an eye on him ever since Mingyu's entered the building.

The two find themselves under the mercy of Korea's harsh winter wind, inside the small alleyway next to the bar. There are a couple people walking by, but they seem too intoxicated to pay any close attention to the two. Jimin opens his mouth to explains. What exactly, he's not quite sure of. Either way, he doesn't get a word out, because Mingyu is holding a hand up, his jaws tense and his eyes
"You told me there's nothing going on with Kim Namjoon," Mingyu starts after a moment of tense silence, and Jimin almost flinches under the steely stare. "I should've fucking known."

"There isn't!" Jimin counters immediately, roughly pulling his wrist out of Mingyu's hand.

"Yeah? Then how come everyone else seems to know about Kim Namjoon putting a goddamn stake on you?"

"That wasn't-" Jimin begins to protest, almost feeling light-headed as he realizes the sheer depth of his boyfriend's misunderstanding. Namjoon had only done that to help him. Nothing more nothing less. He's ready to clear up the monumental misunderstanding, even if it means having to dig up an embarrassing part of his past, except Mingyu's next words put a stop to everything in his head.

"I expected better from you."

It takes a while for the words to sink in. Even when it sinks in, Jimin finds himself in a state of confusion, because Mingyu can't possibly mean what he thinks he means, right? I expected better from you? As if he's disappointed in his boyfriend over some stupid rumor? Because his own boss had been nice enough to help him finally get back at his cheating ex?

Mingyu should trust him. At least let him explain. But no, Mingyu clearly has no intention of doing any of it.

And suddenly, all the blood in Jimin's body is rushing towards his head, pushing heat against his eyes and burning his cheeks.

"...Excuse me?"

"I mean, Jimin, come on, fucking Kim Namjoon?"

"And what's that supposed to mean?" His own voice sounds cold against his own ears. Too calm compared to what he's feeling inside.

"You know exactly what I mean. You really want to stoop that low?"

"That's not fair. You don't know anything about him."

He's so angry at everything. At Mingyu. At Mingyu's friends. At all the people who must've seen Namjoon as nothing more than that. At himself for not being able to do anything about it. And he can't stop. Can't keep back the angry words spilling out of his mouth.

"At least he doesn't go around talking behind people's backs like your friends. At least he doesn't belittle people based on some stupid rumor. He's a good person who's been doing so much to help people like us. How can you say that about him?"
"You mean this fucking bar? He's not doing this for anyone but himself, Jimin. It's just money, and I'm pretty sure it makes it easier for him to pick someone to fuck at the end of the day," Mingyu counters in a biting tone. "But if you think he's so great, I have nothing else to say."

With those words, Mingyu walks away from Jimin, and Jimin doesn't make an effort to stop or follow him. He stands in the alleyway, not even registering the painfully cold air hitting him. Against his own expectations, his eyes aren't tearing up. There's no longer heat in his cheeks.

There is only the notion that everything's somehow turned into a complete mess. His emotions are now in ruins beneath his feet, rubble of anger, frustration, sadness and even regret lying lifeless and pitiful.

But why is he feeling all these things? Because his relationship with Mingyu's probably over? Then why isn't he crying and looking for a tub of ice cream to drown his sorrow in. It hurts, but not in the way it had with all the heartbreaks he had thus far. Something feels almost stilted, and it makes Jimin just stand between the two walls, lost in his own thoughts. There must be people walking by. Must be noise surrounding him given that it's Itaewon. Yet there is nothing. It's just him and the mess surrounding his very existence.

And it's not until a single tear drop falls down Jimin's right cheek that the man wipes away at it furiously before returning to the building.

Just around the corner, Wonho exhales slowly, letting the frigid air escape his lips in a trail of white.
I'd like to first state that I really do like Mingyu! I know he's kinda the "bad guy" here but i love him irl i swear lol
And as for Wonho. You guys all have your suspicion I see. Will he be good? Bad?
We'll see ;)

I listened to "So Close" by Jon McLaughlin while writing this (y'all remember the song? wink wink) and maybe you guys can too while reading! :)

Again thank you for all the lovely comments and Im sorry I haven't been replying to them! I always seem to be uploading these chapters in a hurry before having to go somewhere or before falling asleep!

Namjoon massages a particularly tight spot on his neck as he makes his way downstairs to check up on the bar. Things have been relatively peaceful following the last two parties, which gave him a bit of time to continue to come up with ideas for renovation. Yet, he hasn't been getting very far with the brainstorming, especially when he finds himself constantly distracted by the conversation he had with Jimin during Wonho's welcome back party.

He hadn't expected Jimin to ever ask about him and Wonho. Didn't expect the man to even pick up that the two shared a history. Afterall, there's no way of Jimin knowing about his past relationship with Wonho, given that no one from Bulletproof would ever relay that information to anyone else. It wasn't so much that he had been actively trying to hide it. He's not ashamed of what he and Wonho had. If anything, he'll proudly admit that Lee Wonho still holds a very special place in his life.

Yet when Jimin asked, it had caught him off guard. Partly because he had assumed that Jimin's too busy with his own relationship to care, and partly because he didn't think Jimin would venture to ask. But Jimin did, and Namjoon had answered honestly. And it had felt strange to finally admit to someone that he's not in love with Lee Wonho anymore, mostly because it had been the first time in his life that he'd managed to convince himself as well.

In all honesty, seeing Wonho again had kept him up that night. They had ended things amicably. In the most mature way that could muster given their circumstances. But the few months following the man's departure had destroyed him. Left him hollow, because Wonho was the one person he had let himself give his everything to. He trusted Wonho, and the man had accepted all his imperfections with a smile and open arms.

It wasn't love at first sight. Wonho was beautiful, but Namjoon had slowly fallen in love with the man's gentle spirit. Namjoon had a bit of a rebellious streak in him back then. Despite his constant efforts to come in terms with everything that's happened in his life, he had still resented the rest of society for shunning him. For making him build a wall around him to protect himself.
But Wonho was different. He wasn't capable of hate, and Namjoon was naturally drawn to the light that was Lee Wonho. They started off as friends. Namjoon learned to trust people outside of just Seokjin and the few people working at Bulletproof, and as time went by, he was in love.

He had been the first to confess, and Wonho had burst into tears that day. Wonho could have lied to him. Acted in a way that would have Namjoon just give up and turn around, but Wonho wasn't capable of deceiving anyone. So Wonho had been honest with him. Told him that he has no intention of settling down with a man. That his family came first and that he can't disappoint his parents. That he's already made up his mind to marry a woman who will understand him and carry on his family name.

And despite the anger and confusion, Namjoon understood. Not everyone was like him. Knowing Wonho's past, he knows that the man would willingly give up his own happiness to keep his parents happy. Wonho had apologized, and Namjoon had told him that there is nothing he should be apologizing for.

And Namjoon had taken a leap of faith. Told Wonho that he's willing to stay for as long as Wonho will have him. Wonho had been quite vehement in his rejection, arguing that there is no way that he's going to put Namjoon in that situation. But Namjoon was in love for the first time in his life and had fought for it.

In the end, the two jumped into a relationship that had an expiration date. *Tick tock, tick tock.* Time had always counted down for them, but neither of them cared. Namjoon loved Wonho. Loved seeing the man smile in the morning. Loved the way he pretended to not be crying when they watched a sad movie together. Loved the way he brightened up every time Namjoon told him how beautiful he is.

He had been so happy that he had forgotten that time was running out. And then one day, it all came crashing down. Wonho's father had found about their relationship, and in exchange for keeping Wonho's mother in the dark to spare her the misery, he had order his son to study abroad so that he can come back and start working at his company.

And Namjoon knew that it wasn't his place to stop the man from going. How can he, when he had known this was going to happen? And so they ended their relationship. Did their best to not cry. Promised each other to remain as friends if they see each other again.

When Wonho left, Namjoon felt lost. He still had everyone from Bulletproof, but it had felt as if the anchor to his ship had been severed off. He found himself floating aimlessly and uncontrollably in a sea that had no boundaries. The next few months were just filled with pain of varying magnitude. Some kept him pouring alcohol into his system until he passed out. Some made him unable to fall asleep at night. Some just felt like a dull ache that might never go away.

But time proved to be the best medication. He learned to continue on with his life without Wonho. Yet as the wound begin to heal, the walls were back up. Namjoon's stopped believing in love, not because he thinks it's a mythical concept, but because he's come to understand it's not for people like him. Love was for people who were deemed "normal" by society, and he wasn't about to put on an act for the rest of his life for a world that had punished him and Wonho when they had done nothing wrong.

And then of course he met Jimin. The man had stood for everything he detested. He had mocked the smaller man, because he hated seeing a reflection of the clueless idiot that he himself used to be. Yet the irony was that that's the *precise* reason why he couldn't just leave Jimin to himself, and before he knew it, he had agreed to help him in hopes that maybe, *just maybe*, that he can help Jimin protect himself before reality becomes too much.
But Jimin wasn't him. Even after a string of failed attempts at romance, even after seeing all the ugly and being taken advantage of by people who didn't believe in love, Jimin was still Jimin. The man who believes in the magic of mistletoe and first snow. The man who was that afraid of sex but not afraid to jump into a freezing river to save someone else's life. The man who got excited over marshmallows and untouched snow and alcohol-themed ornaments.

The walls were still there, but Jimin began to add bits of color here and there. Added little flowers and lights that eventually covered the entire wall, and Namjoon begin to wonder what lies outside of the world he's created for himself. Because despite the heartbreaks and drama, Jimin seemed happy. Happy that he can love at all.

When Wonho came back, it had felt as if he's finally remembering all the boxes he had locked up in the back of his heart. And it had hurt as much as it made him feel whole again. Wonho was his familiar territory. Someone who already knew about his walls and weaknesses, and when their eyes met, Namjoon knew that the other must've felt the same way.

It'd be easy to fall right back into it, hoping that it hurts less the second time around. At least he'd know what to expect and how to get back up on his feet again. Because as much as he was in love with Jimin, it frightened the hell out of him.

But the colors were too bright. The light too inviting. Jimin already had his heart, and no matter how hard he tried to go back to Wonho, he couldn't. Not even when he saw Jimin with his boyfriend. Not even when Jimin spoke to him about their overnight trip.

Yet the man had asked him if he's still in love with Wonho. And he had answered honestly. But the honesty is what now scares him, because uttering those words and admitting to himself that he's no longer in love with Wonho feels like he's crossed that point of no return. As if his back is against the wall and he has nowhere no go other than to face Jimin as the naive, real Kim Namjoon that he had worked so hard to hate and erase.

Namjoon exhales slowly, but the weight won't lift from his chest. The bass is hitting him from all sides, tingling his skin and almost sending a shiver through his skin, but he can't focus on the melody. There is so much movement. So many people. Yet Namjoon finds himself unable to register any of the faces, with only two more steps left till he reaches the bar floor.

Pull yourself together.

Namjoon continues to repeat those words in his head as if he's reciting a mantra. And against his expectations, it begins to work. Slowly but surely, the melodies dissociate from one another and the individual faces become clearer.

He needs to stop letting his thoughts overwhelm him like this.

Namjoon exhales slowly one last time before scanning the bar, overlooking the lust-filled glances, flirty winks and a few pairs of eyes filled with awe. Despite feeling as if his entire life is going to shit, nothing seems out of the ordinary for Bulletproof. People are having fun. No mess anywhere and no fighting. Just people leaving realities behind for the next few hours.

From where he's standing, he can see that Seokjin and Taehyung are serving up drinks, chatting pleasantly with a couple of the patrons. Jungkook is watching over the bar by the main door, his brows furrowed into a deep scowl, which makes the bar owner wonder if something's happened while he's been in the office. His eyes automatically turn to find Yoongi, who's DJing as usual, and Hoseok passes by the area, his eyes fixed on the tablet in his hands. His eyes continue to roam and then realizes that Jimin's nowhere to be seen. Is the man on his break?
Namjoon approaches the two bartenders, and while it had been difficult to spot when he was a good few feet away, he's suddenly picking up something akin to anxiety in both men's demeanor. It's not blatantly obvious. In fact, he doubts that any of the visitors would have detected the barely noticeable change. But he's spent too many years with them to simply brush it off as fatigue or simple annoyance from dealing with someone who's had too much to drink.

"What's going on?" Namjoon asks Seokjin, and Taehyung sort of flees to the bottles and does a horrible job of pretending as if he's rearranging some of them. The bar owner doesn't even bother pointing it out, taking that as a sign that Taehyung doesn't want to talk about it.

"What do you mean?" Seokjin questions, putting away one of the stirrers, and Namjoon lets out a small sigh. Seokjin must know that there is no bullshitting each other. They know each other far too well to think they can fool each other, and when they did act dumb, it only meant one of two things. That they don't want to talk about it or can't talk about it. So Namjoon doesn't push, trusting Seokjin with his discretion. When Seokjin does finally look up to meet his eyes, Namjoon nods curtly in understanding, and the bartender gives the other a thankful look before putting an empty glass into the sink.

"Where's Jimin?" Namjoon asks instead, figuring that he should change the subject, yet he doesn't miss the way Seokjin's shoulders tense for a fraction of a second at the mention of the man's name. It's not too difficult for him to connect the two together. So this had something to do with Jimin. If the man's been hurt in any way, someone would have told him already. If there had been any kind of emergency, Hoseok would have rushed into his office. So what can it possibly be?

"I sent him home. He wasn't feeling too well," Seokjin replies, still avoiding eye contact, and Namjoon immediately picks up on the change in tone in the second sentence. It's enough for Namjoon to understand that it's a lie, which means that Jimin isn't actually sick. It's something much more personal.

"I see. Is he OK?"

"Yeah, nothing life-threatening."

And that's all Namjoon needs to hear for the time being. He contemplates sending Jimin a message but then stops himself, figuring that there must be a reason why the man left without telling him or leaving some kind of a message. He's going to have to wait till the next day, and hopefully, Jimin will be back at Bulletproof to tell him what's happened. Just like he always does.

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By the time Jimin opens his eyes again, it's nearing dinner time, and he's not at all surprised. He had watched the sun come up. Let sunlight seep through his curtains as he lied wide awake in bed, curled up in his blanket in hopes of seeking some kind of comfort from the piece of fabric wrapped around
him.

What started off as too many emotions assaulting him slowly dissipated into a sense of detachment as the fight continued to replay in his head over and over again. It was such an ugly fight. Had stemmed from something so ugly and then spiraled into something just as horrid.

Now that he's gotten some sleep, he's able to pick at his own emotions and thoughts with more clarity. And he's surprised to find that there is still anger lingering in his system. Not because of what Mingyu's said to him, but because what his friends and he had said about Namjoon. The nasty words still make his gut wrench, knowing that they were directed at Namjoon.

Jimin reaches for his phone again. He knows he has missed calls and unread texts from Mingyu, and from the sheer number of them, Jimin gets a feeling that it might be something akin to an explanation for his behavior or an apology. Yet he can't bring himself to read any of it as he remains in bed, unable to will himself to crawl out of it.

Minutes pass. And it's a full 42 minutes later that Jimin finally opens up the texts.

It starts of with a [Jimin Im so sorry. I fucked up] and Jimin begins to gnaw at his lower lip as he lets his eyes move to the next line.

[I know its all going to sound like an excuse but I wanted to explain]

[Ive been paranoid about u spending so much time with kim namjoon]

[Bc ppl cant seem to stop talking about him]

[Like everyones always talking about how they want him]

[And I know you don't like Kim Namjoon that way]

[So im sorry for making such an accusation. I shouldnt have done that]

[And im so sorry about what I said about him and what my friends said]

[Ur right. I shouldnt have said all those things about him]

[I just got so frustrated I fucked up. Im sorry]

[Please text or call me when u read this]
Jimin can feel the sincerity of the apology, and he wants to accept it, fully understanding where Mingyu's coming from. He's familiar with what insecurity can do to people. He himself has been a victim for a very long time, so he can't bring himself to readily push the blame entire onto Mingyu. Afterall, it's Kim Namjoon. He's heard the rumors himself. He's listened to drunk patrons talking about how they would do anything to sleep with the man in question.

He should be glad that Mingyu understands the truth now. He should now be deciding if he wants to text or call Mingyu back...or if he should accept the apology or not.

But why is it that he's reading one sentence in particular over and over again, the rest of the words on the screen fading into grey blurs around it.

[And I know you don't like Kim Namjoon that way]

And Jimin doesn't even know why he can't stop. The words are screaming at him now. The tone growing almost accusatory in his head.

[And I know you don't like Kim Namjoon that way]

It's what he had wanted to hear from Mingyu all along. It's what he's told Mingyu and everyone else all along. It's something he's even told himself, so why do the words sound so foreign to his ears all of a sudden.

Then a small voice, somewhere in the back of his head begins to whisper to him.

But what if Mingyu had been right?
What if that's the reason why he's more fixated on those exact words than being sad over a possible breakup? What if that's the reason why the fight had happened in the first place?

Because now he can't stop the snapshots of the time he had spent with Namjoon flooding in. Images of how Namjoon's taken him to get ice cream. How they had comforted each other following a near-death experience at the man's summer home. How they had opened up to each other under the stars. How Namjoon's let him fall asleep at his apartment uninvited. How Namjoon had been the first person he'd go to for advice or help.

And each and every image is followed by a feeling of warmth. Acceptance. Knowing that Namjoon will never judge him. That he's safe. An understanding that Namjoon's always there for him whenever he needs him.

The countless hours they spent together. And not once had Jimin stopped to wonder why they end up spending so much time in each other's presence. Because what if... *what if it's him that had always wanted to just spend time with Namjoon?* What if it's that he's never realized until now what Namjoon means to him?

And ever since Wonho started to come to the bar, he had been uneasy, as if he's-

[And I know you don't like Kim Namjoon that way]
[And I know you don't like Kim Namjoon that way]
[And I know you don't like Kim Namjoon that way]
What if Mingyu had been right all along?

The next day, Jimin is back at the bar, and everyone, including even Yoongi who's usually too preoccupied with his craft to pay any real attention to the rest of the bar, notices how Jimin's been wiping down all the tables one by one as if his entire future depends on it. The man doesn't look like he's about to cry. Doesn't even look angry. In fact, he's been smiling at them when they make eye contact, but his hands are constantly working. Cleaning things that don't need any more cleaning. Organizing things that don't need any more organizing.

It's starting to scare them a little.

Namjoon included.

He watches Jimin working ceaselessly, keeping a close eye but not stopping in, because he knows that everyone has their own way of dealing with emotional distress. Yet minutes turn to hours, and Jimin doesn't stop. Shows no sign that he has any intention of stopping, and Namjoon finally steps in before Jimin dislocates something.

He doesn't start their conversation with an "Are you OK?" or "What happened," because how can he bring himself to do so when the man is trying so hard to hide it? So he brings up the next best
thing, figuring that the other man can probably use a distraction. He begins to talk about the bar's possible renovation and then asks if Jimin would like to accompany him in some market research by visiting a few of Seoul's most popular bars to hopefully find some inspirations.

Jimin asks if it's really OK for him to tag along, considering he's not a professional in interior design or business management, and Namjoon answers honestly that he values Jimin's opinion. Especially after seeing what he's capable of doing with Bulletproof's parties.

And Jimin eventually agrees, finally peeling himself away from the tables.

Once they are dressed appropriately for the cold outside, the two are quick to get inside Namjoon's car. Lucky for them, it's not snowing and the road is clear, so they have no trouble navigating their way out of Itaewon.

Jimin is quiet, his eyes fixed onto the light passing by as the car begins to pick up speed. While Namjoon had always appreciated silence for the sense of peace it brings, it's definitely not the case today. Right now, it feels like he's walking on thin ice.

They continue to move from one bar to another, tasting some of the bar's virgin cocktail selection instead of actual alcohol, because Namjoon needs to drive and Jimin doesn't want to lose the little emotional control he has left. The two fall into a comfortable pattern of sharing observations and throwing in their ideas. And Jimin starts to relax. Starts to look genuinely interested as he takes in all the different decors, styles and lighting. The man's laughing again, and Namjoon feels like he's finally walking on solid ground.

They eventually find themselves inside a cozy bar miles away from Itaewon, just to the outskirts of Seoul. The lighting is dim as any other bar, but the atmosphere is much warmer than any of the venue they had visited. Nothing about the place is flashy, relying on a style that is reminiscent of and old British pub, with a bright colored old-fashioned jukebox against one of the walls to keep the place interesting. The music playing is softer, and judging from how someone is standing in front of the jukebox browsing through a song to play, the machine is fully functional and intended for use by anyone who wishes.

"I didn't know a place like this exists in Korea," Jimin muses, taking in every inch of the small venue. People here were much more relaxed, resting casually on one of the cushioned seats or bar stools with a drink in one hand. Namjoon orders for the both of them and hands Jimin his share.

"This place is different, but it's nice," the bar owner continues quietly after a sip of his own drink.

"It really is. I've never seen a jukebox in person," Jimin replies, his eyes back on the big machine. He's never heard the song currently playing before. The singer's voice is husky, the beat not too slow but not fast enough to get any heart rates up. It's much mellower than what Yoongi usually plays at Bulletproof, and he can see a few couples dancing slowly to it, their eyes closed as they lean against each other with a content smile playing on their lips. Nothing is fancy or out of the ordinary about the place. The people dancing aren't exceptionally attractive or flashy like the people he's used to seeing at Bulletproof. But everything managed to be beautiful somehow. Almost beautiful enough for Jimin to forget the pain and confusion he's supposed to feel as he watches the people clearly in love with one another, whether it be just for one night or for the rest of their lives.

"Maybe I can get Yoongi to take requests on some nights," Namjoon says with a small smile, and Jimin lets out a quiet "That actually sounds nice" before taking another sip. They don't talk much as they listen to the next song. The man who has chosen the song walks away from the jukebox with a satisfied smile and returns to his table to grab a hold of a petite woman's hand. The woman lulls her head back in laughter and lets herself be led to the dancefloor. The couple begins to dance, staring
right into each others' eyes, and Jimin suddenly feels a lump in his throat. Not even because of what has happened with him and Mingyu, but because that's the kind of love he has always wanted.

And seeing it for himself right in front of his eyes instead of just believing in it blindly hurts.

"Jimin, are you alright?" Namjoon's low register rings from besides him, and Jimin manages to flash the other man a weak smile. He knows it must not be very convincing, but it's the best he can muster given how hard he has to try to not cry like an idiot right next to the man.

"Yeah. I'm fine," he does his best to reassure the other man, and Namjoon pretends as if the smile's convincing. "I was just...that couple. They look nice. They look happy."

Namjoon says nothing.

Because he immediately understands that something must've happened between Jimin and Mingyu. There's no excitement in Jimin's eyes. Jimin's supposed to tell him how he would like to dance just like that with his boyfriend. Supposed to bring up their upcoming V-day party and talk about how it'd be nice to have slow songs play for couples or how he should invite Mingyu so that the two can spend a romantic evening at the bar.

Jimin's not supposed to sound so detached from the romance that's right in front of him.

Jimin doesn't realize the song's coming to an end until a woman approaches the jukebox with a man in tow. The two are speaking quietly to each other, most likely trying to decide on what song to play. There is a moment of silence as the current song comes to a slow stop, and then the next track begins to play through the speakers.

Less than a couple of seconds in, and Jimin recognizes the song.

It's the one song he had always wanted to dance to with that special someone.

Jon McLaughlin's voice begins flow through the speakers, and Jimin can't control the tears anymore. He doesn't want to cry. No. Not here. Not next to Namjoon. He ducks his head, but it's too late. Namjoon is taking the drink out of his hand and guiding him out the building. Jimin doesn't even check to see what the man's done with his drink or if anyone is watching him, because he can barely see through the tears welling in his eyes.

He didn't want to cry. He doesn't want to cry. Not in front of anyone or by himself, but he can't stop it.

Jimin doesn't raise his head. Not even when he's back inside Namjoon's car. Not when the car's already speeding through some street in Seoul and passing through a long tunnel. He keeps his lips tightly shut, unwilling to give into the emotions suffocating him and threatening to rip through his chest. He doesn't even know why he's so upset. He's just so confused by everything. He wants to be angry at something but can't find anything to be angry at.

And Jimin doesn't know how long they've been driving, but the car eventually comes to a stop. Expecting to be back in Itaewon, Jimin finally raises his head to look out the window and sees that they are completely alone, overlooking the the dizzying array of lights that creates the city that is Seoul. It's still dark out, but the illuminations seem to reach out to him as he takes it all in.

"...Where are we?" Jimin asks, his voice shaky despite his efforts to steady it. If Namjoon notices it, the man doesn't act like it.
"Just a little place right outside of Seoul. A spot I came across by accident," the other man explains, his eyes fixated on the play of lights. "Has been returning ever since when I just need to clear my thoughts and I don't have time to go stargazing. I pretend that all those lights are stars instead."

"

"....Oh."

"...Do you want to talk about it?"

"...About...?"

"Why you're so upset," Namjoon clarifies after a moment of silence. "You don't have to if you don't want...but you know I'm here if you want to talk."

And Jimin honestly is lost. On one hand, he's about to burst at the seams from having to hold everything in, and he's always spoken to Namjoon whenever he was feeling troubled. On the other hand, he can't bring himself to tell the man everything. Especially when he himself has so much to figure out on his own. Not when he hasn't been able to get Mingyu's and his own voice out of his head.

"Jimin?"

"...I got into a fight with Mingyu," Jimin begins slowly anyway, as if in some kind of a trance. Namjoon doesn't say anything. Doesn't ask what the fight was about, and Jimin's grateful for the silence. "It...didn't end too well. He sent me a bunch of texts apologizing, and I said I needed some time to think, but...I dunno...." he trails off, feeling the tears welling up again. "I just feel like...everything's always a mess with me, no matter how hard I try. Maybe it's time I wake up and just face reality."

"...What reality?"

"The reality that I'm never going to be in that kind of a relationship. The kind where you dance to So Close and just know that you're in love and it doesn't scare you because you know nothing's going to go wrong."

There is silence.

It stretches on until Jimin can only hear the sound of his own heart beating in his chest. And he's about to tell the other man that they should go back to the bar, but Namjoon begins to move, cutting through the stillness that has befallen them. Jimin watches as the man opens the door and exits the vehicle. Watches as Namjoon walks around to car towards him and motions for him to come outside as well.

Jimin blinks slowly, unsure of what the man wants from him, but he obliges and leaves the warmth of the car as well, letting the cold air surround him instead.

Namjoon pulls his phone out and begins to slide his thumb across it. Tapping the screen every once in a while, and Jimin can't help but wonder what's going on. It doesn't look like Namjoon's trying to call someone or take a photo. He looks to be searching for something. For what, Jimin has no idea.

Then suddenly, a familiar melody starts to flow from the small device, quick to overcome the silence that had blanketed itself over the two men standing facing each other.

And Jimin holds his breath as he begins to listen to the piano playing in the background, each note just as beautiful as the one before.
"No one can promise a perfect relationship that will last forever," Namjoon begins, his voice carrying above the calm piano melody as he sets the phone down onto the car besides to him. "But dancing to So Close...Will you do me the honors?" he continues, a ghost of a smile playing on his lips as he slowly puts a hand out.

And Jimin reaches out and takes it as if he's under a spell. Enchanted by the sweet melody and the voice that rings through the quiet night air. Namjoon's hand is warm, and Jimin holds onto it tightly, just as the man puts a gentle hand on the small of his back.

You're in my arms
And all the world is calm
The music playing on for only two
So close together
And when I'm with you
So close to feeling alive

And they are moving together. Letting the melody carry them in their steps. And suddenly, Jimin can't tear his gaze away from Namjoon's eyes. The same honest eyes that Jimin's come to know hold so much more depth than people gave him credit for.

A life goes by
Romantic dreams must die
So I bid my goodbye
And never knew
So close, was waiting
Waiting here with you
And now, forever, I know
All that I wanted
To hold you so close

Namjoon's not a great dancer. His feet shift slightly awkwardly as he lets Jimin guide him, and the air is much too cold for the two of them to be dancing outside. There's no dim lighting. The sound coming from the phone isn't loud enough for the open space they're in.

But the moment feels perfect as they glide across the dirt and grass, feeling each other's warmth through their joined hands.

So close to reaching
That famous happy end
Almost believing
This one's not pretend
And now you're beside me
And look how far we've come
So far we are, so close
Namjoon extends his arm above Jimin's head, and the smaller man does a slow twirl before the man's hand is on his back again. Namjoon is biting his lower lip, and it makes something catch in Jimin's throat. For the first time, the usually confident and collected man seems uncertain. Shy almost.

And Jimin can't help but think that this must be the real Kim Namjoon. The real person behind all the stories and rumors. Behind all the intimidating aura and promises of mindless pleasure.

The real Kim Namjoon who became uncertain. Nervous. Doubtful and even awkward.

The real Kim Namjoon that was almost like him in a way.

Oh how could I face the faceless days
If I should lose you now
We're so close to reaching
That famous happy end
Almost believing
This one's not pretend
Let's go on dreaming
For we know we are
So close, so close
And still so far

The song comes to a slow end, the melody fading into the cold night air, and Jimin finds himself slightly breathless as they continue to stare into each other's eyes.

"I know this probably isn't exactly what you want...but...I just wanted you to understand that you don't have to stop believing in the things you do," Namjoon begins as he pulls back slowly, and Jimin watches as the man takes a hand to the top of his head. "Afterall, you made me a believer again. It wouldn't make sense for you to give up first."

"......"

"Now lets go back before they find our frozen bodies miles away from where we're supposed to be."

And with these words, Namjoon is moving towards the car again, and it's only then Jimin remembers where they are. Why they are where they are. What they are.
What if Mingyu had been right all along?
"OK, I don't know exactly what's happened," Jungkook begins in his conspiratoy tone, his fingers interlaced in front of his nose. "But we should probably wait till spring to bury that guy's dead body. I hear it's really hard to dig the ground at this time of the year. Shit's frozen or something."

"Jeon Jungkook," Seokjin begins with a roll of his eyes just as Taehyung perks up at the proposal. "I see that you've done your research, but we're not going to murder anyone. Not intentionally anyway."

"OK, so hypothetically, if-"

"No, no more hypotheticals from you," the bartender cuts in, holding a finger up to effectively shush the bouncer who seems a bit too eager to commit homicide. Honestly though, he finds the whole thing a bit hilarious. The man's still nervous about getting caught for having downloaded a couple songs illegally while in middle school. He'd never pull off actual homicide.

"Has anyone asked Jimin?" Taehyung questions from besides the other bartender, and everyone, including Hoseok and Yoongi who have been listening silently, all glance at each other. "I'm guessing that's a no," Taehyung says with a sigh of defeat.

"I can't bring myself to ask," Hoseok mumbles, and the rest nods in agreement. Normally, Taehyung is too nosy to not ask, but this time, it's different. Especially considering what they have witnessed that night. They have no idea what transpired Jimin and Mingyu to leave like that, only to have Mingyu re-enter the bar and leave right after with the rest of the guys he had come in with. Jimin had returned a few minutes later, looking completely out of it, which meant one of two things.

The two either got into a huge fight or the two got into a fight and then broke up as a result of it. They don't know what has caused it, but something tells them that Mingyu's at fault. Jimin just wasn't the confrontational type. He wouldn't have started a fight, especially when he's surrounded by so many people he's not familiar with.

And all of them are afraid to ask, especially when Jimin has been making such an effort to pretend as if nothing's happened. Taehyung had been a firm believer that Jimin would have told one of them
about the breakup if the two had indeed broken up, but his faith has been dwindling as he continues to see Jimin in the same heartbreaking state.

In fact, Taehyung isn't entirely sure if he's ready to hear the bad news. As much as he dislikes Kim Mingyu with passion, he doesn't want their relationship to have come to an end on such a negative note.


Ever since that night, Jimin finds himself standing in the middle of the endless road that is Kim Namjoon. He has no idea where he is. He doesn't know which way he's supposed to be headed or if there even is a destination that can be reached. It's a jumbled mess of thoughts and emotions that Jimin can't quite bring himself to untangle, but all he knows that he needs to make a decision about which path to take.

The fact that Mingyu's texted him again to ask for forgiveness makes him want to down whatever bottle he can get his hands on and drink himself into slumber that will continue through the end of the week. He's contemplated just taking time off from the bar, figuring that spending too much time around Namjoon's probably not a good idea until he has everything sorted in his head. But in the end, he found himself returning to the bar, because at home, it became just him and his thoughts, and nothing was worse in his opinion.

But of course, he can't quite seek refuge at Bulletproof either. Not when Wonho is present inside the bar, shining as brightly as always just by existing. Days have passed since the man's returned to Bulletproof, but the man's name is still on people's lips. It's as if the rumors of the two together have become a fact for everyone. They were the couple. In fact, patrons were no longer even trying to go for Namjoon. They were in too much awe. Saw perfection they instinctively cowered away from in fear of marring it.

Jimin watches as Namjoon leans over to Wonho and says something into the man's ears. Wonho nods a couple times and then turns to smile at the other man, and something inside Jimin's chest tightens. And when Namjoon smiles back at Wonho, Jimin feels actual pain.

And it hits him.

All that sense of unease. The tightness in his chest. That desperate need to flee from Namjoon's apartment in the presence of Wonho.
He'd felt *jealousy* all along, and it makes him feel sick to the stomach.

He has no right to be jealous. He was already in a relationship with Mingyu. He was *happy* with what he had. And Wonho was perfect for Namjoon. In fact, the two already were already together *way* before he had entered the picture.

Jimin suddenly feels so small. Insignificant even as he stands amidst the crowd of patrons filling the bar, because he sees that it wouldn't have made a difference either way. There was no room for someone like him when it came to Kim Namjoon. Even if he had known about his own feelings earlier, before Mingyu or even before Jaebum.

Even if he had fallen for the man sooner, would it really have made a difference? Even right now, he doesn't stand out from the sea of people surrounding him. If he hadn't cried like that, Namjoon would've never noticed someone like him. If he didn't have such a sob story that was pathetic enough to pique the man's interest, Namjoon wouldn't have spared a second glance.

So why is it that his idiotic heart is telling him that Namjoon must've been so good to him all this time for a special reason? Kim Namjoon's nice to everyone, he tries to argue, but then what about the dance? Everyone knows that the man doesn't dance. Yet he had, despite coming off as almost insecure about the way he moves. The man's let his weakness show. Let a glimpse of his true self show.

Jimin hates himself. It's so typical of him to take any sign of kindness as anything more than just *that*. So typical of him to slowly fall for someone who just happens to be good to him. Namjoon probably thinks of him as a charity case, and the notions hurts much more than seeing the man with Wonho.

Why did he have to fall for the one man everyone's told him to not fall for?

Wonho and Namjoon are laughing together at something, and Jimin tears his eyes away, unable to take how beautiful and perfect the two men look together.

"Joon, when are you coming back from Busan again?"

Jimin looks up to the familiar voice of none other than Hoseok, who is tapping away on his phone with a small frown on his face. He hadn't even realized that the bar owner was back on the floor, too lost in his own thoughts and hating himself to be paying attention to his own surroundings. He's
lucky that no one is paying attention to his face, because he can only imagine how miserable he must look.

Namjoon is standing only a few feet away from him so that only his side is showing. He rubs his lower lip with his index finger a couple before answering "I'm just making it an overnight thing. Will be back on Friday night. I'll be in on Saturday."

"Shouldn't you take another day off? You're going to end up wearing yourself out if you're trying to finish all that in two days," Hoseok suggests, finally looking up from the small screen in front of him.

"I should be fine. I'll just sleep a few more hours," the bar owner answers with a shrug, and Jimin can't keep quiet anymore. What is this about? He vaguely remembers the two bartenders talking about some business trip but he hadn't bothered to ask about it, figuring it had nothing to do with him (and he was busy trying to run away from the sight of Wonho and Namjoon together).

"Are you...going to Busan?" Jimin asks, approaching the two men, and Namjoon turns around to look at him with raised eyebrows. He's not sure where the look of surprise is coming from, but he pretends to not take notice.

"I am. For a business trip of sort," Namjoon answers and then proceeds to blink a few times owlishly before a look of realization flashes across his features. "You're from Busan, right?" he asks, and Jimin nods almost too eagerly. Despite the internal crisis that's being plaguing him, a simple mention of his hometown manages to be almost comforting.

"It is," Jimin says with a small smile, forgetting how miserable he's supposed to be. "Will you be going to the beach?" he asks, hoping that Namjoon does. Afterall, it was what the city's the most famous for.

"I doubt I'll have any time this time around," Namjoon replies rather ruefully, and Jimin lets out a small "oh." Hoseok glances between both men and then finally opens his mouth.

"You miss Busan?" Hoseok asks, putting his phone away.

"Yeah. There's this beach that I used to go to whenever I needed to clear my head and stuff. I think I just miss being able to go there."

"Haeundae?" Hoseok asks, naming the most popular beach in Busan. The place drew people from all over Korea when the weather became warm enough.

"Nah. It's always too crowded there. I went to Ilgwang. I know it's not that well known, and it might not be the prettiest but it was peaceful," Jimin explains with a fond smile, and Hoseok raises his eyebrows in surprise that the man actually looks happy for a change. The man had been looking so terribly down lately, he's glad for the change. He gets it. He's not from Seoul either and misses his hometown. He didn't go all that often, having grown too accustomed to living in Seoul alone, but there were times when he missed the warm familiarity that came with the idea of being at "home."

"Maybe we can all go together in the summer," Hoseok suggests, and Jimin beams at the idea.

"Do you want anything from Busan?" Namjoon asks, and Jimin almost chokes on his own saliva in surprise. He hates that he seems to be the only one awkward between the two of them. Perhaps he's right about Namjoon just treating him like some charity case. The dance must've not meant anything, if Namjoon is behaving the same as always. God, he really needs to pull himself together and stop letting himself get all these ideas in his head.

"No, I'm good, but thank you for asking," Jimin replies meekly and scurries off with the excuse of
Namjoon goes on his business trip to Busan as scheduled, leaving Hoseok extra busy to make sure that everything is running accordingly, and Jimin is thankful for the man's absence in hopes that he will be able to finally put a rein over his own emotional turmoil without the man's presence.

The week thus far has been rather hellish. It started off with the epiphany that he's been jealous of Wonho all this time, and that started things. Started a string of thoughts that led to self-denial, self-deprecation and even self-awareness.

In all honesty, Jimin thinks he should've seen it coming. What made him think that he, who stupidly falls in love so easily and believes in kiddie romance, would be impervious to Kim Namjoon, who every gay man in Seoul sought after? He remembers Taehyung telling him that Kim Namjoon was more than just his looks, and after spending so much time with the man, can anyone really blame him?

So yes. Of course he'd fall for someone like him. Someone so damn amazing in every way. And of course he'd fall for someone who already has someone just as perfect right next to him. After all, that had been his life thus far, right? Falling for men who just aren't meant to be his? Because how would he compete against someone like Wonho? People have already made it quite clear only idiots would bother to try.

Jimin pulls the blanket over his shoulders so that he's nestled into the fabric more tightly. He's experienced heartbreaks before. Every one of his relationships had ended when he hadn't been ready to end them, so he's used to feeling miserable. But this. This was different. He can't remember feeling this kind of misery in which he's so conflicted with himself.

Jimin closes his eyes, hoping to just fall into slumber so he doesn't have to think about this anymore. Perhaps when he wakes up, he'll just get over whatever this is. It's unlikely, but he's growing desperate enough to give it a shot.

Except his phone vibrates very loudly from besides him.

Jimin groans into his pillow, figuring that it's probably Mingyu again, texting him to ask to meet up. He's told the man that he needs some time to sort things out in his head, thinking that some time will help him see everything in a clearer light. However, his situation had only grown worse since then.

And Jimin feels especially horrible about the situation, because a part of him wants to take Mingyu back only because it'd be so much easier. Perhaps he can go back to liking Mingyu and forget about Namjoon and Wonho, and as much as he hates the idea of ever using someone like this, he can't help himself. After all, what is the point of getting caught up on someone who he can't be with? God, only if he didn't feel so guilty about even considering that as a viable option...

Jimin reaches for his phone and turns on the screen, expecting to see another apology from Mingyu.
Except he sees that it's a message from Namjoon.

He doesn't open it immediately. Both his brain and his body sort of freeze up, because being reminded of Kim Namjoon is the last thing he needs right now. He should just ignore it and try to get some sleep. In fact, he should turn his phone off until Saturday and hope for a miracle that will ease him out of his pain.

But he's already opening the message before he can even finish his thought process, because he's an helpless idiot like that. He half-expects something work-related, because the two didn't talk all that much over texts. Namjoon simply wasn't the type of man to spend too much time on his phone. However, he sees a black rectangle as opposed to actual text.

It's a video.

The screen is too dark for him to really make out what it is, so he makes the screen brighter as he waits for it to load. As soon as his finger touches the play button, what almost appears to be static noise fills the room. Jimin pushes the device closer to his nose, trying to figure out what he's supposed to be watching. And then he hears it. It's a familiar sound. Sound of home. The sound of waves gently crashing against the beach of Busan. The same sound he had relied on to console him when his own secret became too much for a teenager still in high school.

The video isn't clear, but he can vaguely make out the movement of the waves. The sand resting calm as water continues to caress it over and over again.

The video is a little less than two minutes long, and Jimin finds himself watching it all over again with his legs curled up against his chest. He lets himself pretend that he's sitting at the beach right now, letting the waves wash his worries away.

His phone vibrates again. It's another text from Namjoon.

[Sorry I couldn't go during the day. By the time I got there, it was already dark.]

Then another one.

[It was beautiful. I see why you spent so much time there.]

Then another.
[I know it's nothing compared to the real thing, but I hope it does make you feel better.]

Jimin's thumbs hover over the screen, unsure of where to go. Unsure of what words to type out. *God, what is he even feeling right now?* Because Namjoon's sent him a video of the same beach he mentioned almost in passing how much he misses. The man made a physical effort to take time out of his busy schedule to send him a piece of home.

Why?

Why would Namjoon do something like this?

In fact, why has Namjoon done any of the things he's done for him?

Cooking for him when he's talked about how he never cooks for any of his dates.

Letting him sleep over basically uninvited.

Getting that Christmas tree despite the fact that he's already decided on getting rid of it.

Staying late to help him decorate the tree and teach him how to make cocktails.

Why?

Jimin starts off typing "Thank you, I feel so much better already!" because that seems to be the only words he can bring himself to send. He has a million questions. *No.* He has one question he wants to ask. *Why. Why do you do all these things for me?* It'd be easy. Just 9 words followed by a question mark, but he can't. He's too scared of what the answer might be. Scared that he might find out that he really is just a charity case Namjoon's been gracious enough to make an effort to help.

*But then again, what does he even want to hear from Namjoon?*

And he sends the message off, praying that Namjoon won't send a reply, because it already feels like he's walking on thin ice. He can almost hear the ice cracking beneath his feet. Jimin closes his eyes and throws the phone near his pillow, unable to hold onto it.

He almost chokes when his phone starts to vibrate.

And it continues to vibrate.
It's not a text.

It's a phonecall.

Jimin reaches for it slowly. Panic rising in his throat and leaving a blank space in his head. He picks it up, his lower lip locked tightly between his teeth. God, he's starting to feel sick again. By the time he's turning the screen towards him, he can't even register the vibration anymore.

Except he doesn't see "Boss" flashing across the screen.

It reads "Mingyu," and Jimin isn't entirely sure if it's any better.

Jimin doesn't pick up. More accurately, he doesn't get to, having lost track of time momentarily. The phone is now resting still in his hand, and Jimin wonders if he should just turn it off. Except it starts ringing again. It's Mingyu again.

This time, Jimin does pick up, because he can't stand all these loose ends anymore. He's going to drown in his own thoughts if he lets this continue. His throat feels too dry as he listens to Mingyu calling his name. It used to make him so happy. Almost made butterflies flutter in his stomach every time Mingyu called out his name, but right now it just feels like weight is being added to the pit of his stomach.

[Jimin, I know you wanted more time, but I wanted to tell you how sorry I am. I messed up. I shouldn't have lashed out like that.]

Jimin's not sure what to say to that. It's the first time any of his boyfriends has ever apologized for their mess, and he should be glad that Mingyu is trying to make things right again, but it doesn't alleviate any of the pressure and confusion that's been keeping a tight hold around his neck.

".....Mingyu...I'm not-" Jimin begins but is cut off by Mingyu's desperate voice coming from the other side.

[Can we talk? In person?]

It's Friday night.

Namjoon feels drained as he parks his car at his apartment. He's regretting having pulled himself into such a hectic schedule and meeting that many people in less than 48 hours. It's not easy for him to take the time off to go all the way to Busan, so he had sort of wanted to take care of everything all at
once while he was there, and now his body's paying the price.

The elevator leading up to his apartment seems to take an especially long time as he stares at the red numbers changing steadily. There is a familiar ding, and Namjoon takes a few steps closer to the door, ready to just take a long shower and get some sleep.

Except he sees Wonho standing in front of his apartment. Namjoon briefly wonders if he's missed a text from the man or something. He wouldn't be all that surprised considering how he's kept his phone inside his bag as opposed to inside his pocket. But the bigger question is what Wonho is doing outside. The man knows the numbers to his apartment and could've very well just stayed inside more comfortably.

"Wonho."

"Hey you," Wonho greets, his back still against the wall next to Namjoon's door.

"What are you doing outside? How long have you been waiting here?"

"Not that long. I figured you'd be back around now."

"Did you text or something? Sorry, I wasn't paying attention to my phone," Namjoon apologizes, studying Wonho to check if the man's lying or not. His apartment building may be well-insulated and well-heated, but it's still a bit chilly where they're standing.

"Yeah, I figured you'd be driving."

"You coming in?" Namjoon asks as he punches in the numbers into the keypad in front of him. There is a faint whirl and a beep, signalling that the door's been unlocked. He pushes it open and waits patiently for Wonho's answer.

"....Yeah just for a little bit," Wonho replies after a while, and Namjoon doesn't miss the hint of something akin to sadness in the other man's eyes. Namjoon pushes past the door and waits for Wonho to enter the apartment as well before closing the door behind him. He doesn't say anything until they are both standing in the living room.

"Is everything OK?" Namjoon asks gently when Wonho doesn't make a move to initiate an imminent conversation. Something's clearly on the other man's mind, and Namjoon hates seeing that look on his face. Wonho shifts slightly, his usual confidence suddenly gone from his system.

"I came here to talk to you about something."

".....What is it?"

"Jimin's going on an overnight trip with his boyfriend tomorrow," Wonho starts, and Namjoon, while not at all surprised that Wonho knows, is surprised that this is all coming from the other man. Actually, where is this even coming from? Namjoon says nothing as he just watches Wonho, silently urging the man to continue and maybe provide some kind of an explanation as to why they are about to discuss the damn overnight trip Namjoon's been trying very hard to wipe from his memory.

Because now it sounds like Jimin's made things up with Mingyu, and that's the last thing he needs confirmed right now.

"Well?" Wonho questions with a small frown instead, and that catches the bar owner completely off guard.
"Well what?"

Wonho says nothing, simply settling for watching him with the same expression that never failed to have Namjoon spilling his deepest thoughts to him. Namjoon maintains his reserved expression for as long as he can, but he gives up. Afterall, what really is the point? Wonho has already read right through him. The man always knew about his thoughts and emotions even before he did. And that had been the reason why he had both loved and feared the man standing in front of him.

"I don't know what you want me to say," Namjoon answers earnestly, suddenly feeling a sense of relief at knowing that maybe he can finally be open about his feelings to someone other than his own masochistic self. And yes, he sees how strange it is that he's standing here talking about Jimin with none other than his ex. Someone who he had loved so deeply only a couple of years ago.

"You don't have to say anything. Not to me anyway," Wonho answers calmly, and Namjoon rakes his fingers through his hair.

"Wonho, I'm fine where I am," Namjoon answers after a while, and he knows that the other man understands how loaded the seemingly simple statement is. Wonho is watching him now, the uncertainty gone from his eyes and replaced with something much more serious. Namjoon looks away, not wanting to find any trace of guilt in those eyes. He doesn't want Wonho to ever feel that way about what they had and what they've become.

"Namjoon. This isn't you," Wonho begins after a long stretch of silence. While something about the words hurt, Namjoon doesn't even flinch. He knows exactly what Wonho is referring to. He's sure that the man's heard of all the stories of his one-night stands, and he's just as certain that Wonho isn't saying these things in spite of him. Namjoon looks away, not wanting to find any trace of guilt in those eyes. He doesn't want Wonho to ever feel that way about what they had and what they've become.

"He's good for you," Wonho continues before Namjoon can bring himself to say anything, and Namjoon's almost glad that he doesn't have to explain himself. But then now his brain is processing the subsequent words and he can't help but look up to meet Wonho's eyes.

"...What?"

"He's good for you, Joonie," Wonho only repeats, and Namjoon understands immediately. Hell, it's something he's known for a very long time. Jimin was good. Too good. That was the entirety of the problem he's been faced with. "Are you really going to let him go?"

"....How do you...

"I'm pretty sure everyone knows. It's really not that hard to figure out."

Namjoon doesn't have much to say to that. Even he knows that everyone knows. The question now is why Wonho is standing in front of him right now to tell him to go after Jimin. Everyone at the bar, he can understand. Not Wonho. Wonho and he used to be in love. Not Wonho. Wonho loved him. Probably still does.

"....Wonho..I'm really trying to understand why you're telling me all these things, but I can't."

Namjoon admits honestly, and Namjoon knows that Wonho must've understood the meaning behind his words. Wonho blinks a couple of times slowly, and against Namjoon's expectations, the man's lips stretch into a hint of a smile. Yet, his eyes don't hold any of his usual mirth. They are sad. Reminiscent of the time when Wonho had to leave for London. There is a sense of understanding. That he's accepted his fate for what it is, and Namjoon hates it. Hates seeing what it looks to become
the victim of one's fate again, because as much as he's not in love with him any more, he wants to see
Wonho happy.

Wonho opens his mouth again, and Namjoon's inhales sharply at the man's next words.

"Because you're about to make the same mistake I made."

It hurts. Just listening to the words.

"And I can't let you do that."

Wonho leans forward, pressing his lips against Namjoon's, and Namjoon's entire body is flooded
with memories from their past. The way they used to kiss. The way they used to wake up next to
each other. How he used to brush his fingertips against the small tattoo on Wonho's thigh when the
man's still sound asleep by his side. How passionate they had been as they surrendered themselves to
each other.

Then Namjoon realizes there it's no pain in his chest. It used to hurt just thinking about Wonho. Just
hearing the man's name. The same memories used to keep him up and night, but right now, they just
all seem beautiful. Like an old page from a scrapbook of his life.

"Namjoon-ah," Wonho begins once he pulls back. "I've missed you too, but I think we both know
it's time for us to move on. You've finally found someone good. Someone who's not a coward like
me."

"...Don't say that..."

"It's OK," Wonho continues, and the man's smile now looks almost believable.

"Come on. You don't have much time."

The dull grey door with a hint of blue. A noticeable chip at the bottom right corner that's a few good
inches long. A few pieces of tape still stuck onto the surface as evidence of the countless flyers that
must've be tacked onto the door year after year.
And just behind it must be Jimin. Is the man home? Is he sleeping? Is he alone or is he with Mingyu? It's questions after questions in an endless train of thoughts that make him want to just turn on his heels and walk away.

When was the last time he's felt this way. Not the being in love part. Not the feeling of being both anxious and excited.

When was the last time he had felt so powerless?

He had promised himself that he'd never do this to himself again. Put himself in a situation that can hurt him in so many ways. Pining was one thing. He knows that one day, weeks, months or even years down the road, he will move on and fall right back into the pattern of making everything meaningless again. He may not be happy, but he won't be this, and that's a promise he had successfully kept thus far since Wonho's left him.

But here he is. Standing in front of an old, worn door that's just as bleary as the color of the wall next to it. And just on the other side is someone that can ruin him again. Someone who already held too much power over him. Someone who's managed to coax out the Kim Namjoon that he himself had locked away and forgotten about.

"Because you're about to make the same mistake I've made."

"And I can't let you do that."

Wonho's words are ringing in his ears now.

What if this is a mistake on its own?

What if this is the mistake that's going to destroy what he has with Jimin? What if the man runs and disappears from his life? Because after all, all he was to Jimin was someone who was supposed to teach him how to get men, because that's who he was to everyone else. The heartbreaker. And why would someone like Jimin, who believes in true love, ever want to be with someone like him?

All odds are against him, yet why is he already knocking on the door as if the answer to all his questions are waiting right there on the other side?

Namjoon doesn't think he's breathing properly anymore. Everything is just ringing inside him, from the pounding in his chest to the throbbing in his head, from the thudding in his throat and the tingling in his fingertips. This is probably the worst mistake he's going to make in his life, and now seconds are drawn out into what feels like hours to let the regret and anxiety hit him that much harder.
He hears a soft "Who is it?" coming from inside the apartment. It's the same voice that made
Namjoon be his stupidest self and also the same voice that made him believe again.

He hears footsteps. A few more and Jimin will be close enough to the door to take a peek at who's
outside.

He still has time to run.

But he doesn't. Maybe he can't. Whatever it is, Namjoon finds himself glued to where he is,
surrendering himself to fate as he watches the door creak open.

And Jimin's standing right in front of him. His hair isn't brushed. He's dressed in a tacky, worn-out
tee and a pair of sweatpants that's seen better days. Yet Jimin still manages to take his breath away as
he blinks back slowly at him.

There is silence. Surprise in the man's eyes. A hint of a smile that is in place to mask the confusion
radiating from him.

And Namjoon had come prepared to be truly honest for the first time in a long time. He had been
ready to explain. Persuade Jimin to understand how sincere he is. How difficult this is for him. Yet it
all suddenly seems meaningless.

Because Jimin is standing right there, and he's already decided to take that leap of fate. He has
nowhere to go but to fall unless Jimin catches him.

So Namjoon takes a step forward, feeling as if he's walking on a tightrope. His heart lurches forward
with every second that ticks by.

Another step, and they are already so close. He reaches out slowly, hoping that Jimin will take a step
back, but he doesn't. Jimin stands where he is, looking into his eyes.

And Namjoon can no longer stop the fall.

He takes Jimin's cheeks into his hands as if it's his only remaining lifeline.
And he presses his lips against Jimin’s, silently pleading for the man to hold onto him and not let go.
Holy shit. Almost 200 comments for the last chapter alone?? I see that y'all have been frustrated with the two eheheheheheheh Again thanks for all the amazing comments. Some definitely made me laugh and I love how some of you are suspecting that I'm going to ruin everything bc its...well, it's me (I don't blame you). Anyway onto to the fic!

"Don't go."

Those are the first words out of Namjoon's lips once he pulls away. Jimin is still frozen where he is, his eyes wide and his lips almost trembling in surprise or fear or anger, Namjoon can't quite pinpoint. But he knows for a fact that fear is what must be spreading quickly to the tips of his own fingers. Why won't Jimin say anything? Why won't he do anything?

Is he even breathing right now? The almost deafening thudding in his head is a solid indication that his heart must indeed still be beating, but everything feels like a jumbled mess inside. His heart is in head. His gut is between his feet.

He can't tell if Jimin's heard him or not. He's not sure if he's managed to vocalize those words out loud or if he had been speaking to himself in his head again. He wishes Jimin would say something. Do something. Yell at him. Push him away. Anything. Because anything would be better than the current state of nothingness.

And the fear quickly turns to regret. This is it. He must've managed to fuck everything up because he let that stupid, naive old self talk to him. Because he let himself be persuaded by Wonho, who now he remembers was sort of like Jimin in the way he believes in love, people and all those things he probably shouldn't place so much faith in. This is how he's going to lose Jimin.

Namjoon feels sick. Like none of his organs are where they are supposed to be. He wants to run. He can't be here right now. He wants to apologize, but he can't seem to speak anymore, and it drives him mad, because he knows he has to explain himself. Jimin deserves at least that much from him. It shouldn't be that hard. Just open his mouth and start off with an "I'm sorry" and admit to Jimin how he feels about him. Tell him the truth for a change.

But he can barely manage to breathe, let alone explain himself, because Jimin is still watching him, frozen still and his expression still unreadable. Why won't the man say something?

Then he sees Jimin's lips twitches as if he's trying to formulate words as well, and Namjoon holds his breath, bracing himself. He knows Jimin is probably too nice to say anything mean to him. Too kind to express any kind of disgust he may feel. And the notion makes everything so much worse. How could he have done this to Jimin? How could he have been this selfish?

Jimin's quiet voice cuts through the silence, right through Namjoon, and Namjoon, who had been
expecting the worst is caught completely off guard at the man's words.

"....You kissed me."

And that somehow magically snaps Namjoon out of his state of incoherence.

"I'm sorry," he finally manages to say, and his voice sounds shaky and cowardly to his own ears. He's managed to let those words out...but can he really explain himself? Is there anything he can say to justify what he's done?

"...Why?" Jimin asks before Namjoon can even try, and Namjoon looks right into the other man's eyes to understand where the question is coming from. He tries to detect any anger. Frustration. Annoyance. Even disgust. Yet he sees none of those things on Jimin's features. There's confusion. Utter confusion that seems almost heartbreaking in its intensity. There is sadness that Namjoon isn't sure where it's stemming from.

He knows he has to answer him, but what should he say? Jimin, I'm stupidly in love with you. I've been in love with you, but I've been acting around you the whole time because I'm a coward? I hated seeing you with Mingyu but was secretly glad, because I needed an excuse to not do what I just did? But I still did it anyway knowing that you're still with Mingyu? God, the words sound ugly even in his head. What will Jimin think of him now?

"And what do you mean don't go?" Jimin continues when the silence stretches on for too long, and this time, the man looks pained. And it breaks something in Namjoon. He hadn't meant Jimin to feel this way.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sor-"

"No. I don't want to hear an apology," Jimin lets out, his voice quivering slightly and raspy. The corners of his eyes are turning red, and Namjoon knows the man must be holding back tears. "Just answer me. Please."

Now Namjoon has a choice. He can go right back to being a coward and make up some stupid excuse. He'd be taking advantage of Jimin's kindness, because he knows the man will eventually forgive him and move on. He can totally do that and return to resorting to meaningless one-night stands for company and acting as if he's not actually broken somewhere inside. Life will go back to what it's been. Pointless, but safe.

But as he stands there, watching Jimin, he knows he can't. And suddenly he finds the courage to be honest. He's already taken the leap, knowing he'd be risking falling into a deep hole he may never crawl back out of.

"I don't want you to go on that trip with Mingyu," Namjoon answers, and his voice almost sounds calm, as if he's reciting a passage from a book. "Because I'm in love with you."

And suddenly, a weight is lifted from his chest. He feels almost liberated as he lets everything go. He's surrendered everything to Jimin without a single armor left on him.

It feels almost surreal. Being honest. Not having to act anymore.

"....You..." Jimin begins and then inhales sharply as if everything is finally hitting him. "...You...love me? Me?" he says the last word a little bit louder, and Namjoon immediately understands what the man must be talking about.

"Yes. I'm in love with you. I have been. For a long time," Namjoon answers with as much sincerity
he can muster given his state, because he needs the other man to know. Because, no matter how this is going to end, he needs Jimin to know that he's fallen in love with Jimin for who he is. That Jimin is damn perfect with his imperfections and insecurities.

"...I don't...understand," Jimin says slowly after a moment of tense silence, and at this point, his eyes are definitely tearing up. "But...Wonho-"

"Jimin. I told you. I'm not in love with him anymore, and I meant it," Namjoon cuts in before the other man can even finish the sentence. "And I'm sorry. I know you're still with Mingyu, but I couldn't just stay on the sidelines anymore, even if it means you never want to see me again."

Jimin opens and closes his mouth a few times, and Namjoon can't help but think that this is where he's supposed to walk away. Let Jimin figure things out on his own and decide what to do with him.

So Namjoon takes a step back, regret thrumming through his system again and his eyes still fixated on the man in front of him. He needs Jimin to know how sorry he is. How sincere he is, but right now, he doesn't feel welcomed anymore.

He's just about to turn on his heels when he sees Jimin reach out and grab a hold of his jacket. The man's small hand is now woven tightly around the piece of fabric, and Namjoon holds his breath, scared that breathing wrongly might destroy whatever is about to happen.

"I'm--" Jimin begins and then pauses for a second before licking his lips and starting again. "I'm not with Mingyu anymore. I...I broke it off with him."

Namjoon finds himself unable to breathe for an entirely different reason.

"It wasn't going to work out with him," Jimin continues, hanging his head low. "Because...because...I might be a little bit in love with you too."

At that precise moment, something in Namjoon's world changes. It's almost indiscernible. Nothing dramatic like feeling as if his entire world has tilted on its axis. It almost feels as if the oxygen he's been breathing has changed just a little bit. As if the sound of his own heart beating has taken on a slightly different note.

Then something explodes in his chest. He doesn't want to call it happiness. He knows what happiness feels like, and he'd be belittling what he's feeling now by labeling it as something as mundane as "happiness." It's something much bigger. Deeper.

Because Jimin feels the same way. The same Jimin who would never even entertain the idea of being with someone like him. The same Jimin who's too good for him. The same Jimin who's made him believe in love and being stupid again.

And he can't hold it in anymore, because Jimin is standing right in front of him with his fingers curled around the fabric of jacket, silently asking him to not go. And who is he to deny the man?

Namjoon takes that step forward again, and Jimin looks up, his eyes wide and still confused despite the words exchanged. And this time, Namjoon's able to smile. Smile not because he needs to hide his true feelings. Not because he needs to be reassuring.

But because he can. Because he wants to.

He cups Jimin's cheeks, and Jimin blinks slowly, his hand still latched onto Namjoon's jacket.

And this time, Namjoon leans forward slowly, but not because he's scared.
When his lips meet Jimin's again, it feels like he's kissing for the first time in his life. Everything suddenly feels new, as if he's learning what it feels like to have someone's lips against his.

This time, Jimin leans into the kiss. It's hesitant. Uncertain. Clumsy. It's by far the worst kiss Namjoon's even been a part of, but it sets his entire body on fire and overwhelms his emotions. He doesn't rush Jimin. Doesn't try to take charge. Because this kiss isn't a start to some mindless sex. It's not for pleasure. It's for reassurance, both to Jimin and to himself, and it's perfect as it is.

Here he is.

So stupidly in love.

"You OK?"

Wonho doesn't even look up at the sound of Seokjin's voice. Instead, he continues to run his index finger across the rim of the almost empty glass in front of him. The ice has already melted for the most part, the droplets of water that used to coat the outside of the glass now creating a small pool on the bar counter he's leaning against.

Seokjin heaves a long sigh before taking one of the seats next to him, and Wonho flashes him a lazy grin that the bartender doesn't find at all persuasive.

"Wonho."

"Hmm?" the man hums slowly as he fixes his eyes back on the glass in front of him. There is a soft cling as one of the ice cubes slide off another and hits the side of the glass.

Wonho had come to the bar just as the place was closing up shop. He walked inside with a barely noticeable smile on his face and asked Seokjin to fix him a drink, and the bartender knew exactly what it must mean. Wonho was perfectly capable of making his own drinks, which meant that alchol
was not what the man was seeking.

Seokjin had excused everyone else, and no one had questioned him. They didn't shoot Wonho any questioning or sympathetic look. They simply bid their good-byes, which left only Wonho and the bartender inside the otherwise empty Bulletproof.

Seokjin mixed something sweet for the other man in an attempt to perhaps help alleviate some of the sadness in the other's eyes. It doesn't work as well as he had hoped, but he's not all that surprised. Wonho may be trusting of people, but he had a tendency to keep his problems to himself, and if the man's come all the way to the bar to explicitly ask for companionship, it must be serious.

The bartender has a fairly good idea what it must be about, though.

"Is this about Namjoon?" Seokjin asks, and Wonho doesn't give any verbal reply, but the change in the other's expression is a loud enough answer.

"I told him that he should go for Jimin."

Now, this surprises Seokjin. Not because Wonho knows about Jimin and Namjoon, because hell, everyone knows about the two, but because he had been quite certain that Wonho had come back to Korea for Namjoon. He had witnessed the relationship between the two blossom into something beautiful. He had to watch Namjoon lose a piece of him when Wonho left. Wonho had cried in front of him the day before, murmuring words of apologies directed at exactly who, he's still not sure of, and had asked Seokjin to take good care of Namjoon.

And he knows that Wonho isn't selfish enough to try to get Namjoon again given the circumstances. Especially when it's so easy to see how much in love Namjoon is with Jimin. But everyone else at the bar had stayed out of their way in fear of meddling. He can't imagine what Wonho must have felt to have made the decision to bring the two together, because Wonho looked at Namjoon the same way Namjoon looked at Jimin.

"Told Namjoon that he should stop Jimin from going to that trip with Mingyu."

"They're still together? No, wait, they're still going on that trip?" Seokjin asks, coming to a halt. While no one had explicitly asked Jimin, their assumption had been that the trip must've been canceled, judging from the event of the night.

"I don't know," Wonho replies with a small shrug, and the bartender narrows his eyes slightly at the other man. "All I know is that Namjoon is hell of a lot better than that guy, and Namjoon needed that push."

Seokjin locks his lower lip between his teeth, slowly processing the piece of information. Boy, he's got a lot of questions for the other man right now, but he doesn't ask. Not when Wonho looks utterly heartbroken against the dim lighting of the bar.

"I told him Jimin's good for him," Wonho continues as the silence between them stretches on, and Seokjin keeps his lips tightly pursed, unsure of what to say. Afterall, what can he say? As much as he supports the idea of the two men together, and yes, he completely agrees that Jimin's good for Namjoon, but Wonho's still his friend.

"...How come?" Seokjin asks quietly, and Wonho throws him another rueful smile.

"Because it's the truth," he begins just as another cling rings through the bar. "I'll never be able to stand up for him. Or fight for us."
"....Wonho..."

"I guess I just missed him...but now I see that it's really over, and I feel like I can finally move on."

"....."

"Hopefully they've sorted everything out by now," Wonho continues with a barely believable grin. "Well, I should get going."

"..What about you?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe go back to London? Maybe stay and see what I can do," the other man answers as he pulls himself off the stool.

"Not that. I'm asking about you."

"I'll be OK. It...surprisingly doesn't hurt so much the second time around. Anyway, thanks Jin."

"You know I'm here whenever you need to talk, right?" Seokjin says with as much sincerity as he can muster, because he needs Wonho to know that there will always be a spot for him. That he doesn't need to leave them just because he and Namjoon are no longer.

"Of course."

"Don't go back to London. We'll miss you, you know that."

"....Yeah. I know."

Jimin wakes up the next day completely confused out of his mind. He looks down, and he finds himself still dressed in that tacky tee and his old pair of sweatpants he now wishes he hadn't been
wearing. He blinks a few times and runs his hands haphazardly over his hair and face and then suddenly feel a rush of blood to his cheeks.

_Holy crap_, it had actually happened. All that with Namjoon had happened. They actually kissed. No, wait, Namjoon actually came to his house and kissed him and then told him all those things and he had told the other man all those things and they kissed again. All that actually happened. None of it had been a dream.

Jimin sort of twitches on the bed and then blushes even harder once he remembers how Namjoon had kissed him one last time before heading home, telling him that he will see him tomorrow.

He's not sure what the whole interaction means for them. They are definitely beyond the whole "casually dating each other to see where it all goes" but not quite in the "in a relationship" stage. He's not sure if Namjoon is even willing to venture into the realm of actual relationships, and for a brief moment, Jimin feels unsure, but then he's remembering the way Namjoon looked at him. The man's words. How sincere he had been. And then he can't even bring himself to worry about it anymore.

Jimin reaches for his phone to check for time and then sees that Namjoon's actually messaged him about an hour ago. It's simple. Nothing elaborate or overly sweet, but it's so Kim Namjoon that Jimin can't help but smile to himself.

[Hope you had a good night's sleep. Would you like some coffee? I can stop by your apartment when you wake up.]

And Jimin can't believe the change. Namjoon had been somewhat distant in the last few weeks, and now the man's offering to stop by his place with coffee? Kim Namjoon bringing him coffee? Is this what Kim Namjoon really is like?

Jimin forces himself to snap out of it and types a reply quickly.

[Actually, maybe I can get you some coffee? You must be tired after the Busan trip]

The message is read immediately. Jimin stares at the screen intently, waiting for a reply. Seconds pass by, and Jimin finds himself tilting his head with a confused frown. Namjoon must've read it. Did he do something wrong? Was he supposed to just accept the offer? Just when he's about to text the man again, he receives another message.

[That sounds nice. I'd love it if you stopped by, if it's not too much trouble.]

Jimin nibbles at his lower lip as a shy smile spreads across his face. It's like he can almost hear Namjoon's voice in his head. The way he enunciates all his words so calmly and accurately. So Jimin hops out of the bed and rushes to take a quick shower, determined to look a lot more presentable than he did when Namjoon had visited.
There's a small coffee shop that Jimin stops by every once in a while before heading off to work, so he decides to pay a visit. He doesn't know all that much about coffee to be honest. He drinks it mostly for the sake of trying to stay up as opposed to relishing the taste, and he hopes that the coffee lives up to Namjoon's standard.

When he enters the shop, the owner greets him with a small smile. The man's in his 20s. Not much of a talker either but somehow maintains a strangely friendly atmosphere despite the lack of much verbal exchange. Jimin orders two americanos (although he would normally get something sweeter) and hands the man his card. As he waits for the drinks to be made, he eyes the bagels and a few slices of cake next to the counter and lets out a small hum, wondering if he should perhaps grab something to eat as well.

Does Namjoon eat bagels? He's starting to realize that he doesn't know all that much about Kim Namjoon. But he can learn right? That's the fun part, right?

"I'll actually get two bagels as well," Jimin calls out, and the owner turns around with slightly raised eyebrows.

"You've never ordered for two before," the man says with a gentle expression, and Jimin has to make a physical effort to not smile so obviously. "Is it for someone special?"

"I um...I hope so," Jimin answers honestly with a sheepish grin, and the man nods in understanding.

"In that case, the bagels are on the house."

"Oh, you don't need to do that! You gave me a free muffin last time, remember?"

"I insist. And here's your coffee. Good luck," the man continues, handing Jimin two cups, and Jimin takes it with an appreciative smile.

"Thank you. You're the best."

Jimin thinks he's off to a good start. In all honesty, he's still a bit nervous. Nervous about if everything is going to pan out as he's expecting or wanting it to. Nervous about if Namjoon might regret the whole thing and end up calling it off. Hell, he himself isn't even sure what he wants, because at the end of the day, it's Kim Namjoon, the man who himself has stated that he doesn't believe in relationships.

But Namjoon has told him things. Had said some honest words about how much he's in love with him. And on top of that, he knows that there's more to Namjoon than the whole playboy image. So he's hopeful that this might be the start of something different, because now that he's able to think clearly, he had been a complete idiot to not see that he had always been just a little bit in love with Namjoon.

Jimin eventually finds himself standing in front of Namjoon's door.

Normally, he'd have no problem just knocking or ringing the door bell to make his presence known, but he's suddenly feeling rather self-conscious and a little bit scared. Shoot. Maybe he should've thought this through. What if Namjoon wanted to come over with coffee to apologize to him for his behavior last night? What if Namjoon just wants to ask him to forget everything he's said? Then what?

Jimin shakes his head almost violently, needing to just stop. Alright, so all his relationships had gone to shit for one reason or another, but he can't do this to himself right now.
So he knocks before his head is buzzing again and then waits patiently for the door to open. The coffee feels warm against his skin, and it's somehow able to provide some comfort to his rather frazzled state. The door does open slowly, revealing none other than Namjoon standing in a clean shirt and black trousers.

And suddenly, Jimin's staring at him with eyes wide open, unable to formulate any intelligent words. Which doesn't even make sense, because hell, they've spoken to each other so many times. They've even kissed each other. And suddenly, it feels as if Jimin is seeing Namjoon for the first time or something. Namjoon looks gorgeous as always, that hasn't changed at all, but it's just...wow.

"Come in. Thank you for the coffee," Namjoon greets, and if Jimin's not mistaken, the man's voice is smaller than usual. There is a soft edge to it that feels almost....shy? Jimin walks into the apartment instead of vocalizing anything, because he doesn't quite trust his voice yet, and he hears the door click close behind him when he's almost inside the living room.

"Here," Jimin blurts out after a moment of silence, basically thrusting the coffee towards the other man. Namjoon raises his eyebrows momentarily but takes the cup with a tiny nod. "Coffee. Um. Americano. I mean, I got you an americano. And some bagels, if you're feeling hungry?" he continues, holding up the brown paper bag that's hooked around his wrist.

"That sounds great. Thank you," Namjoon replies and the motions for Jimin to take a seat on the couch next to them. "Did you get some rest?"

"I did. Did...you?"

"I did," the man replies with a soft smile and then sits next to Jimin. He does leave a few inches between the two of them though. "I feel a lot better."

"That's...good."

"Jimin, about last night..."

"Y-yes?" Jimin squeaks out, wondering if this is where he's supposed to brace himself for the whole "regret speech" he's heard too many times in both movies and in real life. But before he can even properly prepare him mentally, Namjoon is speaking again.

"I just want you to know that I meant everything I said."

"...Oh."

"And I also wanted to tell you that I won't tell anyone at the bar until you're ready to share the information with them," Namjoon continues in a slightly more serious tone, and it takes a while for Jimin to realize that the other man doesn't mean it in a "let's keep it a secret between the two of us" way.

"You're OK with them knowing though....right?"

"Of course I am," the other man answers without missing a bit, his brows furrowed slightly as if he's genuinely confused by the fact that Jimin would think otherwise. "It's just I know how they can get, and I don't want their behavior to get in the way of how you want to take this."

"...Oh," Jimin lets out and the scratches the side of the cup in his hands. "Yeah. Maybe I should wait a few days. Not that I'm like reconsidering this or anything. I swear that's not-"
"I know."

"OKay....good...."

"And I would really like to take you on an actual date. A first date."

"A date," Jimin repeats, and he can already feel heat pooling around his cheeks. He must look absolutely disastrous. He's always had a problem with his cheeks turning too red at all the wrong times, and he's sincerely hoping that it's not too noticeable.

"Yes. A real date. This Monday. That is, if you'd like."

"Of course I'd like to go," Jimin jumps in perhaps a bit too eagerly, but Namjoon is already all smiles. And the smile is different. It's almost child-like in how pure and honest it is, and Jimin can't help but wonder how Namjoon still manages to surprise him in so many new ways.

"That's good to hear."

And just like that, they find themselves scheduled for their first date.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

First date hohoho
A lot of you seemed to be very glad that I didn't ruin the minjoon moment with Mingyu or something else hehehe. I know, I wouldn't trust me either but after 24 chapters, I had to. Thank you all you lovely people for leaving all those amazing comments and hope you enjoy this one as well!!!

"OK, something is definitely up."

The two bartenders turn to glance at Jungkook, who's studying Jimin with a burning gaze that is almost conspiratory.

"And what the hell are you on about this time?" Taehyung asks, returning to wiping down the bar as they get ready to open up shop. Their resident bouncer has been spending too many hours lately playing detective, and while all the empty threats of murder have been quite entertaining, they are starting to see that there's no way to truly figure out what exactly is going on in Jimin's life unless the man decides to tell them himself.

"I'm not fucking with you. Something's definitely up between Jimin and boss man," Jungkook counters with a huff, pointing at Jimin, who is moving slowly across the floor with a mop in his hands.

"What." Both Taehyung and Seokjin deadpan and stop what they are doing to stare at Jungkook, who still has eyes on Jimin. Jimin, on the other hand, seems completely oblivious to the attention, humming a tune as he mops up the bar, a ghost of a smile playing on his face.

"And where's this even coming from?" Taehyung questions, and Seokjin takes this as a cue to pretend to busy himself with arranging some of the new glasses he had purchased earlier today. Seokjin has an inkling that Jungkook's probably right, judging from what Wonho has told him that night. To be completely honest, he had sort of expected Namjoon to not even go through with it (knowing him) and half expected Namjoon to go back to his mopey self and Jimin to not come in.

That is, until Jimin actually came in on a Saturday that he's supposed to be on that trip on. Seokjin had then studied Namjoon carefully, doing his best to appear as inconspicuous as possible. It's a damn shame that Namjoon's a talented actor, because the bartender couldn't get a damn thing out of him.

Then Jungkook is suddenly picking up on something, and as much as he hates to admit it, Jungkook was almost animalistic when it came to his heightened intuition. Most of the time, the bouncer had no idea exactly what's going on, but he always knew when something was off or different.
And Seokjin can't help but think that maybe, *just maybe*, that Namjoon had finally taken that step, and maybe, just maybe, that Jimin finally came to his senses.

"Something's just different. The air between them's changed. That weird tension is gone," Jungkook mumbles cryptically in response, eliciting a withering look from Taehyung. The bartender shakes his head and finishes up wiping the surface in front of him and then suddenly jerks his head up as realization hits him full force in the face.

"Wait. Hold up. It's Saturday."

"...Yeah, so?" Jungkook asks, finally tearing his gaze away from Jimin.

"And Jimin didn't go on that trip," Taehyung murmurs, furrowing his brows slowly. "But you didn't even ask him about it," he continues, turning his head to fix a scrutinizing gaze at the other bartender. "Didn't even ask me to ask him."

"So?" Seokjin counters a bit too quickly, and he knows that Taehyung's onto him. *Ugh.*

"You know something," the other man says with an accusatory point of a finger, just as Jungkook gasps rather dramatically from the other side of the bar.

"No I don't. I just didn't want to meddle," Seokjin tries again, adding in a little shrug that he hopes is even a tiny bit persuasive.

"Really? You?" Taehyung retorts with a roll of his eyes, and Seokjin shrugs again in the most noncommittal way he can muster. He's not about to relay to the two idiots the conversation he had with Wonho. Too much of it is too personal, and plus, it's not like he even knows what exactly happened that night.

"I will hurt you," Jungkook warns with a menacing look and Seokjin just sticks his middle finger up before retreating to their storage room to "retrieve" something he's conveniently left out.

Namjoon or Jimin will talk to him when they are ready.

Jimin squints, as if it's going to help him feel better about what he's wearing. He leans back a little, studying every inch of the reflection in front of him for a bit, and then slumps his shoulders before glancing at the almost pitiful pile of clothes on his bed. His closet has been emptied for the most part
as a result of his attempt to mix and match just about everything he owns.

It's Monday.

Which means one thing, and one thing only.

Normally, it would mean a day off.

But today, it marks something a lot more significant.

*First date.* With Namjoon.

And Jimin's been on first dates before. Quite a few of them actually, and for each and every one of them, he had been nervous in a couple-of-butterflies-in-his-stomach sort of way. But right now, there is a storm of butterflies and *god knows what else* in his gut, and it's gotten to the point where Jimin can't quite decipher if the excitement and anxiousness he's feeling is the good kind or the bad kind.

Which doesn't even make sense, because he had spent so much time with Namjoon already. Hell, Namjoon had even taken him out on a fake date to a restaurant, which unfortunately is now reminding of the time he had spent in Namjoon's apartment taking notes on how to attract guys. *Holy shit, he did that.* He actually did that, with a notepad and everything and they practiced kissing and stood around without their shirts on. Ugh, maybe if he slams his head hard enough against the nearest wall, he will conveniently forget that part of his life.

Jimin glances at his reflection again. He's dressed in a simple pale grey shirt and a pair of black jeans that he personally believes best compliments his legs. His outfit is nothing extravagant. Almost too simple, if you ask him. But it's safe, especially considering he has no idea where they're going for dinner. Jimin wonders if he's supposed to text and ask, but he kind of likes the element of surprise. Plus, Namjoon's seen the state of his wardrobe. He doubts the man would pick any place with a strict dress code.

There's only 10 minutes left until Namjoon's scheduled to pick him up, and Jimin's getting quite jittery again. He busies himself with shoving all his clothes back into the closet and tidying up the room to stop himself from thinking so much.

Namjoon does arrive, right on time. Not a minute early and not a minute late, and again, Jimin has no idea how he does it. He checks his reflection one last time and pushes around a couple loose strands of hair before rushing towards the door.

And when he does open the door, Jimin finds himself just staring dumbly at the figure in front of him again. Not because Namjoon's so damn gorgeous, because that's already been established and Jimin's somehow miraculously become immune to the strikingly handsome man, but because of the way Namjoon is smiling at him with a small bouquet of flowers in his hands.

Because the smile is so...so...

Jimin doesn't have the right words to describe the smile. Namjoon is smiling at him as if he's the most precious thing in this universe, and the change in the man's demeanor since that night is mindblowing to put it mildly. And Jimin can't help but ask himself how in hell he's missed all the sign until now. Was Namjoon just a brilliant actor or had he himself been completely blind all along?

"These are for you," Namjoon says softly once the silence stretches on, and Jimin takes the white flowers into his own hands.

"They're...beautiful," Jimin manages to let out after a couple more seconds of silence, and Namjoon's
shoulders relax just a tad bit. Had he been nervous? "Let me uh, let me just put them in a vase or something before I go," he continues, the warm fuzzy feeling finally hitting him as he heads back towards the living room.

Unfortunately, he doesn't have any empty vase lying around in case of getting surprise flowers, so he ends up fumbling towards the kitchen to pull out a glass mug that's been sort of sleeping dormant in the back of his cabinet. He fills it quickly with water and place the flowers as neatly as he can inside and makes a mental note for himself to buy a nice vase for the flowers.

By the time Jimin's back at the door, Namjoon is standing in the hallways, a few feet away from the door. Jimin closes the door behind him with a sheepish grin, just as Namjoon turns to look at him with the same smile he's been wearing since his arrival.

"Are you ready to go?" Namjoon asks, and Jimin nods, suddenly feeling incredibly self conscious. They are actually going on a date.

An actual date and not one of those practice-dates.

They arrive at a small restaurant near the outskirt of Seoul. The decor is almost vintage, with wooden furniture and simple earth tones creating a peaceful atmosphere. The two men are greeted by a lanky man with a strikingly handsome face who greets Namjoon by name and flashes Jimin a toothy smile.

"I got you two the best table in the restaurant," the man explains as he motions for the two to follow him, and Jimin soon finds out that the man had indeed reserved the best spot for them. Jimin didn't see it when he first entered the restaurant, but their table is partly hidden within the canopy that drapes around it. It's not completely secluded from the rest of the place, but it provides just the right amount of privacy that Jimin is more comfortable with.

"Alright, I'll give you two some time to look over the menu," the man informs once both men are seated, and he throws Jimin a rather knowing smile before walking off.

"Do you...come here often?" Jimin asks, picking up the menu in front of him.

"Not as much as I'd like to," Namjoon answers, scanning the menu as well. "That guy's the owner of this place," he continues as if he can can see the questioning look on the smaller man's face. "Used to
stop by the bar almost every day to try to win over Hoseok before he decided to give up."

"Oh...He's really good-looking."

"Is he?" Namjoon comments rather nonchalantly, and Jimin wonders if something's wrong with his own eyes, because the man is damn attractive with his express doe-eyes and a figure that belongs on a runway. *Just how high is Namjoon's standard?*

"Really? He looks like a celebrity," Jimin muses more to himself than anything else and misses the fleeting look from the taller man.

The next couple of minutes go by in silence as they try to decide on what to have for dinner, and as soon as their menus are placed flat back on the table, the man is back, looking just as charming as he had been the moment Jimin walked into the restaurant.

"You two ready to order?" The man asks, and they place their order swiftly. Jimin hands his menu to the man, who gives Jimin another mysterious look.

"You're cute," the man begins out of the blue, the corners of his lips upturned in an almost sultry way. Jimin almost chokes on his own saliva and manages to stop himself just in time from becoming a total mess.

"Name's Jisoo. If you ever get tired of Namjoon-"

"Hong Jisoo."

Jimin snaps his head around to the low rumbling coming from Namjoon. If Jimin isn't completely mistake, there is a hint of warning in the man's eyes, and as much as Jimin doesn't want to jump to any conclusion, is Namjoon being...protective? Jealous? And wait, how much does this Jisoo guy know about the two of them? And how is it that he hasn't even heard of the man until now?

"Relax, will you?" Jisoo says briskly, seemingly unfazed by the stern look. "How's Hoseok?"

"With Yoongi."

"Ugh. I knew it. All the cute ones are taken," the man laments with a roll of his eyes and then winks at Jimin before walking off.

"I shouldn't have come here," Namjoon mutters under his breath, barely audibly, but it doesn't go unheard by Jimin and his excellent hearing ability.

"Is he a....friend?"

"Yeah, unfortunately," Namjoon answers with a small sigh, not looking as composed as he had been a few minutes ago. "He's actually Jin's friend. That's why we all know him."

"Oh," Jimin lets out rather stupidly, wondering how many of these "friends" Namjoon has that Jimin's never heard of. "So um, how, uh, how was your trip to Busan?" he asks, hoping to change the subject instead of dwelling on the handsome stranger.

"It was busy. Didn't get to enjoy it as much as I would have liked."

"That's a shame...there's a lot to see in Busan. Or maybe I'm just really biased because I'm from there," Jimin says with a sheepish grin, remembering all the local diners he used to go to as a high school student and the beaches he'd sit by throughout the year. "Hey, boss?"
"Jimin," Namjoon leans forward, his eyes fixed into a gaze that somehow manages to be both stern and gentle.

"Yes?"

"I'd really like it if you'd stop calling me boss, given our circumstances."

"...Oh," Jimin breathes out and then swallows hard. He's never considered the idea of addressing the man in front of him by anything other than "boss" but now he's seeing how ridiculous it is. He can't call the man "boss" forever. Not when they're on kissing terms now (oh god). "What...what should I call you then?"

"My name would be nice. Or something else if you'd like. Just not boss."

"Your...name?"

"Yes. You do know my name, right?" Namjoon says playfully, and it helps Jimin relax a little.

"Nam...joon?"

"Yes?"

"I think it's going to take me a while to get used to it," Jimin admits honestly, scratching his arm idly. The idea of calling the man by his name makes him feel ticklish.

"That's OK. What were you going to ask or tell me?"

"Right. I just um...will you be going to Busan again?"

"Probably," Namjoon answers after a moment of contemplative silence. "But not for a few months. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, it's nothing-"

"Jimin."

"...Well, I thought that maybe I can go with you...? Like I can be your secretary and help you with the business trip?" Jimin asks hopefully, thinking about how nice it'd be to go back to his hometown with the other man.

"Jimin, I don't need a secretary."

"...Right, sor-"

"But I'd love you have you there with me to just spend time with me." "...Oh"

"And we don't even have to wait for my next business trip. We can go whenever you want," Namjoon continues with an expression that shows Jimin that he's not joking about the proposal, and it feels strange knowing that Namjoon's willing to do something like that for him without a moment's hesitation.

"But what about the bar...?"

"I can just close up shop for a couple of days. That's not a problem. Plus, we'll probably have to
close for renovation soon, in which case, we will get a few weeks off."

"Oh, you're going ahead with the renovation?"

"Nothing's set in stone, but it's most likely going to happen. I've been talking to everyone else at the bar too, and they seem to agree."

"That sounds nice! I think we can do a lot with the second floor, you know? I don't know anything about architectural stuff, but I was actually looking up some pictures and things like that online of bars from all around the world, and if you're OK with it, I had a couple of-" Jimin rambles on excitedly and then purses his lips. "Sorry, I'm talking too much again, aren't I."

"Not at all."

"But you told me not to talk too much on first dates."

"Jimin," Namjoon begins, reaching out to take one of Jimin's hands. "I was wrong."

"...About what?"

"You never should have to act a certain way. I kept telling you that you didn't have to impress your dates, but at the same time, I was telling you to act a certain way that wasn't you."

"....."

"And I like listening to you talk. I always have. And I fell in love with you for who you have always been."

"....."

"But, since this is our first date, I don't want to talk business."

"That's...that's cool. We can talk about other things."

Just then, their entrees arrive, and Jimin's glad for the interruption. He knew that Namjoon's always been a rather honest man, but he had not been ready to face this version of Kim Namjoon who is so open about his thoughts and feelings. The man's not at all ashamed or embarrassed to admit how much he wants to spend time with him or how he's in love with him, and as much as Jimin had always dreamt of meeting someone like this, he's realizing that he's not mentally or emotionally ready for it.

Don't get him wrong. He likes it. A lot. It sends butterflies tickling every inch of his stomach, but how's he supposed to react to any of these things considering his dating record so far? He knows that he's supposed to play a little hard to get, but is that even an option when it comes to Kim Namjoon? The better question is, does he even want to?

So Jimin delves into his food, hoping that it'll provide him with a proper distraction and another topic for conversation.

"This is, wow," Jimin begins with an appreciative moan with his first forkful. "How do you know all these amazing places?"

"This is only the second restaurant we've been to, Jimin," Namjoon replies with a smile. "And I still have a lot more places I want to take you."

"R-really?"
"Of course. And I guess I've visited a lot of restaurants in Seoul. Don't cook all that much at home."

"But you're such an amazing chef too? Remember how you made me that pasta? It was the best I've had."

"I'm really not that good."

"But you are! I don't think I'll ever have pasta that good."

"But you can. You know you're always welcomed to have lunch or dinner at my apartment," Namjoon states with a fond smile, and Jimin's taken by surprise again. He knows that he's had a history of sort of inviting himself to the apartment from time to time, including that one time where he was taken there drunk off his mind. But he remembers the other man telling him how he never cooks for his dates, so he had assumed that the pasta was a one time thing.

Then Namjoon is inviting him for homecooked meals, and it does make him feel special. As if Namjoon's ready to break his own set of rules for him. Is he bring a tad bit dramatic? Probably.

"...Really?"

"Of course."

"You really want to cook for me?"

"Jimin," Namjoon places his fork down slowly and straightens his back. Jimin stops as well and peers at the man rather nervously. The taller man is wearing that serious expression again, and Jimin's never quite sure of what to anticipate when the man is wearing it.

".....?"

"I've been meaning to ask," the man continues slowly. "Do you find it difficult to believe that I really do want to do these things for you?" he asks and drops his gaze just slightly, and Jimin doesn't miss the hint of uncertainty in the other man's voice. And Jimin spends the next few seconds just staring, almost mesmerized by the fact that Kim Namjoon is sitting right in front of him, looking so unsure of himself again.

"Because I really do," Namjoon starts again, suddenly looking quite nervous as the silence stretches on. "I know I have a reputation."

"Oh, I-" Jimin starts, knowing that this is going into a territory that should probably be avoided. He did not mean to make Namjoon feel this way or remind him of all the rumors, and he already feels horrible for having acted so skeptical.

"Please, let me continue. I think it's only right that we, or I, talk about this."

"Okay..."

"I know that I have a reputation," Namjoon repeats slowly, and this time, Jimin only listens. "And I deserve it after what I've done. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that that was all a mistake, because it wasn't. I did all those things knowing exactly what I was doing. And I'm not going to tell you that isn't who I am, for the same reason."

"..."

"But I need you to know that that's not all I am."
"...I know," Jimin replies honestly, hoping that Namjoon will believe him without a doubt. "I've always known," he tags on slowly, needing the other man to just know that he knows. Hell, that's the reason why he had gotten into that fight with Mingyu in the first place.

Namjoon is now watching him in silence, and Jimin can't quite tell if it's out of surprise or something else.

"I always knew you were more than those rumors. A lot more."

"...Thank you."

"It's nothing to thank me for...it's just the truth. Anyone would have to be crazy to not see what I saw. Everyone at the bar thinks the world of you, but I don't need to tell you that," Jimin replies with a playful grin, hoping to get the man back on a more positive mood.

Yet, he's not ready for the next words out of Namjoon's lips.

"Would it be too crazy if I kissed you right now?"

".Oh, but I just had some food, and I swear this has garlic in it?" Jimin begins to ramble in an attempt to hide the fact that he almost choked again and proceeds to cup a hand over his mouth and blow into it before giving it a small sniff. "Oh, it's not that bad...wait, I don't know. That might be because I can still smell the-" Jimin is cut short at the sudden sound of Namjoon's laughter. It's not loud. It's not meant to be insulting. Jimin's surprised to find it full of endearment, and great, his cheeks must be so red right now.

"Maybe not now then," Namjoon says as his laughter dies down, and Jimin finds himself staring at his own plate as if he's hoping that it will swallow him whole.

"Sorry, I messed that up, didn't I."

"No apologizing for that."

"Right...I um, I do want to kiss you."

"I know."

"Oh. Okay. I just wasn't sure if you thought I didn't want to kiss you or something," Jimin adds and then has to fight the urge to physically cover his mouth with his own hands. Why is he still talking? Yeah, so much for playing hard to get.

"For now, I guess we should go back to eating," Namjoon suggests, and Jimin gladly returns to his meal.

"I think I ate too much," Jimin comments idly, patting his stomach with a content smile on his face.
"I'm glad you liked it," Namjoon replies from besides him as the car slowly turns a corner. After the meal, Namjoon had taken Jimin to a popular ice cream shop near the restaurant, and Jimin had taken up on the offer gladly. When he couldn't decide on a flavor, the taller man was quick to let Jimin pick three different ones, which is why he's currently suffering from mild food coma.

It's their first date, and Namjoon's spoiling him already.

Namjoon parks his car in front of Jimin's apartment, and Jimin begins to fiddle with his seat belt, wondering if he's supposed to invite the other man in or not. He did sort of clean the place for a just-in-case-Namjoon-has-to-wait-inside sort of situation, but now that he's thinking about it, what if Namjoon takes the invitation as a sign of something more....

-sensual.

And it makes sense. Not to shit on Namjoon's reputation or anything, but Namjoon's probably expecting sex right? Afterall, he himself has said that it's not that big of a deal, and they're both adults. Wait, but Namjoon knows him. Knows that he's not the type to just jump right into it. But still, what if-

"-Jimin."

"Huh? What? Sorry, what were you saying?" Jimin asks with a nervous laugh, realizing that he's been completely zoning out.

"Jimin. Stop thinking so much," Namjoon answers quietly, watching him with a hint of a smile tugging at his lips. "I told you. You set the pace."

".....Was I being that obvious?"

"Little bit. You do that thing with you brows when you're thinking too much," Namjoon explains as he reaches out and gently taps the spot between Jimin's eyebrows.

"....Oh...I do?"

"Yes. So, I'll see you tomorrow? Would you like me to bring coffee over?"

"That...sounds nice."

"Alright. Off you go."

"Okay..." Jimin answers sheepishly and then unbuckles his belt and gets out of the car. He's glad that Namjoon can read him so well and save him from having to argue with himself in his own head for an uncomfortably long period of time. He watches Namjoon get out the car as well and is confused all over again. Wait, is Namjoon about to invite himself in? Oh shit, what is he supposed to do now?

"Jimin, stop," Namjoon calls out gently, and Jimin briefly wonders if he's been doing that thing with his brows again. "I just wanted to walk you to your door. If that's alright with you, of course."

"That's fine. I mean, I'd really like that."

The two of them make their way up to Jimin's floor in relative silence, with Jimin spending the time in the elevator wondering if they're supposed to at least hold hands or something. Would that be too weird? The familiar ding of the elevator brings him back to life, and Jimin awkwardly steps out into the hallway with Namjoon in tow.

"I had a really great time," Jimin says as soon as they are in front of his apartment's door.
"Me too. Well, I'll see you tomorrow with that coffee," Namjoon says with a soft smile, and Jimin nods slowly.

"Oh, and remember to call me when you get home? So I know you got home safe?"

"Of course," Namjoon answers before motioning for Jimin to enter his apartment.

Jimin digs the heel of his shoes into the floor a couple time before swallowing hard and taking a small step towards the other man. Namjoon throws him a confused look, but it's quickly wiped away when Jimin goes on tiptoes, both his hands resting on Namjoon's arms. The man understands immediately and leans forward, lowering his head slowly and leaving less than an inch between their lips.

Jimin shuts his eyes tightly and closes the gap, practically smashing his lips against the other man's with more force than he had intended. He can vaguely make out the taller man stumbling back a little at the collision, and Jimin pulls back immediately, quite horrified that he's probably bruised both their lips. He totally overthought that kiss and he got too tense. *God, why does he have to be such a mess?*

"Now that's a kiss," Namjoon lets out with a small laugh, lulling his head back slightly as he does so.

"Oh, come on," Jimin lets out rather petulantly, heat right back to his cheeks, but he can't help the smile tugging at his own lips. He opens his mouth to let out another indignant reply but is stopped by Minjoon's lips on his. It's chaste. Almost playful in nature, and Jimin leans into it slowly, letting all the thoughts and uncertainty flush out of his system and allowing himself to forget what just happened.

"Alright. I should go," Namjoon says softly once he pulls back, his forehead pressed against Jimin's.

"Okay..."

Namjoon pulls back and kisses Jimin one more time on the forehead before making his way to the elevator, leaving Jimin just a little bit out of breath.

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