Until My Feet Bleed and My Heart Aches

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Until My Feet Bleed and My Heart Aches

by Reiya

Summary

‘…Of all the rivalries in the world of sports over the years, perhaps none has become so legendary as that of Russian figure skater Viktor Nikiforov and his rival, Japanese Yuuri Katsuki…’

A single event changes the course of Yuuri’s life, throwing him into a bitter rivalry with Viktor Nikiforov that spans across his entire skating career. But as the years go on, rivalry and hatred begin to develop into something very different and Yuuri doesn’t seem to be able to stay away, no matter how hard he tries.

Hatred and love are two sides of the same coin and even though everything changes, some things are still meant to be.

Podfic
Spanish
Chinese
Russian
Portuguese
Polish
Japanese
Others
Yuuri fell in love with Viktor’s skating from the very first moment he saw him.

It happened on what had started as an ordinary day, he and Yuko holed up in Ice Castle after a hard day of practice, crowded around the battered old television that was currently showing the Junior Grand Prix in fuzzy muted colours. It was a ritual of theirs, to sit and watch the figure skaters glide across the screen and fantasize about what it would be like when it was finally them out on the ice rink in front of the crowds, or standing on the podium waving to adoring fans with medals around their necks.

Yuuri had been distracted that day, half his mind still on their skating practice and the other half dreaming about the future, when he heard Yuko let out a gasp of surprise. Quickly he had turned his attention back to the screen just in time to see a skater that he had never seen before gracefully land what must have been an impressive jump, if Yuko’s reaction was anything to go by.

From that moment on, he couldn’t look away.

The other skaters were graceful but this one was different. He danced across the ice like he was born for it, his movements so fluid and enrapturing that Yuuri was frozen to the spot. The skater was young, Yuuri had never seen him before and he assumed - correctly as he would later find out - that this was the boy’s first time in the Prix. He still had the fresh-faced innocence of a young boy and his silver hair whipped out behind him as he twirled, softening his features into an almost angelic likeness.

Yuuri had watched as the boy spun and leapt across the ice, never missing a beat in the music that seemed to flow all around him. The routine ended with his arms held gracefully out, his head bowed demurely although Yuuri could have sworn he saw the hint of a smile hidden by the locks of hair.

“That was amazing!” Yuko had squealed, bouncing up and down in her seat, unable to contain her excitement. “I can’t believe that was only his junior debut. He’s only four years older than you Yuuri!”

A banner had unfolded along the bottom of the screen, detailing the name and nationality of the skater as his scores were calculated.

**Viktor Nikiforov**, Yuuri had read, still in awe of what he had just seen. He read the information again, committing the name to memory. **Viktor Nikiforov from Russia.**

*Someday, I want to skate like you.*

From that moment on, Yuuri had been hooked. He and Yuko followed Victor’s career religiously, watching as the young skater quickly shot up the ranks in the junior division, winning medal after medal with easy grace. Yuko pored over magazines, scouring them for any information about Viktor while Yuuri watched the videos they had taped of Viktor’s performances obsessively, copying the
moves over and over again on the ice until he could do a passable, if still slightly shaky impression.

The walls of Yuuri’s room slowly became filled with posters of the other skater. Official posters, competition photographs, pictures cut directly from the magazines Yuko loved so much. He was in love with the way the other boy skated, the grace and ease with which he moved. Whenever he needed to be by himself he would go to the skating rink and lose himself in Viktor’s routines until he could think again.

Gradually he began to work his way up through the ranks, competing at local competitions first and slowly branching out, going further from his little hometown to compete in bigger and bigger competitions as he slowly but surely improved.

He knew in his heart that if he practiced hard enough, he could skate on the same ice as Viktor someday.

When Yuuri was eleven, he asked for a poodle for his birthday. Just the day before, Yuko had found an article that mentioned Viktor had a pet poodle, accompanied by an adorable picture of the two of them together, and Yuuri had gone to his parents the next day and begged for one. They had good naturedly allowed it and Yuuri fell in love with the puppy immediately. When his mother had asked what he planned to name him, Yuuri knew without even thinking about it.

It was only later that evening, when Vicchan was curled up asleep on Yuuri’s lap, that his parents presented him with the second part of his birthday gift.

“We got them for you as a surprise,” his mother had told him as he clutched the tickets in shocked fingers. “We know how much you love skating and we thought since you’ve been working so hard this would be a nice treat for you.”

Yuuri had thrown himself into her arms then, the tickets to the Junior Grand Prix finals still clutched tightly in his fist.

He was going to see Viktor skate in person and he had never been more excited in his life.

Waiting almost a whole year for the Junior Grand Prix to come around was torture but Yuuri bore it as best he could, still not quite able to believe his luck. Yuko had squealed when she had found out, partially excited for him and partially green with envy that he would get to see the skaters live in person while she would have to make do with the fuzzy old television set in Ice Castle like she did every year.

When the date finally arrived, Yuuri could hardly sleep for the excitement. He glided through the day like he was in a dream, still not quite able to believe it was really happening. His parents had to guide
him through the crowd to prevent him from wandering off and to make sure they actually found their seats in the throng of people surrounding them.

Yuuri could barely keep still as he waited for the competition to begin. When the skaters finally appeared on the rink for their warm up he felt his breath catch in his chest.

There was Viktor, Viktor Nikiforov in person, fifteen and beautiful and everything Yuuri had dreamed he would be. His costume was covered by a white zip up jacket with RUSSISA emblazoned on the front to keep the costume from prying eyes but even without the glitzy costume he still looked like a god to Yuuri, flying across the ice like he owned it, silvery hair trailing behind him.

The bell rang, signalling the end of the warm up and the rest of the skaters left the ice, leaving Viktor alone in the rink. Skating to the barrier, Viktor carefully unzipped his jacket and handed it to his coach, exposing his short program costume to the crowds. It was a skin tight blue and white ensemble, covered in tiny diamantes with spirals stretching over his shoulder and down his arms, like a snowstorm on skin. Viktor skated into the centre of the rink to begin his routine and the crowd roared its approval.

Yuuri cheered loudest of all.

The first notes of the music began to play as Viktor took his starting position, head bowed and arms wrapped tight around his body. As the music filled the stadium he began to move, the song hard and cold, sharp notes like icicles dancing through the air and Victor danced with them. Each of his spins was perfect, every slide of his skate precise. His movements were sharp, almost dangerous and there was a hard edge of ice to his eyes. Gearing himself up he launched himself into the first jump of the program, a triple axel that drew cheers of approval from the crowd.

The lights danced off his costume, turning it to icicles across his skin. Yuuri could almost feel the story Viktor was weaving with his movements, an ice prince, as cold as the snow he commanded, bending the world to his will. There was a beauty, almost feminine, in his movements as he danced like he was part of the ice, a snowstorm trapped in a body.

Silver hair whipped out behind him as Viktor launched himself into a flying sit spin and Yuuri realised he was gripping the edge of his seat so hard his knuckles were white. The crowd roared its approval again as Viktor executed another jump, this time a triple salchow, landing it perfectly, arms extended and leg stretched out behind him. It was quickly followed by a step sequence and Yuuri couldn’t hold back a gasp at the complexity, the way Viktor skated as though the movements were nothing, as if he were born for this and this alone.

Yuuri never wanted the program to end. He watched Viktor glide across the ice, spinning and twisting, enchanting the whole room with the way he moved. No-one could look away. Distantly, Yuuri could hear the announcer’s glee as Viktor completed the last jumps of the program, a quad double combo that had the crowds screaming in approval.

Yuuri was on the edge of his seat as Victor finally finished in a combination spin that accentuated every line of his lean body under the dazzling lights. He could hardly believe that less than three
minutes had passed since Viktor had begun skating. It felt like his whole world had shifted. He never would have believed before that Viktor could be even more incredible but watching him skate in person was so much better than seeing it on TV. He could see every movement of Viktor’s body perfectly, every expression that crossed his face and Yuuri loved it.

The crowd was giving Viktor a standing ovation and Yuuri jumped up too, feeling like his heart was about to burst. Distantly he registered his parents sitting beside him, clapping politely, blissfully unaware of the beauty of what they had just witnessed. But Yuuri didn’t care. All that mattered was Viktor.

When the scores came in Viktor had scored well into the nineties and no-one was surprised. Viktor acknowledged the praise from the Kiss and Cry with a warm smile for the camera, the ice gone from his eyes as if it had never been there at all.

He was beautiful.

That night, Yuuri could talk about nothing else. He could tell he was boring his parents, even though they smiled encouragingly every time he analysed Viktor’s routine again, marvelling over the way he had jumped, spun, danced, stepped. There was nothing Yuuri hadn’t loved and he didn’t think he could stop talking about it even if he tried.

That night he could barely sleep, still riding high on the excitement of the day and the thought of seeing Viktor skate his free programme in the morning. Tossing and turning, Yuuri ran over Viktor’s routine again and again in his mind, seeing it all in perfect detail. He couldn’t wait to get back to Hasetsu to try and replicate it, although he knew he would never be able to do it like Viktor.

But maybe one day…

Someday, he vowed to himself again, he would skate on the same ice as Viktor. He’d practice and practice until he was good enough to qualify and then he’d skate so well that Viktor would be the one who couldn’t look away from him. Someday…

When Yuuri finally fell asleep, he was smiling.

The next day dawned bright and early and Yuuri awoke with the sun, practically bursting with excitement. Viktor was in the lead, his excellent score in the short program the day before boosting him straight to the top of the score table. None of the other competitors had come close. If he nailed the free skate today he would win gold and Yuuri would be there to witness it. In his heart, he knew that Viktor could do it. The other skater was leagues ahead of the rest of the competition and slated to
make a spectacular senior debut next season as long as he could triumph in the juniors one last time.

Yuuri believed in Viktor more than anything and he couldn’t wait to be proven right.

He barely noticed the other skaters performing their routines that day as the competition progressed, too on edge waiting for the main event to be able to give them more than a silver of his attention. Vaguely he was aware of the cheers of the crowd and the scores coming in over the loudspeaker but it was all background noise to the pounding of his heart.

When Viktor skated out onto the rink for the last time Yuuri could barely breathe.

In contrast to the day before, for his free skate the older skater was dressed in a skin tight black costume, partially see-through with silver crystals scattered up one side. There was a half flap of fabric discretely sewn onto one side of the ensemble that flared out as Viktor turned, almost like a skirt. The silvery grey hair was pulled back from his face in a long ponytail that flowed behind him and Yuuri couldn’t look away.

Viktor took his starting position in the rink, the back of one hand gently resting against his cheek and the other raised towards the sky, fingers curled. The music began, swelling through the room in a beautiful melody and Viktor moved. He still glided with the same almost feminine grace as the day before but the movements were softer and there was none of the previous icy hardness in his eyes. Instead they were warm and full of an emotion Yuuri couldn’t quite name.

Every step, every spin, every jump had the crowd on the edge of their seat, gasping and cheering as the story unfolded. If Yuuri had thought Viktor’s short program was incredible it was nothing compared to his free skate. He had upped the difficulty considerably but it was the artistry that stole his breath away.

A quad flip, a move Viktor had never before attempted in competition had the crowd on their feet and for a minute Yuuri panicked as his view of the rink was blocked. The crowd cheered again and he jumped onto his seat desperately, craning to see over the heads in front of him. As the roar died down and people began to take their seats again Yuuri could just see Viktor, gliding in a graceful spin across the rink with his eyes closed, hair flowing behind him.

Time seemed to slow and Yuuri stayed rooted to the spot, still standing on his chair looking over the now seated crowd. Viktor finished his spin, his eyes fluttering open and for a second Yuuri was sure Viktor was looking directly at him. He could imagine their eyes locking, blue on brown, the skater on the rink and the boy high up in the crowds. But then Viktor turned away as the music swelled and the moment was broken.

Still enraptured, Yuuri clambered back down to sit on his seat, never taking his eyes off the rink. Never taking his eyes off the skater it held.

Finally, the music swelled to its last crescendo and Viktor finished his routine with a combination spin. His half skirt flared out around him as he raised his arms for the final rotations, face pointing up towards the sky. The audience burst into thunderous applause and Yuuri was on his feet again, screaming his approval with the rest of the crowd.

Chest heaving from the exertion he finally allowed himself to show, Viktor lowered his arms and bowed deeply to the crowd, accepting the applause with a serene smile on his face as the praise rained down around him. He stayed there for another minute before finally skating off to the side of the rink towards the kiss and cry to await his scores.
After the performance they had just witnessed, there was no doubt in the mind of anyone in the audience that Viktor had won but there was still an audible gasp from the crowd when the score was announced over the speaker. Excitement was clear in even the announcer’s voice as he declared that the winner of the Junior Grand Prix, Viktor Nikiforov, had finished in first place with the highest score in Junior Grand Prix history.

The crowd went wild and the cameras trained onto Viktor's face where he was sitting smiling with his coach. He raised his hand in a wave of acknowledgment and the cheers increase in volume, almost defending.

Yuuri couldn’t help but think in that moment that Viktor Nikiforov was the most amazing person in the world.

There were throngs of people waiting outside the rink at the end of the day after the last competition had ended, all hoping to get a glimpse of the skaters as they left the building and Yuuri was right at the front of the crowd. His parents were quite a distance from him, standing further back having not wanted to force their way to the front. Yuuri hadn't cared about politeness, not this time. This was his chance, a real chance, to meet Viktor in person. A poster was clutched tightly in his sweaty hands, a promotional one from the beginning of the season featuring Viktor wearing the same outfit he had just won the free skate in, arms extended in frozen grace as he glided across the ice. It had quickly become Yuuri's favourite picture and he prayed that Viktor would have time to sign autographs for his fans when he finally appeared.

The thought of seeing him up close, of maybe even talking to him made Yuuri shiver in half fear half anticipation. He had to force himself to calm down, reminding himself that if everything went to plan then one day he would be skating on the same ice as Viktor, as an equal and not just a fan. It wouldn't do to embarrass himself now.

The screams of the fans closest to the entrance jolted him out of his musings and he craned his head, standing on tip toes at the barrier to try and catch a glimpse of who had just left the building. A flash of silver caught his eye and when he craned his neck he could just make out Viktor through the crowds, signing autographs and smiling to his fans.

As Viktor worked his way down the line Yuuri's heart began to beat faster and faster until he thought it might burst out of his chest. Soon, Viktor was only a few feet away from him and Yuuri could feel his chest begin to tighten and his hands start to shake. Frantically he looked down, trying to still his trembling hands and calm his rapid breaths.

There was a sudden lull in the noise directly around him and Yuuri looked up again, mouth falling open in shock as he saw Viktor himself standing in front of him, eyebrow raised expectantly, a small smile on his face.

Yuuri tried to speak but the words stuck in his throat. Still panicking he wordlessly thrust the poster and pen out in front of him, blushing furiously, a blush that only deepened when Viktor laughed gently and took the picture from him wordlessly, signing it was a flourish.
He handed it back to Yuuri and Yuuri, panicking internally and desperate to say something, *anything*, blurted out the first thing that came into his mind.

"I'm going to skate like you someday." The words tumbled out in a rush, his tongue tripping over itself in his panicked state. "And one day I want to skate against you too!"

Mortified at what had just happened he snapped his mouth shut with a click and willed the flaming red in his cheeks to die down. This wasn't exactly how he imagined his first meeting with his idol to go, blurt out his biggest dream in a moment of panic like an idiot but Viktor only laughed again, eyes bright.

"You might need to drop some weight before you can think about being a skater свинка," he laughed, ruffling Yuuri's hair as he handed the picture back into Yuuri's frozen hands. "But I look forward to seeing you out on a rink someday да?"

Yuuri opened his mouth to speak but the words stuck in his throat, this time for a very different reason. Viktor had already turned away to greet the next fan with the same easy smile so he didn't see the moisture that welled up in Yuuri's eyes no matter how hard he tried to fight it back or the way his hands clenched around the newly signed poster, crumpling it in their small grip.

Yuuri's parents had been worried when he had pushed his way back through the crowd, eyes still bright with unshed tears but Yuuri stoically refused to explain what had happened, sitting wordlessly throughout the whole journey home. He knew he was worrying his parents but he couldn't bring himself to explain. They wouldn't understand and he didn't want to be laughed at any more that day. There was only one person he wanted to talk to right now and she was worlds away, all the way back in Hasetsu.

When they finally made it home the first thing Yuuri did was head over to the Ice Castle where he knew Yuko would be waiting. Sure enough she was there when he arrived, practically bouncing up and down on excitement as she waited to hear his recollection of the final. She froze when she saw his face however and, after a moment of recovery, grabbed him by the wrist to drag him off to a deserted area of the rink and sit him down on one of the benches, expression serious.

"What happened Yuuri?" She asked, voice full of concern. "Viktor won. He beat the world record! I thought you'd be happy?"

Yuuri looked up at her expectant face and could feel his lip begin to wobble again, eyes stinging as he fought back the tears that threatened to come.

"He didn't even believe I was a skater Yuko." He choked out, feeling the first drop of moisture slide down his cheek. "I told him I was going to skate in competitions with him someday and he called me fat and told me if I ever wanted to be a skater I'd have to lose some weight first."

Another tear slipped out of his eye and joined the first, tracing a wet trail down his cheek. The insult burned and all Yuuri could hear was the voices of the other skaters at Ice Castle, Takeshi pushing him over and calling him fatso, all of them laughing and poking at his stomach as he tried to get
changed hiding behind his clothes. He knew he was a chubby child, he put on weight easily and he hadn’t had his first growth spurt yet but for Viktor, his idol Viktor who he had looked up to for so many years, to dismiss him like that hurt him more deeply than any of the other skaters at Ice Castle ever could.

Viktor might not have believed he was really a skater but Yuuri was, all the way through to his bones. His love for the sport was reinforced with hours upon hours of practice, he had gone to all the local competitions he could to try and get good enough to compete on the juniors when he finally passed the age restriction. Ice skating was his life, he practically lived at Ice Castle. He had worked so hard, determined one day to skate with Viktor himself only to have the other skater look right past him, seeing only another stupid fan, a chubby little boy who could never compete next to the likes of him.

“Aw Yuuri no, that’s horrible!” Yuko exclaimed and pulled Yuuri in for a hug. Lacing his fingers into the back of her shirt he gripped her tightly and allowed the tears to fall, sniffling gratefully into the fabric beneath his face. At least Yuko understood, in a way his parents never could. She knew just how much Viktor had meant to him, how much work Yuuri had put into becoming just like him.

Yuuri let himself cry into Yuko’s shoulder and vowed never to care about Viktor Nikiforov again.

That night, Yuuri tore down all of the posters in his room. He did it violently, ripping them from his walls, uncaring of the tearing paper as they split apart under is hand. There was a sense of vicious satisfaction as he crumpled up each piece of ruined paper, tossing them away and watching each fragment of Viktor destroyed forever. When he was finally finished the walls were bare for the first time in years, decorated only by the last fluttering fragments of paper that had clung on throughout the carnage.

Yuuri flopped down onto his bed, deciding to deal with the rest of the mess in the morning. For now he just wanted to think, made easier by the fact that Viktor’s face was no longer staring down at him from every corner of the room, mocking him.

Closing his eyes, Yuuri pushed his face into his pillow angrily, trying to block out the thoughts of Viktor’s laughing face from his mind, the way Viktor had laughed disbelievingly at the thought that someone like Yuuri could ever be a skater like him.

‘I’ll show him.” Yuuri vowed, hands still clenched tight around the pillow. “I don’t want to be like him anymore. I want to be better. I’ll beat him at his own game and he won’t be laughing at me anymore.”

And it was with that thought in mind that he finally drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

UPDATE - The English version of this fic should not be available on any website other
than AO3. If has been uploaded anywhere else, or any version has been used for profit, it is plagiarism and not done with my permission as the author.

Original note:

And so it begins!

Just to clarify, Viktor wasn’t being deliberately cruel or rude. He’s proven in canon he is a very blunt and honest person which was probably even worse when he was younger. Just like in canon when after the first GPF he mistook Yuuri for a fan rather than a skater, in this AU he does the same, assuming Yuuri is a fan who admired him and wanted to start skating and giving him what he thought was genuinely useful advice. He didn’t realise that Yuuri was 1) already a pretty decent skater and 2) very sensitive about his weight.

And so begins the biggest rivalry of both their careers!

This fic will follow them both through the years as their skating careers and relationship progresses. There will definitely be explicit chapters later on although nothing will happen until both of them are well overage.

Hope you enjoyed! Please drop me a kudos and comment to let me know what you think.

Rey xx

Russian Translations:

свинка - Little Piggy
да - yes

Music Used:

Viktor's SP - Winter Music Instrumental January by Derek & Brandon Fiechter
Viktor's FS - O Mio Babbino Caro - Sung by Renee Fleming
Memories You Bury or Live By

Chapter Notes

Wow, the response to the first chapter was…absolutely incredible. I’m still a bit in shock, I wasn’t expecting this kind of response! Thank you so much to everyone who commented, kudosed or subscribed, you guys are the reason I was able to get this next chapter up so fast. You all completely inspired me to keep writing!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Russia’s Rising Star Viktor Nikiforov Set To Make Spectacular Senior Debut

By Jamie Miller

Russian Skater Viktor Nikiforov wowed the skating world last season, winning the Junior Grand Prix with a staggering 258.47 combined total and breaking the world record for the highest score ever at a Junior Grand Prix. He then went on to follow his victory with another gold medal at the Junior World Championships, cementing his title as the most decorated junior skater in history. Nikiforov, now 16, is slated to make his senior debut in the coming season, starting with the Grand Prix in August of this year. While his training and routines are being kept tightly under wraps by the FFKKR and Nikiforov’s coach Yakov Feltsman, word is that Nikiforov himself is choreographing his free skate routine, an ambitious move for a relatively young skater.

Nikiforov has been described previously by his coach as ‘tenacious’ and ‘disobedient’ but is well regarded among his peers and wider skating world, generally seen as a charming and confident young skater with his eyes firmly fixed on gold. He is rarely seen away from St Petersburg where he trains under his coach with other Russian stars in single and pair skating. Unsurprising considering the pressure he is currently under, his senior debut being the moment that could make or break his career as a skater.

Given his past record, it is unlikely Nikiforov will disappoint his fans come the next season, his senior debut being one of the most widely anticipated in history. Nikiforov is known for surpassing expectations time and again, with harder and harder routines complete with varied and emotive themes. In a recent interview with a Russian newspaper he stated that he was ‘confident’ in his routines for next season and expressed the hope that he would be able to surprise the audience with something new and unexpected. With this rising star in the line-up, one thing is for sure. It’s going to be a hell of a season.

Yuuri flopped down onto his bed, exhausted after another long day training. Nowadays he was almost constantly tired, a bone deep weariness that was both gruelling and satisfying. Between private lessons with the local ice skating instructor, ballet training with Minako, his friend, ballet teacher and general ice skating enthusiast, and still trying to keep up with all his schoolwork, he
came home every day wanting nothing more than to eat and sleep for a week.

Keeping up with everything was hard but he was determined. There was no better feeling than finally completing a new jump or executing a new routine perfectly and he knew he couldn’t get that without the training, no matter how exhausted it made him.

From outside his door there was a pitiful whine and scratching and Yuuri grinned tiredly, heaving himself off his bed to pull it open.

Vicchan bounded in, knocking Yuuri back as he leapt at his owner and covered his face in enthusiastic licks. Yuuri laughed, pushing the dog down before collapsing back onto his bed and allowing Vicchan to curl up next to him, one arm slung loosely over the dog’s warm side. Vicchan panted happily and Yuuri buried his face into the soft fur with a smile, content to just cuddle his beloved companion.

Vicchan had grown a lot since he had first arrived in the Katsuki household almost two years ago but he was still as excitable as a puppy and fiercely loyal and affectionate to his owner. Yuuri loved him more than anything. Vicchan was always there for him, allowing him to cry into his fur when Yuuri was at his lowest, cheering him up with affectionate licks and snuggling, and sharing in his owner’s happiness when Yuuri had done something he was especially proud of, his enthusiasm magnifying Yuuri’s own tenfold. Mercifully, he helped Yuuri through the new gruelling training regime he had insisted on taking part in, bounding along the beach next to his owner as Yuuri completed his daily runs, determined to get fitter and faster and better.

Vicchan was perfect, the only thing wrong with him being his name which Yuuri only had himself to blame for. What kind of idiot named his dog after a person after all? Vicchan was much better than his namesake but no matter how hard Yuuri had tried in the past year, Vicchan refused to respond to anything else. Various attempts had been made in the months immediately after the disastrous Junior Grand Prix Final but eventually Yuuri had given up, resigning himself to the name permanently. He didn’t care he told himself, although it sounded weak even in his own head. Vicchan didn’t even sound much like Viktor anyway right?

Yuuri scratched behind the dog’s ear absentmindedly, thinking back on his semi-successful day of training. Earlier that morning he had run into Yuko at Ice Castle after one of his private lessons, still aching after hitting the ice multiple times while failing to land the new jump his instructor was trying to teach him. Spotting him from across the ice, she had cornered him in the locker room as soon as he was finished and made him promise to meet up with her later in the week to watch the Grand Prix finals together. At the hesitant look on Yuuri’s face she had pouted and complained she barely saw him anymore, which Yuuri could hardly refute. Between training, exercise and work he barely had any time to sleep let alone hang out with the few friends he did have.

He had almost declined, his last memory of a Grand Prix Final still bitter in his mind but in the end he didn’t have the heart. Watching the Grand Prix Final with Yuko was tradition, he loved it and he didn’t see why one stupid skater should ruin that.

During his absentminded musings his hand had fallen limp onto Vicchan’s back and the dog whined at the lack of attention. Huffing out a laugh at the mournful look on Vicchan’s face Yuuri scratched behind his ears again, gaze drifting languidly around his room. Eventually, his eyes alighted on the single solitary poster that stood out amongst his blank walls, still stripped as bare as they had been the day he had returned from Hasetsu after the last Junior Grand Prix. Piercing blue-green eyes gazed out at him from the glossy paper, the pale face frozen in an expression of serene grace.

It was a poster of Viktor, the same poster that Yuuri had taken to meet his once-idol nearly a year ago. Viktor’s looping signature was still emblazoned across the lower half of the picture, slightly
faded but still clearly legible despite the time that had passed.

If his parents or sister had ever wondered why this one poster had remained even after all of the others were found ripped up and carelessly thrown away, they had never questioned him about it and Yuuri was grateful for that. Most likely he would have trouble explaining how he kept the single poster up as a reminder, for a motivation that was the complete opposite of what it had previously been. Before, he had plastered the walls of his room with pictures of Viktor to remind himself how amazing the other skater was, how beautiful he was as he glided across the ice, how much Yuuri wanted to skate alongside him one day.

Now, the solitary poster reminded him of how much he hated Viktor, with his stupid smile and stupid airy attitude and stupid, stupid talent that Yuuri couldn’t dismiss no matter how much he disliked the other boy. It was a reminder of what had happened and a motivation rolled into one. Viktor’s face would look down on him every night, mocking him, telling him with his cold blue eyes that he would never be on the same level as perfect Viktor Nikiforov and every night Yuuri would remember his promise, remember exactly why he was skating nowadays.

Before, he had skated to compare to Viktor one day. Now he skated to exceed him.

Every painful skating session, every gruelling dance practice, every miserable early morning run, Yuuri could focus on that one image and push himself to keep going over and over again. He would become a better skater, better than he had ever dreamed of being. He would make it into the Juniors, then the Seniors and one day he would beat Viktor fair and square on the ice and prove exactly how much he was worth. He had promised it to himself after the last Final and now it was a promise he could never forget.

Later that week Yuuri found himself back at Ice Castle with Yuko, the two of them curled up in front of the television like they did every year, the bright colours of the Grand Prix Final flashing across the screen. It was nice, Yuuri reflected, the normalcy of the routine, the comforting presence of Yuko at his side. Watching the Grand Prix final together was a time-honoured tradition of theirs and despite everything that had changed in his life recently he was glad that had stayed the same.

Yuko had been incredible in the intervening year between the two Grand Prixes. Despite their unwavering support of his skating, his family just didn’t understand in the way Yuko did. She was there to cheer him on each practice, to stay with him after hours as he repeated jumps and spins over and over again until his feet were bruised and he finally had them perfect. She understood his love of the ice and his drive to skate in a way his family never could. He knew wholeheartedly he was lucky to have a friend like her.

“It’s a shame you were too young to qualify this year.” Yuko exclaimed as the skater on the tv botched his landing of a triple axel, landing badly on his right outside edge and crashing down onto the ice, expression pained. “You could beat some of these guys easily.”

Blushing slightly under the praise, Yuuri just shrugged. He was good but he wasn’t amazing. Not yet. He still had a long way to go if he ever wanted to rival Viktor, the intense training program he was putting himself through was just the beginning.
Younger than the cut off for the Junior Grand Prix by just a few months, he had missed his chance to qualify for the juniors this year but he was determined that next year he would make it. Viktor wasn’t competing in the Juniors anymore but Yuuri had to if he wanted to improve enough to rival Viktor when he eventually moved up into the senior division.

The skater on the screen finished his routine and turned to face the audience, sweat dripping down his face but eyes bright with exhilaration despite the mistakes he had made. Gaze caught by the sight, Yuuri stared intently at the screen and wondered what it would be like to be out on the ice in front of that many people, all cheering for him. It was a dream but far from an impossible one. He had worked so hard this year, he could make it into the competition next year if only he tried hard enough.

Next year, that would be him on the screen. Him on the ice, soaking in the praise of the audience. He had to make it, there was no other option.

After the Junior short programs were over, the cameras switched to the senior division where the final six skaters were completing their six minute warm up out on the ice. Resolutely, Yuuri forced himself not to notice the silver haired figure looping with easy grace around the outskirts of the ring. Internally he strengthened his resolve, he was watching this to enjoy the skating and nothing else.

That resolve lasted throughout the first two skaters routines, he and Yuko gasping and cheering as they performed particularly spectacular jumps and spins, but crumbled the moment that familiar silver head stepped out onto the ice. Despite the drastic shift in his feelings since last year, Yuuri couldn’t deny that Viktor could still capture the attention of the room effortlessly.

The silver hair was still as long as ever, this time braided elfin style around the sides of his head. In the intervening year Viktor’s cheekbones had sharpened and his face had lost most of its childish roundness but he was still as beautiful as ever, pale and cold and perfect as the ice he skated on.

Yuuri felt Yuko nudge him slightly and realised he had been staring far too intently at the tv, nose practically pressed against the screen. Embarrassed he leapt backwards and folded his arms resolutely over his chest, desperately trying to ignore Yuko’s giggling in the background.

He hated Viktor, wanted to beat him on the rink over and over again until all that smug confidence was stripped away for good but that didn’t mean he wasn’t still a little entranced by the other boy’s skating. It was normal, Yuuri told himself, to be captivated by the other skater’s performance. After all, if he didn’t watch Viktor closely, how would he know what he needed to beat.

The Russian skater took his place in the centre of the ring, both hands crossed over his chest and eyes cast towards the ceiling. A hush stole over the audience as he waited, perfectly still in the sudden silence of the area.

At the first notes of the song rang out he moved fluidly, stretching one arm out gracefully in front of him, reaching to the crowd. In contrast to the year before, the melody he had chosen for his short program this year was delicate, almost melancholy, the gentle notes of the piano matching Viktor perfectly as he glided around the rink, movements soft and mournful and utterly captivating.

Yuuri had almost forgotten how Viktor looked when he skated, as though nothing in the world
mattered more to him than that moment, the music around him and the way his body moved across
the ice.

The first jump of the program was met with cheers and whistles from the audience as Viktor landed it
perfectly, blades cutting across the ice without hesitation, following it quickly with a layback spin,
extending on arm into the air and drawing the other down to rest softly across his cheek as he bent
backwards into his rotation.

The crowd was eating it up and Yuuri could hear the commenter praising the artistry of the skating in
a slightly awed tone, barely deigning to mention the technical elements. For Yuuri it was the worst of
dichotomies, his desire to enjoy the beauty of the routine at war with his hatred of exactly who was
skating it.

Transitioning gracefully out of another spin Viktor began gliding backwards across the diagonal of
the arena, gearing up for another jump. At the peak of his speed he launched himself off the back
outside edge of his skate, propelling himself into a quadruple Lutz, a notoriously difficult jump that
had the crowd cheering their approval.

Yuuri saw the mistake a fraction of a second before it happened, the way Viktor’s skate hit the ice at
a bad angle, cutting the elegance of the jump as he stumbled, touching on hand down onto the ice to
keep his balance. A groan of disappointment rose up from the crowd but Viktor continued on
unfazed, moving swiftly from the botched landing onto his step sequence, skating serpentine across
the rink with unflappable grace. The bad jump didn’t seem to have affected him at all, although
Yuuri could have sworn for a second he saw a flash of disappointment briefly flicker in Viktor’s
eyes. There are gone again in a fraction of a second, the moment was so brief Yuuri could almost
believe he had imagined it.

No-one else in the audience seemed to have noticed, everyone in the stadium completely captivated
by Viktor from the moment he first moved from his starting position to the moment the last mournful
notes echoed out of the speakers. When the melody finally died away, leaving Viktor alone in the
rink with one hand resting over his heart and the other gracefully extended towards the judges, the
audience burst into thunderous applause, showering the young skater with flowers and other tokens
of approval from the stands. Yuko burst into squeals of delight before cutting herself off and looking
over at Yuuri guiltily.

But Yuuri hadn’t even noticed her outburst. He was too fixated on the screen and the smiling face
that was filling it.

‘He was good.’ Yuuri thought, with grudging respect for the other boy’s skating if nothing else.
‘Even better than he was last year. But one day, I’ll be better.’

He might have been too young to qualify for the Juniors this year but next season that would all
change. He was good enough to make it to the Junior Grand Prix, he knew he was. From there, he
would have to work his way up the ranks. There was still so much more to learn, so much more he
needed to do but Yuuri had faith that one day he’d get there. He had promised himself that he would
beat Viktor and prove his worth and he wasn’t letting go of that promise for anything.

The Junior Grand Prix next season would be the first step, the start of a road that would eventually
lead him to the senior division and Viktor. It would take him years he knew but when he made it,
when he stood at the top of that podium with a shining gold medal and looked down of Viktor’s
stupid disbelieving face, the victory would be all the sweeter.
Russian Figure Skater Viktor Nikiforov Takes Silver In a Spectacular Grand Prix Final

Viktor Nikiforov, the next big thing in Russian figure skating, made a spectacular senior debut this season, smashing his way through the qualifying competitions and winning an impressive silver medal at his first ever senior grand prix final.

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  I can’t wait to see him compete at Worlds in March

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So this chapter was a little bit of a filler chapter just to explore how the events of last chapter have changed Yuuri’s approach to skating and also to give a little bit of insight into Viktor’s senior debut and how the wider world sees him. Next up will be Yuuri’s first Junior Grand Prix so watch the space! The next part should be up pretty soon as all the incredible support I’ve gotten for this story had really encouraged me to keep a regular update schedule. (I’m also really keen to get onto the juicy bits of this story so I’m writing as fast as I can…)

As I mentioned in the tags, this story will be a long one so strap yourselves in! I have fully planned out this fic and know exactly what is going to happen so don’t worry about me abandoning it, that definitely wont happen!

Thank you again for all your wonderful support! I’d love to hear more from you as comments truly are what keep me writing. I also answer every comment so if you have a particular question about the fic you can ask here or on my tumblr and I’ll try my best to answer it (although I won’t spoil any of the rest of the fic by giving too much away!). Alternatively, you can just come and scream at me about Yuuri on Ice on my tumblr because that’s what I spend most of my life doing anyway.

Finally, shout out to The_Last_American_Virgin for correcting my Russian in the last chapter. I do try my best to keep things as realistic as possible but as I am neither an expert in Russian or figure skating (I based Viktor’s junior score in this chapter on the current junior world record) feel free to point out any mistakes and I’ll try my best to correct them.

See you soon!

Rey xx

Music Used:

Viktor's SP - Francis - Cœur de Pirate

Update - I have just watched episode ten and like...I can’t believe this is real?? This is the best thing that has every happened to me, I feel blessed
The next year sped by, full of training and dancing and training and fitness and more training. Yuuri pushed himself harder than ever. Finally he had made it into the age bracket to qualify for international skating and it was with more determination than ever before that he threw himself into the qualifying competitions, skating as though his life depended on it. His parents and sister came to them all, cheering him on proudly from the side-lines and his coach, a strict man named Hiroki Tanaka who had retired to Hasetsu to teach skating a few years previously, watching him with satisfaction when he nailed one of the jumps they had been working on for the past two years.

His hard work finally paying off, Yuuri breezed through the qualifying competitions and before he knew it he was sitting on a plane to France for his first ever event in the Junior Grand Prix.

Yuuri had been told that France was one of the most beautiful countries in the world but he barely registered anything from the moment the plane touched down onto the landing strip to the whistle signifying the start of the competition. It was his first Junior Grand Prix and he was terrified. For financial reasons his family had been forced to stay in Japan instead of flying out with him and even though they had promised to watch him from back home it just didn’t feel the same without them there. His missed his parents, missed Mari, missed Yuko who was probably holed up in Ice Castle even now. He especially missed Vicchan and he wished he had been allowed to bring the dog along, for the comfort if nothing else. The only person he had been able to bring was his coach and while Tanaka provided him with a gruff form of support they weren’t close and it wasn’t the same.

The whole thing seemed unreal to Yuuri and it was probably that complete sense of dissociation that allowed him to get through his first event. The nerves that usually hit him were absent only because he kept expecting to suddenly wake up and realise it had all been a dream. God knows he had dreamed enough about finally making it to the Junior Grand Prix in the last two years. For it to actually have become a reality was incredibly strange and more than a little unnerving.

To Yuuri’s surprise and great pleasure he placed third in his first event which left him with a genuine shot at the final if he could do well in the second.

His next event was in Russia and Yuuri had to force himself not to get distracted with wandering thoughts of exactly what that country represented to him. Every time he heard the sharp strings of Russian from the mouths around him all he could think about was Viktor calling him ‘свинья’ and of the burn in his chest and in his eyes. Viktor was away winning hearts and medals in Skate Canada but to Yuuri he was very present in Russia all the same.

When Yuuri stepped out onto the ice in the Russian rink for the first time he could see Viktor in every face in the crow, in every word spoken. He was terrified but in a strange way the illusion helped. Everyone watching him was Viktor in that moment and Yuuri skated to prove him wrong, to prove everyone wrong who thought he couldn’t do it, who ever doubted him. With more focus than ever he jumped and span across the ice, only stumbling a little on the occasional landing.

Despite everything he was still one of the youngest skaters there and some of the other, older skaters were already performing quads, something Yuuri himself had yet to master. Judging was harsh and he dropped marks on his technical score but to his great relief his presentation score was high and boosted him just slightly over a Czech skater in his final year competing in the juniors and into 3rd place.
In the chaos of the moment he could barely think let alone figure out what that truly meant but after he had accepted his medal, looking a little dazed, Tanaka had pulled him aside with a smile and motioned to where the scoreboards were showing the combined results of all the skaters in the competition, the top six highlighted in bold at the top.

Yuuri’s name was on there. He was going to the final.

Before flying out to Italy for the final, Yuuri first went back to Hasetsu to see his family. His mother had hugged him as soon as he walked through the door, his father had given him a proud smile and pat on the back and his sister had ruffled his hair affectionately. They still didn’t really understand the sport or exactly what a spot in the Junior Grand Prix Final meant to him but Yuuri was eternally grateful for their support regardless. They wouldn’t be coming with him and so he basked in the attention while he could, determined to make them proud.

Vicchan greeted him excitedly as soon as he stepped into his room, bounding up to his owner and covering his face in excited licks. Laughing, Yuuri let him, burying his hands in the poodle’s warm fur. In a way he had missed Vicchan most of all and his tour away for the Grand Prix had been the longest time the two of them had ever been separated for.

Yuuri had missed them all and much as he enjoyed skating in the Grand Prix, it was nice to be home even if it was only for a little while.

All too soon, his time in Japan was over and he found himself back on a plane flying out to Italy and the Junior Grand Prix Final. He and Tanaka had flown out a week in advanced to give Yuuri enough time to practice and get comfortable with the city. Unfortunately, it seemed to have the opposite effect and Yuuri found himself constantly on edge. In the qualifying competitions his nerves had been suspiciously absent but with the final looming ever nearer they came back in full force, twisting and writhing in his gut and making him feel almost physically ill.

He tried to practice to calm himself down, to lose himself on the ice the way he used to be able to back at Ice Castle in Hasetsu but he couldn’t. Skating, which had always been the solace he had turned to to block out the outside world, was now the source of his anxiety and as the day of the final grew ever nearer it began to eat him up inside.
Finally, after a disastrous practice session on the day before the short program, where Yuuri flubbed all of his jumps and hit the ice so many times the doctor on standby had to check him over for a suspected concussion, Tanaka had ordered him to pack it in for the day and take a break. Yuuri had stubbornly refused, wanting to keep practicing over and over again until his feet bled if necessary but Tanaka insisted and Yuuri eventually caved, not wanting to be physically dragged off the ice like a child as the older man threatened.

Instead Tanaka took him sightseeing, hoping some time away from the rink would calm his nerves. It did the exact opposite.

The city was strange to Yuuri, with its ancient sweeping architecture and cobbled stone streets. People chattered around him in strange languages and Yuuri clung to Tanaka’s side, feeling completely lost. He understood only basic English and nothing of Italian and he longed for the comfort of home and the flowing sounds of Japanese all around him. Even the food was strange and Yuuri found that he had no appetite, picking at his plate but barely eating any of it. In his mind he longed for Katsudon, his mother’s homemade Katsudon and all the comforting familiarity it brought him.

But he couldn’t have it. His mother was thousands of miles away in Hasetsu and even if she was here, Yuuri had sworn to himself that Katsudon was special. He could only eat Katsudon when he won. Which meant if he wanted to eat it now, he first had to win.

The day of the short program dawned sunny and bright and Yuuri felt like he was going to throw up. The reality of what he had to do had hit him in full force during the previous night and he was terrified. Terrified of the crowds who would be watching and judging him. Terrified of the other skaters and how good they all were. Terrified that he was going to fail, that all his hard work would be for nothing, that he would never be a good skater, would never be able to rival Viktor, was just a stupid fat little piggy like Viktor had told him he was.

Tanaka had to drag him to the rink that morning, giving him a stilted pep talk and obviously not knowing how to deal with Yuuri’s steadily mounting panic. Yuuri didn’t take in a word he said, too lost inside his own head.

At the rink he changed into his costume before covering it with a dark blue and black zip up jacket that was customary of Japanese skaters. The bell signalling the warm up rang out, cold and piercing and Tanaka escorted Yuuri to the rink as Yuuri tried desperately to block out the muted roar of the crowd.

As soon as he stepped out onto the rink he was blinded by lights, spotlights and camera flashes coming from every side. The noise was deafening as thousands of people chattered and laughed and called out to each other. The other skaters were already on the ice, some looping around the outside with an easy grace and the others spinning or flipping across the centre. Yuuri could feel his legs shaking as he took off the skate guards he wore and stepped out to join them.
The warm up went badly. There was no other way to put it. Just like the day before Yuuri flubbed the jump he attempted, which only drove his nervousness up another notch. It was a toe loop, one of his favourite jumps but as he had geared up to take off he had caught another glimpse of the heaving crowds, the thousands of people watching him full of expectation and the distraction ruined his landing, sending him sprawling across the ice in a painful fall.

The crowd let out a sigh of disappointment at the sight which only served to further drive Yuuri’s anxiety, his face burning red with the embarrassment as he picked himself up off the cold ice where he had landed sprawled on his back.

When he was upright again he skated a few basic moves, gliding through a spread eagle to try and get back into the swing of things, trying to conjure back the excitement and thrill he had felt when skating back in France and Russia. But he couldn’t do it. The stakes were too high here and his mind was caught in a downwards spiral of worry, sinking deeper and deeper with every passing moment.

Finally, the bell signalling the end of the warm up rang and he left the ice gratefully, refusing to look Tanaka in the eye.

Quietly his made his way to the waiting room where the television was set up to broadcast the other skater’s performances. The first up was an Italian skating on his home turf and the crowd went wild. Yuuri could hear their chanting from above him as well as on the TV and the stadium seemed to shake with the pounding of feet. The skater made a casual loop around the rink, waving to his fans and grinning before finally taking his place in the centre and beginning his routine.

He was good. He was very good. Yuuri was glued to the screen, he didn’t want to watch but he couldn’t look away. The knowledge that soon he would have to be the one on the ice in front of the crowds and judges made him feel like someone had reached into his gut and was twisting his insides with vicious tugs.

After what felt like an eternity the other skater finished his routine with a bow and the crowd burst into thunderous applause. Yuuri could feel his breath start to speed up, his heart racing and feeling like it was about to beat out of his chest.

Gasping a little for air he sank down into one of the seats, trying to get his traitorous body back under control. From the other side of the room Tanaka signalled for Yuuri to follow him, eyes tight with worry at the Yuuri’s distress. Yuuri was skating second and he needed to be up on the rink while the Italian was receiving his scores in the kiss and cry.

Throughout the whole walk back to the rink Yuuri tried to calm his breathing, working through some of the meditation exercises Minako had taught him. It helped fractionally but as soon as he stepped back out into the glaring lights of the arena any semblance of calm he had achieved was lost.

With shaking hands he unzipped his jacket, handing it to Tanaka and revealing the costume beneath. It was pale green, a loose shirt over black trousers with swirls of green spiralling down the seams.
Nothing too flashy, Tanaka had refused.

Stepping onto the ice Yuuri clenched his hands into fists, his nails biting into delicate skin before he pushed himself off and gliding into the centre to take up his starting position. Unlike the skater before him he didn’t acknowledge the crowd, he was too busy pretending they didn’t exist. Pretending this was just another practice session back in Ice Castle and when he was finished he’d see no-one but Yuko cheering from the side-lines.

The first notes of the music rang out, a sweet and slow melody that Tanaka had picked out for him. Yuuri’s theme for this year was innocence, again a choice of Tanaka’s. He had explained he wanted to play to Yuuri’s strengths, give the crowds what they’d expected and Yuuri hadn’t argued with him over it.

Temporarily losing himself in the music Yuuri skated, gliding across the ice with his arms outstretched. The first few moves went well and he almost relaxed. He could do this. He could.

As he geared up for his first jump he caught sight of one of the television cameras, panning slowly across the rink to catch him as he leapt. In that instant, all Yuuri could think about was his family and Yuko, all watching him back home, full of expectation. The though terrified him, breaking him out of his focused mindset and causing him to take off badly, his left leg almost buckling. Twisting in the air he just managed to fit in the required rotations but the bad take-off had skewed his landing and his right leg crumpled as it hit the ice at the wrong angle, sending him sprawling.

There was a groan from the crowd and Yuuri scrambled up again, determined to keep going. But the bad jump had thrown him off and he could feel the stilted nature of his next sets of moves, his spins awkward, his step sequences robotic and lacking all the emotion that usually won him the points he so desperately needed. By the skin of his teeth he landed his second jump, a triple toe loop, but even that felt wrong. There was none of the grace and poise he was used to. The racing of his heart and the shortness of his breath was distracting him and he could barely focus.

His final jump, a triple double combo went almost as badly as the first jump. Although he didn’t fall fully Yuuri still landed awkwardly, being forced to touch down on the ice to keep himself upright. By the time he ended the routine with his final spin he wanted nothing more than to get off the ice and away from the crowds, to somewhere quiet where he could break down in private.

But first he was forced to go to the kiss and cry where he was awarded his score. Disappointment welled up in Yuuri’s chest when it was announced. In his head he had known it couldn’t be good but the reality was still hard to face, the embarrassingly low numbers mocking him from up on the screen. As soon as he was able to he left the arena, fighting back the burn of unshed tears in his eyes. Tanaka made as if to follow him but backed down at the look on Yuuri’s face.

Yuuri was grateful for that at least. He just wanted to be alone.
stadium. It was only once he had shut the door and sunk down onto the ground that Yuuri allowed himself to cry.

Pulling his knees up to his chest he rested his head on them and let the sobs wrack his body, feeling the warm wetness of the tears slide down his cheeks and onto the floor.

He had messed up. He had worked so hard to get here, had put his heart and soul and life into his skating and when it really mattered he hadn’t been able to hold it together. He had been too scared, too nervous and it had ruined his routine. There was no way he would be able to win gold now.

Yuuri frantically rubbed at his eyes, trying to clear away the tears but they continued to fall and eventually he gave up. More than anything in that moment he wanted Vicchan with him, Vicchan who had comforted him through moments like this before, who was always kind and patient and never judged him for anything.

So caught up in his own thoughts and facing away from the door, Yuuri didn’t notice the soft creak as it swung open, or the figure that looked through. They paused for a second, observing the boy crying alone on the floor and for a moment it looked as if they were about to enter the room, to reach out to him. But something pulled them back and they hesitated, before carefully inching the door shut again, closing it softly so as not to alert the boy on the floor that he had been seen and disappearing back down the corridor in a flash of silver hair.

Once Yuuri had finally cried himself out he got back up, brushed the dust off his costume and went to find Tanaka. Crying had helped a little and he was beginning to feel slightly better, although nothing could make up for the aching disappointment still present like a gaping pit in his chest.

When he explained to Tanaka what he wanted to do the other man agreed, bemused but obviously not wanting to upset Yuuri further. With a bit of negotiating he used their passes to be given access back onto the rink where the men’s senior short programs were just starting to take place. Yuuri watched as each skater performed, gazing intently at how they moved, how they recovered when a jump went wrong, how they smiled throughout everything, their real emotions buried deep.

After what felt like hours, the final senior skater glided out onto the rink. He was dressed in dark colours, blues and blacks accentuating every line of his body and making his silver hair seem to gleam under the lights. There was some kind of subtle makeup surrounding his eyes, the dark lines accentuating the gleaming blue-green of the irises.

Viktor looked dark, almost dangerous out there on the ice. The intervening year had been kind to him, his shoulders had broadened and his face had taken on a more masculine cast, highlighting the sharp beauty of his features. The music he skated to was as beautifully dangerous as he was, a dark waltz that flowed around the room as he spun.

The routine was beautiful, a dance for two with an invisible partner. Two people, one flesh and blood and the other a fantasy of imagination circling each other, weaving and spiralling, locked in an
eternal dance.

The crowd went wild for it, screaming in elation every time Viktor jumped, each take-off graceful, each landing perfect. Yuuri watched him, unable to look away. This was a reminder, he told himself as he stared, mesmerised. This is why you have to be good. This is why you have to be better.

When Viktor finally finished his routine the crowd was on its feet, stamping and cheering in a standing ovation. Viktor took a bow, waving and smiling to the people surrounding him and chanting his name. He turned to acknowledge the people standing behind him and for a second Yuuri could have sworn Viktor noticed him, a little Japanese boy standing with his coach far away on the other side of the rink, half concealed in shadows. He could almost believe he saw the waving hand falter ever so slightly, the slight widening of the eyes as Viktor turned in his direction but of course, it was all just in his imagination. Viktor was arrogant and beautiful and Yuuri was just another unrecognisable face amongst the crowd.

He turned away before he could see anything else and walked away, disappearing back into the shadows.

That night Yuuri barely slept, running his free skate over and over again in his mind’s eye. Every move, every step, every jump. It all had to be perfect.

Seeing Viktor again today had been his reminder. His reminder of why he had to do this, why he wanted to be the best more than anything else in the world. Viktor’s skating was brilliant, he was already legendary in the figure skating world. If Yuuri wanted to beat him someday he would have to work around his fear, would have to be able to keep his focus no matter what.

He could do it, he told himself in the darkness of his room, staring up at the ceiling with his eyes far away. He may have messed up today but he could do it. He could. He had to.

It was with that thought in mind that Yuuri entered his second day of the final. He was still terrified, that wouldn’t go away no matter what, but he had a new sense of focus and determination. Seeing Viktor skate yesterday had been exactly what he needed and he stepped out onto the rink with a new sense of confidence.
During the warm up he avoided doing any jumps. His flubbed toe loop in the warm up yesterday had been what really knocked his belief in his own ability and ruined what little chance he had of getting through his routine unscathed. He wouldn’t make the same mistake twice.

Yuuri was skating first in the free skate and so while the other skaters left the ice after the warm up he stayed, briefly skating to the barrier to hand his jacket over to Tanaka before moving back out into the centre of the rink to take up his starting position.

A hush fell over the stadium and the first few notes of his music rang out, a soft piano melody that he allowed to wash over himself for a few seconds before he moved, skating in slow, sweeping movements, eyes closed. Yuuri ignored the crowd, ignored the cameras. In his mind it was just him and the ice and the music guiding his every move.

The song was soft and sweet, in keeping with the theme Tanaka had chosen. Instead of focusing on his fears Yuuri searched inside himself for what the music made him feel. Of memories of long quiet runs on the beach with Vicchan bounding by his side and the beauty of the first rays of sunlight breaking over the horizon out across the waves. Of his family, their smiles and laughter surrounding him, engulfing him in their love. The warmth of the onsen and the beauty of Hasetsu.

From what seemed like a long way away Yuuri could hear the cheers of the crowd but they weren’t important. With the grace he had been lacking the day before Yuuri prepared for his first jump, a triple Salchow. For a second he almost faltered, this would be his first jump since the disaster yesterday and he had always disliked Salchows. But instead he pushed the thought away, focusing instead on the memory of the Salchow he had seen Viktor perform in his routine the day before. It had been elegant and effortless and if Yuuri wanted to compete with Viktor someday his could be nothing less.

With Viktor in his mind he threw himself into the jump, spinning in the air and landing it perfectly, eyes snapping open in surprise as the roar of the crowd finally hit him as they screamed their support.

Suddenly filled with a rush of pride Yuuri continued his skate, dancing across the ice and feeling as light as air. He did it, he could do it. Every step in his step sequence was precise, every spin was tight and controlled. His next jump, a combo jump was perfect.

He was skating at his very best, doing everything right, driving the crowd wild just like Viktor had and it felt amazing.

Yuuri sped into another spin, watching as the lights and the crowd blurred all around him. In glimpses he could catch the black of the cameras focusing on him, the bright white of the lights. The splashes of colour from the crowds, black hair, brown, blonde, a brief flash of silver.

Exhaustion began to build up in his limbs as he drew the routine to a close but he refused to let it show until the final note of the melody had died away and he was left alone on the ice. Bending over he panted in exhaustion before turning his face back to the crowds that were cheering for him, cries echoing and bouncing all around the stadium.

Warmth bloomed in his chest and Yuuri couldn’t help the grin that spread across his face, the rush of adrenaline in his veins. The crowd cheered for him and Yuuri felt on top of the world.
After he finally made his way off the ice, Yuuri had been met by Tanaka and escorted over to the kiss and cry to await his scores. Yuuri was exhausted, he had put everything into his free skate and now all he wanted was to collapse and sleep for days, then eat and extra large bowl of Katsudon and fall asleep again. But first he had to wait for his scores and the time dragged out as the judges deliberated, deciding his fate.

When the scores finally came in however Yuuri blinked in shock. He read them, then had to read them over for a second, a third time. They were high. They were very high.

Tanaka clapped him on the back and the cameras zoomed in on his surprised face but it was all a blur to Yuuri. His heart felt like it was about to burst out of his chest and it wasn’t just because of the exhaustion anymore.

He had done it.

When at last all the skaters had finished their routines and the final scores calculated Yuuri was placed in fourth on the score table, only a fraction behind the skater who had won bronze. His disastrous short program had dragged his overall score down considerably but his performance in the free skate had boosted him up the rankings and he was proud of himself for that.

The failure in the short program still burned and whenever he thought about it he could still feel the sharp sting of humiliation but it was dulled down by the memory of the crowd cheering as he finished the free skate, of the small smiles on the judges faces as they gave him his score, a higher score than he had ever achieved before.

Standing with Tanaka he watched the three medallists ascend the podium and receive their medals with smiles and waves to the cheering crowds.

The Junior World Championships was the next competition of the season for him and Yuuri promised himself that next time, it would be him standing on that podium with a medal around his neck.
Three months later, after the conclusion of the Junior World Championships, Yuuri found himself staring out at the crowds from the lowest block of the podium, a gleaming Bronze medal clutched in his sweaty hands.

The metal felt warm in his palm and he clung onto it with all his might, terrified that it might suddenly disappear. He had worked so hard in the intervening months between the Prix and Worlds, trained harder than he had ever trained in his life. The competition itself had flown by in a blur of light and colour and cheering crowds and now he was finally, finally standing on the podium, his achievements acknowledged. It might not be first place but it was a start. He still had another season in the Juniors before he could qualify to move up into the senior division and Yuuri was determined to make every moment count.

This year he was happy with the Bronze but next year would be different. Next year, he would win gold.

After the medal ceremony Yuuri was making his way out of the building with Tanaka, dragging his suitcase along behind him when he heard the familiar sounds of a Russian voice floating across the din from behind him. Quickly he glanced over his shoulder and saw Viktor, standing to the side of the busy corridor and talking quietly with his coach, a gold medal slung casually around his neck.

The silver haired man made a sweeping gesture in the air, half turning as his did so and for a second his eye caught Yuuri’s. Blue locked on brown and Viktor paused in his sentence as Yuuri stared.

Viktor had no idea who he was. How could he? Yuuri may have been a skater but they were in separate divisions and it was unlikely the high and mighty Viktor Nikiforov took any notice of a junior bronze medallist. And before that, the only time they had ever met, Yuuri had been one fan in thousands, met and instantly forgotten.

Viktor opened his mouth slightly as if to speak again but Yuuri turned away before he could hear the words, disappearing into the crowds thronging the hallway. Viktor was probably looking at someone else after all. And Yuuri didn’t want to speak to Viktor. Not yet. Not until he was better, not until he was real competition.

Not until he had won gold.
I can’t believe Viktor won again! Two world championships in a row and he’s only 18 :D

I know right! Our boy grows up so fast <3

His quad flip in his free skate was so beautiful :o he really deserved the gold

Can someone tell me the music Viktor used in his free skate? It was so nice!

Viktor’s program was really strong this year, you can see how much he’s improved since his senior debut

I completely agree with you anon

Hey guys this is meant to a discussion about all the skaters in the World Championships! I know we all love Viktor but can everyone tone it down a little XD

But Viktor was the best by far! Muller screwed up the free skate, Hernandez fell on his last combo jump, Lee didn’t have a strong program this year at all and the other two were good but they just couldn’t compare when up against Nikiforov

Idk, I kinda liked Lee’s program

Are you kidding me? It didn’t fit him at all!
With Nikiforov out there no-one else stood a chance, it was boring to watch by the FS because everyone already knew who was going to win. At least in the juniors there was some good competition!

Yeah, they all did really well! I especially liked that little Japanese kid, he was really good for someone his age

Aw yeah, he was adorable <3 <3

I hope he’s back next year, he looks like he’s got a lot of promise as a skater!

And so Yuuri wins his first medal!

I really wanted to make him win gold straight away because I love him with all my heart but unfortunately the real world doesn't work like that and Yuuri is still a very young skater. Plus, just like in canon, in this fic he does struggle with anxiety before competitions which can be detrimental to his performance.

But he won bronze and now he's more determined than ever to step it up for next year.

Please drop me a comment and let me know what you thought! I really struggled with writing this chapter but I didn't want to keep people waiting for any longer. I hope you all enjoyed it!

Also next up, Yuuri's second Junior Grand Prix and (gasp) actual Viktor-Yuuri interaction. Finally!

See you next time

Rey xx

Music Used:

Yuuri's SP - Nocturne - Secret Garden
Yuuri's FS - River Flows In You - Yiruma
Viktor's SP - Waltz of Love - Eugen Doga
You Know We’re Gonna Be Legends

In the intervening months between his success in the Junior World Championships and the beginning of the next Junior Grand Prix, Yuuri was busier than ever. Tanaka had him practicing at the rink every free moment he had, laboriously going over jumps and spins and step sequences until Yuuri’s head spun and his whole body ached. During the rare moments he wasn’t at school or at the rink he was at Minako’s studio, practicing for hours into the night.

From the looks they gave him, Yuuri could tell his family was a little concerned about his all-consuming devotion to his training but to his relief they never pressed the issue. Rationally, he had always known that they had assumed skating was just a hobby for him, something to work hard at and be proud of but ultimately something he would eventually give up in pursuit of more academic and ‘realistic’ goals. But Yuuri knew in his heart that skating was his passion. Skating was what he wanted to do, all he ever wanted to do, for the rest of his life.

Perfection would only come with practice and so he practiced, pushing aside all other pursuits in favour of the rink. Eventually, he knew, his family would come to understand that this was the final path he had chosen, that after winning a medal he wasn’t simple going to step down and move on to something else. But for the moment he was content to have their support if not their understanding and his mother’s home cooked food at the end of the day was sometimes the only thing that could keep him motivated to finish the strenuous hours of practice.

He loved his family with all his heart and he could only hope that one day they would fully understand just how much skating meant to him.

The only person who seemed to really get it was Yuko. Without fail she still met him down at the ice rink almost every day, although now she worked there part time for extra income for her family. In her free time when she wasn’t working or watching Yuuri practice she was hanging out with Takeshi, one of the older skaters who’d used to tease Yuuri when he was younger.

Initially Yuuri had been a little hurt by the association when Yuko had first told him about the other boy during Yuuri’s stint away for the World Championships but to his surprise, once he had finally arrived back to Hasetsu, Takeshi had clapped him on the back and congratulated him on his medal, making Yuuri promise to show him a few of his moves sometime. It seemed that during the time Yuuri had spent away Takeshi had finally begun to grow up and Yuuri’s feelings for the older boy gradually changed from dislike into a grudging friendship.

Much of his free time was spent with Yuko, and Takeshi by proxy, either on the rink or off it. Yuko supported his decision to continue skating as a career wholeheartedly, even sneaking him a copy of the keys to Ice Castle so he could practice after hours. Of all his practice sessions, those were the most precious to him. The times when he could skating in silence during the peace of the night with no-one there to judge him when he failed.

Yuko had also been trying to help him master his quads, something Tanaka had decreed he didn’t need to win gold but grudgingly agreed to instruct him in anyway. The first quad he was learning was the quadruple toe loop but try as he might, Yuuri still couldn’t quite seem to get it. Despite being young and fit, the power and strength needed for the four rotations was still just slightly out of his grasp as his child’s body refused to mature and put on the height and muscle he knew it one day would. On the rare occasions he did achieve the required rotations he could never make the landing,
the effort needed exhausting him and causing his legs to buckle under him when he hit the ice.

Yuko was always there to encourage him, to urge him to get back up and try again. Studiously she looked him up various videos and articles online to try and help him improve his technique but so far nothing had worked. It frustrated Yuuri, ate away at him in the dead of night. At this point in his career Viktor had been able to perform a quad flip in competitions and Yuuri couldn’t even manage a quad toe loop. Tanaka tried to reassure him by pointing out that many junior gold medallists had won before without a single quad in any of their routines but it did little to placate his frustrations.

Sometimes during the night, when his exhaustion wore right down to his bones after a hard day of training, Yuuri would gaze up at the poster he still had pinned to his wall. Almost three years had passed since he had first been given it but the colours still remained as bright as ever, the looping Russian cursive of the signature untouched by the passage of time. Yuuri would look up at the poster and remember. And the next day he would get up and practice harder than ever.

Yuuri’s second Junior Grand Prix got off to a good start. He did well in the qualifying competitions, bolstered in the second by his family cheering him on from the stands. In a stoke of good luck the competition he had been assigned to was held in Japan which meant his family had been able to come and watch him live. Hearing their cheers from the stands had boosted his confidence immensely and Vicchan’s enthusiastic good luck cuddling had sent him out onto the ice with a wide grin on his face.

Having his family and his dog there watching him succeed filled him with a warm contentment and his mother’s arms around his neck and Vicchan’s sloppy wet tongue on his face was a better feeling than even the heavy weight of the medal around his neck.

Just like the previous year, Yuuri passed the qualifying competitions and moved on to the final. Briefly he spent a short period of time back in Hasetsu, the lull in the competitions luckily coinciding with his fifteenth birthday. For the occasion his parents planned a surprise party, just a small gathering with themselves, Mari, Minako and Takeshi and a few assorted family friends. His mother made her famous Katsudon which Yuuri practically inhaled, for once not caring about how unhealthy the food was or how he had to watch what he ate before a big competition. It was his birthday, he was surrounded by people who loved him and he didn’t need to worry tonight.

After the party had finally quietened down and Yuuri had returned to his room for the night, Vicchan sleeping peacefully beside him, Yuuri found he couldn’t sleep. Pressure for the final was great and even though he had managed to ignore it for the day, in the quiet of the night-time it all came rushing back. At last year’s event he hadn’t even placed which meant this time he had to or his dreams of continuing skating professionally in the senior division might fall through before they had even begun.

In the dark of the night, the faint moonlight lit a pale streak that danced across the room and illuminated the icy eyes that stared down at him from high up on his walls, the same eyes that looked
at him every night when he slept here and the same eyes that sometimes floated, phantom-like, through his dreams. At the time, the Viktor on the poster had seemed so old and mature to Yuuri’s childlike gaze but now he looked very young, his face still soft and round despite the cold piercing look of his gaze and his body still slim shouldered and supple.

Viktor nowadays looked very different. At eighteen, nineteen that December Yuuri reminded himself, Viktor’s body had matured fully, with his face losing all traces of its childhood innocence. His chest and shoulders had filled out considerably and he had shot up in height, not awkward and gangly in the way of most teenage boys but gracefully. None of his movements had been hindered by the changes in his body as far as Yuuri could tell but his skating style was subtly different to compensate.

Most strikingly, after the World Championships earlier that year, Viktor had cut off the long hair that had been his trademark for so long. In sharp contrast the silver locks now were shaved close to the nape of his neck, a few stray strands brushing across his eye when he moved. Gossip articles had speculated many times over the reason for the change but most seemed to agree that the new look suited the young skater. Yuuri couldn’t argue with them although privately he did miss the long hair - although he would never admit that fact out loud.

Viktor was older now and so was Yuuri. The boy in the poster that still stared down at him was fifteen, the same age Yuuri was now. Viktor had made history just before his sixteenth birthday in the Junior Grand Prix Final where he broke the world record for the highest combined Junior score in history and now it was Yuuri’s turn.

He didn’t know whether that elated or terrified him. All he knew was that if he wanted to face Viktor as a fellow competitor someday he had to succeed in the current season. Otherwise it would all have been for nothing.

In the Grand Prix Final, Yuuri did much better than the previous year. Tanaka cheered him on furiously during his short program where he skated with a dogged determination, refusing to fall prey to the nerves that had caught him out before. He finished with a considerably higher score which placed him near the top of the leader board much to both of their delight.

In his free program the next day the nerves returned. Being high on the leader board in the Final added on a pressure he wasn’t used to to perform again well and while Yuuri refused to allow himself to be overcome with the fear that had ruined him the year previously the nerves were still very present.

During the skating he performed well, his moves tight and precise but each of the skaters before him had all performed at least one quad in their program and Yuuri was filled with the fear that his own technical score wouldn’t be high enough to compare. Presentation was always where he gained the majority of his marks but most skaters focused on their technical scores, packing their routines full of as many advanced jumps as they could manage.
As he prepared for a triple toe loop Yuuri changed his mind at the last moment, determined to go for a quad. Digging his toe pick into the ice he threw himself into the air but even before he landed he knew it wasn’t enough. He had just barely managed to fit in the required rotations but his technique wasn’t good enough to land the jump properly and he fumbled as soon as his foot touched the ice, hitting the cold surface with his knees before springing back up to continue the routine, desperate not to lose time with the music.

The mistake wasn’t a fatal one. Technically he had fit in the required rotations for the jump to count as a quad but the botched landing lost him marks he couldn’t afford to lose and dragged his overall score down. His free skate and short program were stronger this year than last and Yuuri still placed comfortably in third place, not running far behind the silver medallist.

It wasn’t good enough.

Bronze might have been acceptable last year but Yuuri was furious with himself as the ceremony drew to a close. Viktor had stood where he had now three years ago with a gold medal around his neck and a world record under his belt. A bronze medal just couldn’t compare.

Tanaka tried to console Yuuri after the ceremony was over but Yuuri brushed him off, still angry with himself. If he hadn’t tried that stupid quad toe loop it wouldn’t have thrown his whole performance off and he might have been standing at the top of the podium a few minutes before.

He vowed not to make the same mistake again.

Three months, one short program and countless hours of exhausting training later, Yuuri stood on the ice at the World Championships in preparation for his free skate, heart racing so fast it drowned out even the thunderous noise of the crowds.

Thankfully, his short program had gone well the day before, placing him in second place on the leader board. Unlike in the Grand Prix, this time Yuuri had focused all of his effort into his presentation rather than his technical score. High difficulty jumps would score him points but failed ones would lose him much more than he would gain. His true talent lay in the emotion of his skating, his interpretation of the music, the beauty of the movements – not their difficulty. Over the past three months he had worked with Tanaka to create a program that would maximise that.

The theme he had chosen for the World Championships was Victory, a bold move and something which the announcers hadn’t failed to comment on. Yuuri knew himself that it was a dangerous gamble. If he lost now it would be more than humiliating and it could break his career. But he needed this. He needed to believe he could do it and this program was the way to achieve that.

The music he was skating to was chosen especially to fit into the story he wanted to tell. It started off slow and simple, a few rich piano chords that sounded slightly dark and melancholy. Yuuri skated the first few moves with the same slow deliberate movements to match. This was the part of the program that represented when his desire to win was just that, a desire, an impossible dream.
Slowly the music began to build, gradually getting faster and louder and Yuuri skated with it, movements speeding up, passion filling every step. This was the point in the story that he had begun competing, where he could start to make his desires a reality. Where he was just now, standing on the ice on the cusp of victory with it so close but still just slightly out of his grasp. But not for long.

In a burst of sound the music reached it crescendo just as Yuuri landed his combination jump flawlessly to thunderous applause from the audience. In his mind’s eye he could see the scene before him, the story he was weaving with the music and his body. This was the part of the tale he had not yet reached, the part that was still to come.

The music soared in triumphant fanfare and Yuuri soared with it. Here was where he would be, where the story would one day take him. This was the moment he would beat Viktor. The picture was so clear he could see it in front of him, superimposed over the expectant faces of the audience. Himself, standing on the podium with a gold medal strung triumphantly around his neck. Viktor with a shocked look on his face, staring from far below him. Victory in its finest.

That was the story he was telling with his program. That was the story that he would make a reality.

The triumphant notes of the music ended abruptly and the frantic vigour Yuuri had been skating with ended with them as the crescendo transformed back into the same haunting piano chords that had begun the music. Here was where the brilliant vision of the future transformed back into the present. To himself as he was now, not a winner yet but determined to become one, victory on his mind and in his heart. It was the story of his skating, his desires, his ambitions all rolled into one and he had skated the program with more passion that he had ever skated before.

As the last few notes died away he finally came to rest, positioned in the centre of the rink with sweat pouring down his face and plastering his hair to his scalp. Sound suddenly hit his ears full blast as he was shaken out of his own mind, the audience’s screaming and cheering hitting him like a tidal wave. The force of it nearly knocked him to his knees and he looked up, bewildered. Everyone was on their feet, all eyes were fixed on him. The announcer was yelling over the speakers, calling it the performance of a lifetime.

Yuuri could barely take it all in. He had locked himself into his own head for the performance, focusing on nothing but the story he wanted to tell. The sudden jerk back to reality was a shock and he could barely comprehend the praise that was being flung his way.

He left the rink a little shakily and Tanaka was there to greet him. He clapped Yuuri on the back and Yuuri was stunned to see the normally stern man was full out grinning at his student.

“Well done Yuuri.” Tanaka yelled over the noise of the crowd. “I don’t know what you were thinking about out there but whatever it was, it just won you a gold medal.”

It wasn’t until the official scores were announced and the final skater had skated his piece that Tanaka’s statement could be confirmed but when the time came there was no dispute.
Yuuri had won gold.

Stepping up onto the podium felt like a waking dream. Cold metal was draped around his neck, heavy and solid and real and Yuuri couldn’t help the awed expression on his face when he touched it, the gleaming gold winking in the light of thousands of cameras.

Despite all his hopes, all his dreams, he could barely believe he had actually done it. He had finally won a gold medal. He was the Junior World Champion and it felt like his heart was going to burst from happiness.

After the ceremony was over and Yuuri and Tanaka were waiting in the area reserved exclusively for skaters and people with VIP passes, something seemed to catch Tanaka’s eye. With an uncharacteristic smile the man waved over two distant figures who were crossing the other side of the room. Without his glasses on Yuuri could barely make out their features but he could see the blurry outlines of a tall, well built man with long greying brown hair tied back in a long tail behind his head. Beside him was a small boy with dark skin and dark hair, bounding along excitedly in the wake of the older man.

“Celestino.” Tanaka called out as the two made their way over. “I didn’t think I’d be seeing you here.”

“Hiroki!” The man, Celestino, replied sounding pleased. “I had heard someone had finally dragged you out of retirement and after that performance I can see why you agreed.” He gave Yuuri a smile and a nod and Yuuri ducked his head, embarrassed under the praise.

“This is Celestino Cialdini, an old associate of mine from my professional coaching days.” Tanaka told Yuuri who gave the older man a short bow of greeting but refrained from speaking. His English had vastly improved, with Tanaka insisting he had to become fluent if he ever wanted to skate professionally in the senior division, but he still hadn’t had a huge amount of practice speaking it with non-Japanese people and he didn’t want to embarrass himself in front of one of his coach’s old friends.

“And this is my newest skater Phichit Chulanont.” Celestino added, motioning to the boy beside him who gave Yuuri a cheerful wave. “He’ll be making his debut as a Junior next season so he’s coming to Detroit to my skating club to train with me this year.”

“You were amazing out there!” The dark-haired boy – Phichit - told Yuuri with an excited grin. “I can’t wait to see you skate in the senior division.”

Blushing slightly under the enthusiastic and completely sincere praise Yuuri stuttered out an awkward “Thank you” and hesitantly returned the smile the other boy had given him.

“You should come and join me in Detroit Yuuri!” Phichit exclaimed, looking up expectantly at Celestino who smiled indulgently back at him. “We could train together.”
“Now now Phichit, Yuuri has his own coach.” Celestino chastened lightly, although his tone was playful.

“Although,” He turned back to Yuuri, face contemplative. “If you were ever to consider it, I would be happy to take you on. I run a skating club in Detroit to train skaters for both the Junior and Senior divisions. We have a good education program and close ties to the local university so you have the option to complete a degree with a full scholarship if you continue skating in championships for the club. Usually you would have to go through an interview process and several skating trials but, well, clearly you’ve already proven you’re exactly the kind of person we need.”

“Come Yuuri!” Phichit pleaded, before whipping out a phone and snapping a quick picture of them together. Yuuri was almost positive his face was frozen in a rather shocked expression but it didn’t deter the younger boy. He waved at Yuuri enthusiastically as he and Celestino walked away, leaving Yuuri alone with Tanaka again.

Yuuri turned to Tanaka with a worried expression, opening his mouth to insist he wasn’t considering abandoning his coach as soon as a better offer came along but Tanaka waved him down, his expression unusually serious.

“Don’t dismiss the offer so easily Yuuri.” Tanaka chastened him and Yuuri snapped his mouth shut with a sharp click, eyes widening at the unexpected words. “I’m an old man. I retired to Hasetsu for a quiet life, to teach a few children to skate and live by the sea. Of course when I met you I could hardly turn down your requests for more advanced coaching and I’m very proud of how far you’ve come but I can’t remain your coach forever. Now that you’ve won a world title there will be many better coaches than me more than happy to take you on. Celestino has my personal recommendation.”

Yuuri opened his mouth to protest, to exclaim that Tanaka was a great coach and he couldn’t imagine training with anyone else but Tanaka waved him down again before he could speak.

“Just think about it Yuuri.” He said, his tone soft and placating. “I’ve taught you everything I can and if you truly are serious about making your senior debut in the Grand Prix final next season you will need a younger coach with more experience coaching medallists than me. Celestino’s offer is good. You can’t stay is Hasetsu forever if you want to be a champion. Just think about it ok?”

Yuuri opened his mouth for a third time to speak but closed it again before any words came out, not quite sure what to say. Tanaka had been teaching him at Ice Castle since he was young, had agreed to come out of retirement for a few years to coach when Yuuri had begun to skate internationally. But he was right. The senior division was a whole new level of skating and Yuuri would have to make sacrifices if he wanted to join that world for good.

But he loved his family. He loved Hasetsu in all its sleepy small town glory. He wasn’t sure if he’d be able to leave all that behind to go and train in a strange foreign country where everything would be different and everyone he had come to rely on would be worlds away.

He didn’t know what to do.
Hours later Yuuri found himself hidden in an out of the way bathroom just off one of the main corridors in the stadium, seated on the closed lid of one of the toilets and trying desperately to decide what to do. For the last few hours he had been running the options in his head over and over again but the choice seemed just as impossible as it had when it had first been presented to him.

Was he really ready to give up everything he knew just for a better chance at gold?

Sighing in frustration Yuuri stood up and pushed open the door to the cubicle, resolving to think about the problem on another day when his head was clearer and he could debate the options with an unbiased mind. So caught up in his own thoughts, he barely registered the soft swish of the opening door and proceeded to walk right into the man who had just entered from the other side.

Stumbling back from the body he had just walked into Yuuri frantically adjusted his glasses back onto his nose where they had been knocked crooked and stammered out a panicked, “I’m sorry, I didn’t see…”

Gradually the words trailed off as Yuuri raised his eyes from the broad chest his eyes were level with, covered by a white skating jacket emblazoned with the letters RU in blazing red, to the silver hair shining softly in the dull light of the bathroom and the handsome features beneath it.

Viktor Nikiforov was standing in front of him, looking faintly shocked at the sudden appearance of a small Japanese boy who had just walked straight into him and proceeded to make a fool out of himself with his stuttering apologies. The Russian’s cheeks were a little flushed and there was a slight hitch to his breath as though he had been running just moments previously. If Yuuri had to guess he would assume Viktor had been running from the paparazzi that were still swarming the halls of the stadium. Since his senior debut, Viktor’s popularity had only grown and press and fans alike were clamouring to get a glimpse of the teenager at every event he attended.

Regardless of why he was there, the unfortunate truth of the circumstances was Yuuri was now trapped in a bathroom with Viktor Nikiforov blocking the only exit. Ever since their fateful first meeting Yuuri had been rehearsing in his mind exactly what he was going to say to Viktor when they finally met again. How he would gloat about his triumph over the other boy, how he would remind the other skater of how he dismissed Yuuri when they met and ask him how it felt to be so wrong, to be bested by the little piggy he told that he couldn’t skate.

Unfortunately, all his wild fantasy meetings had relied on one rather crucial fact and that fact was he had only intended to approach Viktor in person once he had beaten Viktor to a gold medal. Running into him early was the worst thing that could possibly happen to Yuuri.

He had won a gold medal yes but it was only in the Junior division. Viktor himself had done that and much, much more. The Russian skater probably barely even knew who he was and none of the fantastical scenarios he had been dreaming up for the past three years even remotely applied to the situation at hand. He didn’t know what to say or what to do. After resenting Viktor for so many years Yuuri had though he would have a lot to say but when confronted by the man in person the moment dragged out longer and longer into an unbearably awkward silence and Yuuri continued to fail to complete his sentence, the words of anger directed at the other boy sticking in his throat.

After a few seconds when it finally became clear that Yuuri was unlikely to speak again Viktor laughed a little awkwardly and took a step back, eyes fixed intently on Yuuri’s face.

“You’re the junior gold medallist aren’t you? Yuuri Katsuki?” He asked, accent heavy on his tongue.
Yuuri blinked a little, surprise colouring his features. Viktor knew his name? That was unexpected to say the least.

Although in a way it made sense, Yuuri was a gold medallist after all no matter what division that medal came from and more importantly, he had made it public he planned to make his senior debut in the Grand Prix series next season. It made sense that Viktor would have scoped out potential competitors, no matter how new they may be. He had titles to defend after all.

Hesitantly Yuuri nodded, still reluctant to speak and unsure what he would say if he did regardless.

After waiting a few seconds and gauging that that would be the extent of Yuuri’s response, Viktor ran his fingers through his hair in what Yuuri could almost believe was a nervous gesture, looking away briefly before turning back with a smile on his face.

“I saw your free skate today. It was a good performance and your choice of theme was very bold. You won without quads as well which was impressive since most skaters in your age bracket can already perform them in competition.”

Yuuri bristled at the dig at his quads, the loss from the Grand Prix still burning like a brand of shame at the forefront of his mind. Of course Viktor would pick that particular failure to taunt him with. Perfect Viktor Nikiforov had been performing quads in competition for years, well before he was Yuuri’s age. His inability to perform quads was just another fault, another thing for Viktor to pick at to prove he would never see Yuuri as a fellow competitor, as a proper skater.

“I saw your performance at the last Grand Prix,” Viktor continued, seemingly oblivious to Yuuri’s inner anger that was boiling away just below the surface. “Your balance was off on the landing to your quad toe loop, it’s why you fell. You need to work on finding your centre during jumps if you’re going to compete in the senior division.”

Yuuri seethed internally, all his years of anger at Viktor suddenly rushing back in an overwhelming wave of resentment. Of course Viktor only wanted to criticise him when they finally did meet again. Leopards couldn’t change their spots and Viktor Nikiforov certainly could never stop being an arrogant, condescending arse, no matter how many years had passed between their meetings. He would never see Yuuri as a good ice skater, as a fellow competitor, as a real challenge for the gold. He was still just a stupid fat kid who couldn’t skate and needed advice from the great Viktor Nikiforov if he ever wanted to so much as step onto an ice rink.

‘Well screw him’, Yuuri though with rage still bitter at the back of his throat as he choked back the words he wanted to yell at the other boy, Japanese curses that he couldn’t adequately translate into English to convey the true depth of his feeling. ‘He may not see me as a competitor now but one day he will. On day he’ll regret not taking me seriously. One day I’m going to beat him in front of the whole world when it matters most and when he looks at me standing above him on the podium I’m going to remind him of everything he’s said to me and he’s going to see exactly how wrong he was.’

With a glare directed at the older boy Yuuri pushed past him roughly and barged out of the bathroom, slamming the door behind him as loudly as he could and missing the bewildered expression that crossed the other skater’s face as he left. If he had been able to he would have stayed and told Viktor exactly what he could do with his stupid patronising advice but angry tears had already begun to build up in the corners of his eyes and if one thing was certain it was that Yuuri would never allow Viktor to see him cry. Not ever.

He was going to beat Viktor someday. He was going to do it no matter the cost. Yuuri promised himself that.
A few days later, Yuuri and Tanaka flew back to Hasetsu where Yuuri sat down with his family and had a long discussion that lasted well into the night. His mother had teared up when he had brought up the subject but in the end they had all agreed it was what was best for him. Arrangements had been made swiftly following the decision and less than a month after he returned to Japan Yuuri found himself saying tearful goodbyes to his family, to Vicchan, to Yuko and Takeshi and Minako and Tanaka.

Less than a month after returning to Japan, Yuuri stepped onto a plane to Detroit and tried desperately not to look back.

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**Rising Japanese Star Skater Katsuki Yuuri to Make Senior Debut in Upcoming Grand Prix Series**

By Lauren Munro

Japanese figure skater Yuuri Katsuki, or Katsuki Yuuri as he is known in his home country of Japan, wowed the skating world last Junior World Championships with a truly spectacular performance which has had skating fans taking interest from all around the globe. The fifteen year old performed a personal best during a beautiful free skate that had the audience watching with their hearts in their throats and won him a gold medal and the title of Junior World Champion. Some in the figure skating community have already begun to compare Katsuki to Russian skater Viktor Nikiforov who still holds the title as the most successful Junior skater in history. While Katsuki may not quite live up to Nikiforov’s impressive legacy, his own achievements in the figure skating world to date are not to be easily dismissed.

Katsuki began his career in local competitions in Japan, working his way up to competing at National level where he began to gain public interest with his passionate skating and emotive footwork. Once he had passed the age restriction set on international junior skating he made his junior debut at the Junior Grand Prix last season where he defied expectations and made it into the final although unfortunately not making it onto the podium. From there he proceeded to win a bronze at the Junior World Championships which is where he began to garner international interest.

Following his success in the Junior World Championships Katsuki went on to win a bronze medal in the most recent Junior Grand Prix before proceeding to step up his game for the Junior World Championships where he won his first gold medal. His performance in the Free Skate was
particularly notable, his bold choice of theme, enrapturing music and flawless skating adding up to create a performance not easily forgotten.

Katsuki, who is notorious for losing marks on his technical score due to mistakes in his jumps but reclaiming the marks lost with his masterful presentation scores, created his winning free skate program around perfect presentation rather than opting for trying to gain technical marks with high difficulty jumps like most skaters his age. An impressive feat and something that has been lauded as a return to the true artistry of figure skating. It does beg the question however of whether Katsuki, who has yet to land a quad in competition, will be able to compete with the older and more experienced skaters technically when he moves into the Senior division next season.

Katsuki was born in a small coastal town of Japan named Hasetsu where his family run one of the last operating hot springs. He trained at the local ice rink and was formally coached by a retired local instructor for his two years in the Junior division. After attaining the title of World Champion in the latest season he signed on with coach Celestino Cialdini and moved to a training facility in Detroit to train for his upcoming senior debut.

While the critics are still dubious as to whether Katsuki will be able to maintain his winning streak in the highly competitive arena of senior figure skating next season, it is clear he is a rising star with a bright future ahead of him. He is undoubtedly a skater to keep an eye on and it is obvious to everyone who sees him perform that he will go far in the skating world.

Those of us at the paper would simple wish him good luck and know that we will be watching his senior debut with great interest. Katsuki is the first Junior skater since Nikiforov joined the Senior division to cause quite such a stir and having the two skate in the same division will undoubtedly make for an interesting upcoming season.

Chapter End Notes

Viktor, Viktor my poor sweet child why are you so bad with people? Especially angsty fifteen year olds who already hate your guts! You try so hard and yet somehow still get it entirely wrong!

Ah communication issues at their finest.

I hope you all enjoyed the latest chapter! I have to say, it was incredibly satisfying to write Yuuri winning gold even if it wasn’t the gold he is ultimately aiming for. And I finally got to introduce Phichit! I know in canon Yuuri doesn’t move to Detroit until he’s eighteen but in this AU his determination to beat Viktor pushes him to making sacrifices for his career much earlier. I also have no idea when in canon Phichit was supposed to start training in Detroit but I love him with all my heart and needed him in my fic asap so I decided to have him training with Celestino since his Junior days.

And so finally, Viktor and Yuuri have had their second interaction which definitely did not go the way either of them suspected or intended. But they will meet again, this time as rival skaters in the same division. Stay tuned folks!

As always, thank you to everyone who commented, kudosed and subscribed. It really inspires me to keep updating quickly and I love reading all the wonderful things people write!
See you soon

Rey xx

P.S Come chat to me on tumblr, where I am constantly crying about YOI. My askbox is always open!

Music Used:

Yuuri's FS - Hell Hath No Such Fury - David Chappell
Detroit was nothing like Yuuri had expected.

Despite having travelled far and wide during his time in competitions, Yuuri’s experience of foreign countries was mainly limited to hotel rooms and ice rinks and in all the time he had been competing he had never once been to America. When he had first arrived it had been a shock. Everything was so bright and loud and utterly alien to him. It was terrifying.

Gradually however, he had begun to settle down. Phichit, the younger boy he had met at the World Championships with Celestino, had helped him immensely. He was unfailingly bright and cheerful and they clicked instantly as friends.

There were several foreign skaters training under Celestino but Phichit was the one that reminded Yuuri most of home and he had the feeling Phichit thought the same as him. Together they navigated the bewildering world that was America, helping each other through the new and strange cultural norms and laughing and joking together when one of them did something particularly embarrassing, which happened more than Yuuri would ever admit. Phichit adapted much more easily to the strange American lifestyle than Yuuri and he was always there to drag Yuuri out from being a recluse to really experience the world. With Phichit, Yuuri found himself having more fun than he had had in a long time.

It didn’t take long for them to become inseparable and it became a running joke among the other skaters that if you wanted to find Yuuri, all you needed to do was find Phichit and vice versa. After the first few weeks Celestino allowed them to change their room assignments so they became roommates, which only strengthened their friendship.

On Yuuri’s bad nights, when he was missing home desperately and he wanted nothing more than to curl up under his covers and cry, Phichit would come and sit on the bed with him. Sometimes chatting innately about the day or teaching Yuui Thai to keep his mind off his sadness or, when that failed, being the comforting presence Yuuri needed to cry on. The relationship went both ways too, with Phichit having the occasional bouts of desperate homesickness for the life he left behind in Bangkok and Yuuri returning the favour. They relied on each other and supported each other and Yuuri was very glad that Phichit had become his friend.

Despite how much he missed Hasetsu and Japan, Yuuri found that he did enjoy living in Detroit. The place itself might be strange but he had made a fast friend in Phichit who was excellent at turning the fear Yuuri had about living in a new country into a sense of adventure. The training was good too, although even tougher than what Yuuri had been going through in Hasetsu if that were even possible. Celestino had pushed him harder than he had ever been pushed before but he was grateful for it. He needed it to be that way if he ever wanted to win.

In another pleasant turn of events, despite planning to skate in different divisions, Celestino allowed Yuuri and Phichit to train together more often than not. It was a blessing. Yuuri was used to training alone and unobserved and without Phichit there his nerves would have gotten the better of him many times over. He hated being watched while he trained, especially by the other skaters who trained at the club.

It wasn’t that he didn’t like the other skaters but he had never been a particularly outgoing person.
Making friends didn’t come easily to him and he didn’t quite know how to approach them.

It didn’t help that many of them seemed to be – strangely - slightly in awe of him. Although Yuuri couldn’t understand why anyone would be in awe of him of all people, Phichit had pointed out that he did have a bit of a reputation. He was the Junior World Champion, with three medals under his belt already at only fifteen. Although the training sessions were closed to the public, any skater in the club could come and watch at any time and Yuuri found that his sessions always seemed to be much busier than usual. It was disquieting. He wasn’t used to having so much attention focused on him when he wasn’t on the competing and he missed the quiet night-time skating practice he had taken for granted back in Hasetsu.

In particular, the sessions he loathed people watching the most were the ones where he tried to learn to jump quads. Already he struggled with the difficult jumps and the added pressure of an audience only made it worse. Under Celestino’s expert eye his technique improved enough that he began to land his quad toe loop much more often in practice but the expectant eyes constantly following him always threw him off. Inconsistency was his main trait in his jumps. Some days he could land the difficult quad and others he would fail to land a single attempt and leave the ice dejected. Something just seemed to be missing in his jumps and nothing he did seemed to rectify it. Celestino insisted that he just needed more confidence in his ability but if that was the case, Yuuri didn’t see much hope for himself. The last time he had tried to land a quad in competition he had failed in front of the whole world and confidence in his jumps was in pretty limited supply.

In one particular practice session, Phichit watching from the sidelines where he had been relegated after Celestino had caught him trying to practice quads with Yuuri one too many times, Yuuri just couldn’t seem to get it right. It was endlessly frustrating. He could do it, he knew he could, but the jump just wouldn’t seem to come. That day he had flubbed the landing so many times that his hands were scraped red raw from hitting the ice and he could feel tears of frustration beginning to build up in his eyes. If he was this inconsistent with landing the jump in practice how could he ever expect to land one in competition?

After another failed attempt Celestino sighed and called him over to the side of the rink, handing him a bottle of water and a towel to wipe off the beads of sweat that were gathering on his forehead.

“I think we should call it a day Yuuri.” He told the skater, patting Yuuri comfortably on the shoulder. “You can do the jump, we’ve all seen it. It’s just about confidence now. Let’s take a break and you can try again tomorrow when you’re less tired and your head is in the right place.”

Yuuri shook his head furiously, finishing off gulping down the water and scattering droplets across the ice all around him.

“I want to keep going.” He demanded, although he averted his eyes from Celestino’s piercing gaze, not wanting to make eye contact. He didn’t like disagreeing with his coach and usually he would avoid it but the frustrations of the day were filling him up fit to burst and he was determined to make the jump. Exhaustion ate at his bones but he would practice until he could no longer stand if that was what it took.

“I can do it Celestino. You know I can. Just one more time. Please?”

“Alright.” Celestino sighed. “But only once more. You’re exhausted and I won’t have you hurting yourself through your own stubbornness, do you hear me Yuuri?”

Yuuri nodded and gave Celestino a small smile of gratitude before skating back out onto the rink. Phichit cheered him from the side-lines, phone already out with the camera fixed on Yuuri. With a fond exasperation Yuuri knew that if he hadn’t already banned Phichit from posting any of his
training online the video would be splashed all over Phichit’s social media in a matter of minutes. The younger boy had groaned when Yuuri had forbade him from releasing any of the footage he took but eventually agreed, proclaiming that he would continue videoing Yuuri for ‘training purposes only.’

Yuuri was still convinced that he was keeping all the videos saved so that one day he could post them all when Yuuri finally caved and allowed him. Either that or he was collecting all the ones of Yuuri’s rather spectacular failures to edit into one long humiliating video he could use to embarrass Yuuri when required. Knowing Phichit, Yuuri thought fondly, it was probably both.

Carefully, he skated a few slow loops around the rink, stretching out his muscles to prepare for the jump. Phichit whooped from the sidelines and he gave his friend a quick grin as he sped past, picking up momentum with each passing second. From somewhere deep inside his own mind a soft Russian voice floated out, reminding him that he was the only skater who couldn’t do a quad, that he would never compare if he couldn’t even make this on simple jump.

At the height of his speed he went in for take off, more determined than ever. Just before he left the ice the voice came again. Not criticising him with whispered malice in his ears like he had grown accustomed to but the faint echo of a memory, a soft whisper of ‘watch your centre’ flitting softly through his mind. It was unexpected and Yuuri had to push down the deep flash of anger that always accompanied that voice. But now that the thought was there he found himself focusing on the advice despite his anger, concentrating on find his centre as he jumped, keeping his balance throughout the four rotations and into the landing.

Cheers echoed across from the other side of the rink from Phichit and Yuuri could distantly hear the sound of Celestino clapping but all Yuuri could focus on was the elation he felt, coursing through his own body and elevating his already racing heart. He had done it. He had landed the jump and he had done it perfectly, better than he ever had before.

He decided not to dwell on the reason why.

Later that day, Yuuri and Phichit were sitting in their shared room, sprawled out on Phichit’s bed with a laptop between them. It was a familiar scene and one Yuuri often took comfort in. Phichit had insisted on watching ‘The King and the Skater’ in honour of Yuuri landing his quad that day and Yuuri hadn’t protested. Despite not having the same adoration for the film that Phichit did he enjoyed it all the same and it was the familiar routine for both of them that he loved.

Halfway through the film Phichit turned to him, Arthur the hamster squeaking in protest and he was dislodged from the younger boy’s shoulder. Fortunately, Phichit caught the little creature before he could fall too far, cradling him in his cupped hands and returning him gently to join his two friends that were scrambling across the fabric of his shirt.

When Yuuri had first become roommates with him, Phichit had worried aloud that Yuuri wouldn’t like his beloved hamsters, Arthur and Mongkut named for the characters in the film that was
currently flickering across the laptop screen. After Yuuri had assured him that he did indeed love hamsters, or anything fluffy and cuddly really, Phichit had insisted on buying another on Yuuri’s behalf, knowing that Yuuri was missing his own pet desperately.

Hesitantly, Phichit had asked him if he would like to name the new hamster Vicchan as a reminder of his absent dog but Yuuri had refused. If would feel too much like replacing his beloved friend. When questioned further about things he liked as Phichit searched for an appropriate name for the newest addition to their little family, Yuuri had unthinkingly blurted out ‘Katsudon’, before blushing scarlet in embarrassment. To his great surprise Phichit had loved the name, although he teased Yuuri constantly for the meaning behind it, and now Arthur, Mongkut and Katsudon lived happily in a grand cage in the corner of their room, let out to roam constantly by their loving owner.

After the safety of Arthur had been assured, Phichit turned back to him, expression unusually serious.

“When do you think Ciao Ciao is going to let me start learning quads?” He asked, using the affectionate nickname he had bestowed on their coach the month before.

Yuuri shrugged, unsure of the answer. Celestino had banned all the junior skaters from practicing quads, claiming that it was detrimental to their still-developing bodies. As a senior, Yuuri was given free reign over the jumps but he knew that Phichit was desperate to join him.

“I wouldn’t worry about it Phichit.” He replied instead, giving his friend a small smile. “Quads are overrated anyway.”

Internally he winced, thinking of the bruises blossoming all over his body, the red rawness of his palms and the aching blisters that were already forming on his feet. He loved skating with all his heart but failing jumps was always a painful experience, both mentally and physically and quads were hard on anyone who attempted them.

Phichit sighed, flopping back on the bed dramatically.

“Viktor Nikiforov was doing quads the moment he was allowed to compete in the Juniors. I don’t see why I can’t!” Phichit moaned theatrically.

“Yeah, but his coach used to yell at him all the time for that too.” Yuuri joked, before realising what he had just said and snapping his jaw shut, averting his gaze quickly. Phichit sat up, eyes narrowed. Nothing got past him, especially not a slip like that.

“You know, for someone who claims to hate Viktor Nikiforov you sure do seem to know a lot about him.” He prodded, tone suspicious.

Yuuri had never told Phichit the whole story about what had passed between Viktor and himself, although the ever observant Phichit had clocked onto his dislike of the other skater very early on in their friendship.

Yuuri shrugged and looked away but Phichit wasn’t satisfied, sitting up fully and directing the full force of his gaze at his friend.

“Come on Yuuri. We’re friends! You can tell me anything. ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■■■■■■?”

Phichit was right. They were friends, best friends and it was about time Yuuri told him. Phichit would find out eventually anyway, it was such an integral part of Yuuri’s life and it wasn’t like he was really trying to hide it. The only thing that had held him back was the fact that - old as the memory was - it still burned, still made him feel angry and embarrassed and a whole myriad of
emotions that twisted viciously inside of him. Yuuri had never told anyone but Yuko the full story before now but with Phichit watching him with big expectant eyes he realised there was no way he could refuse.

Hesitantly, Yuuri began to outline what had taken place, speaking in fits and starts as he tried to explain properly, to make Phichit understand. All the time he was talking Phichit watched him with a serious expression on his face, never once looking away. When Yuuri was finally done they sat in silence for a few seconds, before Phichit grabbed him by the shoulders and pulled him in for a crushing hug.

Startled, it took Yuuri a few seconds to respond but eventually he did, wrapping his arms around the other boy and burying his face into his shoulder. Telling the story in its entirety felt like a weight finally lifting from off his chest and he should have known he could rely on Phichit from the beginning to know exactly what to do.

“That’s horrible Yuuri.” Phichit exclaimed, still wrapping Yuuri in a comforting hug. “No wonder you want to kick his ass!”

Yuuri grinned a little at that. Phichit had always been better at adapting to strange English phrases than he had and the other boy loved to use the colloquialisms whenever he got the chance.

“I’ll do it one day.” Yuuri vowed as Phichit finally pulled away. “I’ll beat him. I will.”

“Of course you will!” Phichit encouraged, his faith in Yuuri warming his heart and making him feel confident in his abilities in a way he never had before. “You’re Yuuri Katsuki after all.”

Despite all the reassurance from his friend, during his Senior debut in the Grand Prix series Yuuri was more terrified than he had ever been before. Celestino was there to help him through it but he didn’t seem to be quite sure how to deal with the nerves that struck Yuuri just before a competition. Phichit always did but he was away, winning over hearts in his Junior debut.

Through sheer force of will alone Yuuri made his way into the final, just scraping by, a single point above the next skater in line. It was a very close call and one that had his heart racing. Not making it into the final would have been disastrous and he never would have forgiven himself.

Approaching the Final, Yuuri’s mental state began to deteriorate again. He hadn’t felt this bad since his breakdown at his first ever Junior Grand Prix Final but now those same feelings were rearing their ugly heads again.

In the junior division he had grown to thrive and flourish but in the seniors everything was different. Yuuri was up against experienced skaters, some up to ten years older than he was and it was terrifying. They were mature and world-wise in a way he knew he wasn’t and their skating reflected that. They were all beautiful and precise and all of them could land quads he could only dream of. For the first time since he had begun professional skating, Yuuri felt completely out of his depth.
During his short program he was determined not to let the feelings get the better of him. He refused to have another disaster like his first Junior Grand Prix. He was better than that. He could do it.

Technically, all his moves were fine. He even performed his quad toe loop well, slightly stumbling on the landing but not enough to cause any real damage to his score. But there was no emotion in his skating. Throughout his whole routine he failed to lose himself in the music, to conjure up the story he was trying to tell in his mind’s eye. He was consumed by the logistics of his performance, focusing so hard on getting the moves perfect that he lost all of his presentation and the joy of his skating with it.

When he was finally finished and the scores came in, he couldn’t help the frustrated tears that began to well in his eyes. It wasn’t bad but it wasn’t perfect either. It wasn’t good enough.

That night, sitting alone in the shared hotel room, Yuuri couldn’t stop thinking about the free skate the next day. This was his senior debut, a defining moment in his career and he had to prove he was worthy to skate with the best of them. The whole skating world was watching and he had already failed in the short program yesterday, not living up to his own lofty expectations. He couldn’t let that happen again. He couldn’t.

As the minutes wore on, the worry just continued to build and nothing Yuuri did could dispel it. The thought of going out onto the ice again the next day, of the thousands of people watching him, judging him, expecting him to be great weighed down on him, curling around his throat like a hand slowly choking the air from him.

The faces of the other skaters swam through his mind, so much older and more experienced and better. How could he ever expect to live up to them? How could he do it?

Panic began to build in earnest and the dark thoughts kept coming, circling around and around in his brain, shadows growing longer with every passing second. Suddenly it felt like there was an iron band constricting around his chest, crushing the air out of him. Tighter and tighter until his breath was coming out in short sharp pants and his vision began to grow dark at the edges.

“Yuuri!”

Strong hands grabbed him by the shoulders, prying his arms away from where they were clamped vice like around his knees.

“Yuuri! Yuuri look at me.”

Yuuri wanted to respond but he couldn’t, still too caught up inside his own head, his breathing still jagged and panting, barely enough air reaching his lungs with each passing breath.

“Yuuri, I think you’re having a panic attack. Yuuri, I need to look at me. I need you to calm down. Yuuri.”
The warm hands moved to his face, gentle but firm and Celestino’s face swam into his vision, concern stamped clearly across his features. One of the hands flitted fretfully to his back, rubbing soothing circles into the fabric of his shirt, the other reaching out and gently bringing one of Yuuri’s own to rest on Celestino’s chest.

“I need you to breathe with me Yuuri. In and out. In and out. Ok?”

Steady under his hand, the feel of Celestino’s breath rose and fell with the words, a soothing steady rhythm that Yuuri tried to match to his own frantic gasps. Eventually, his own breathing began to even out, although it still took an immense effort to keep it matched to Celestino’s slow and steady breaths. The iron band that had been clamped around his chest began to loosen inch by painful inch and slowly Yuuri’s vision returned to normal, the frantic pounding of his heart easing slowly back into its usual rhythm.

Eventually Yuuri looked up, seeing Celestino kneeling before him with one of Yuuri’s hands still clasped in his own and pressed against his chest and the other continuing to rub the same soothing circles into his back. Celestino looked terrified and completely out of his depth and Yuuri felt a wave of stinging guilt and shame rise up within him.

Embarrassed, he flushed and tried to stand, to run out of the room before he had to see the disappointment over his display of weakness on Celestino’s face. But his coach stopped him, gently guiding Yuuri back down to sit on the edge of his bed before joining him, sitting far enough away that Yuuri didn’t feel smothered.

“Do you want to talk about it Yuuri?”

Yuuri shook his head, keeping his eyes averted.

“Ok.” Celestino sighed, running a weathered hand over his face, gaze never leaving Yuuri. “But it’s nothing to be ashamed of Yuuri, ok? If you want help, I’ll be here.”

The next day, Celestino brought Phichit to meet him at the rink before his free skate. Phichit had done well in his junior debut, winning the hearts of the judges and audience alike but while he had won a medal in his second competition he hadn’t quite scored high enough to qualify for the final. Despite the loss he didn’t seem too upset about it, claiming he had plenty of time to win medals in other competitions in the future. After his own Grand Prix Series was over he had insisted Celestino fly him out to watch Yuuri compete in the final.

Having Phichit with him in the run up to the free skate was a blessing and one that Yuuri was immeasurably grateful for. The other boy always knew exactly what to say, how to take Yuuri’s mind off the sick feeling in his stomach, how to make him laugh when the moment before he thought he was about to break down.

Celestino seemed to understand and left them both to it, allowing Phichit to stay with Yuuri until the
last possible moment before he had to be ushered onto the rink for his free program.

The **music** Yuuri skated to during his free program was pretty, a light and dancing piano melody, but he didn’t feel much of anything when he skated to it. Unlike the previous year with his success in the Junior Worlds, in the terror of moving to a completely different country under a new coach Yuuri hadn’t been confident enough to pick out his own music or theme. Celestino was a good coach and Yuuri was sure he wouldn’t mind but in the whirlwind of change that had preceded his senior debut Yuuri had retreated into the familiar, allowing his coach to dictate his skating in a way he had rebelled against for the last Junior Worlds.

Moving to the music was automatic and Yuuri forced himself to *feel* as he skated. Emotive skating had always been his strong suit and if he wanted to stand up against the fierce competition of the senior division he had to play to his strengths.

As the performance wore on, Yuuri began to feel himself fall back into the music, into the mindset he needed to be in to skate. As he approached his quad toe loop he almost faltered but a quick flash of ‘*keep your centre*’ flitted across his mind and he landed the jump perfectly, a flood of relief washing through him at the success.

But despite the success of the jump, Yuuri knew it wasn’t going to be enough. His performance was good but it wasn’t fantastic. His nerves kept him from achieving the perfect performance marks he needed to make up for his relative lack of advanced jumps. He could still only reliably do a quad toe loop and it was the only quad Celestino had let him attempt in competition. Both areas of his performance were lacking and while he probably still would have placed while back in the juniors, Yuuri knew that in the more advanced senior level, he wouldn’t have made it.

His scores only confirmed his fears. Again they weren’t bad scores, they were perfectly respectable for a junior skater competing in the seniors for the first time, but they weren’t good enough. He placed fifth, not coming last but nowhere near the gold he wanted so badly he could scream.

After the medal ceremony, Phichit comforted him, congratulating him on his performance, pointing out that even getting into the finals at all was an achievement to be proud of. He was only sixteen, Phichit reminded him. He had up to ten years more to compete, ten years more to perfect his skating and routines. He could hardly expect to be perfect the moment he entered the senior division. Could hardly expect to win gold straight away when up against skaters with so much more experience than himself. Even Viktor hadn’t won gold on his first Senior Grand Prix, although he had placed considerably higher than Yuuri.

It didn’t help.

Yuuri wanted gold. He wanted it more than anything. It didn’t matter that Viktor hadn’t gotten gold on his first Senior Grand Prix, Yuuri wanted to be *better*. The loss grated him, made him want to cry in frustration. He had tasted victory last season and he wanted that feeling back again. He wanted it more than anything.
A few months later, Viktor made the news across the world by winning gold in the Olympics, to the surprise of absolutely no-one. Viktor Nikiforov, at just 20 years old, was a figure skating legend. A god of the ice that no-one seemed to be able to touch. Yuuri watched his performance with Phichit live on TV in the dead hours of the morning, Phichit oohing and ahhing at the routine, Yuuri staying silent with his eyes glued to the screen.

This was what he had to beat, he kept reminding himself. He was sure Viktor never got nervous, never let his stupid fears overcome him on the ice like Yuuri did. If he wanted to beat Viktor he would need to find a way to help his nerves or he would never even come close.

The next day he went to speak to Celestino. He didn’t want to, he hated talking to people about his feelings, hated looking weak. But he had to. If the only way to beat Viktor was to first beat his own fears then that was what he had to do.

Celestino organised everything very quickly and Yuuri met with a professional-looking lady in a smart but cosy office the next week. At first he was reluctant to talk to her but to his surprise she was easy and approachable and he found himself choking out the way he felt before competitions, how he found it hard to breathe and how he wanted to win so badly that it hurt.

Sessions with her proved to be surprisingly helpful. She helped him analyse his own thoughts, taught him some good techniques for calming himself down, from stopping his anxiety from overwhelming him. She also prescribed him some medication for the times when he found that mindfulness alone didn’t work, for when it got really bad. Initially he had refused to take them, ashamed of them and of himself, but Phichit was quick to talk him round. When Yuuri had eventually confessed what was happening Phichit had insisted that needing help with nerves was nothing to be ashamed of. After hours of talking and Yuuri pouring his heart out to his friend, he left the conversation feeling reassured and with the promise that he would practice the calming exercises he had been taught and use the pills if he really needed to.

Again, Yuuri reflected that he would never stop being grateful that Phichit was his friend.

At the World Championships, Yuuri was determined to do better. With the new ways of dealing with his nerves securely under his belt and with Phichit and Celestino cheering him on from the side-lines,
after two intense days of competition he emerged out the other side with a bronze medal clutched tightly in his exhausted grip. Pressure had been high and the competition steep but he had pushed doggedly through.

At the medal ceremony he stood on the lowest podium, waving tiredly out to the crowd with Viktor standing high above him with a gold medal strung around his neck like it belonged there. Obviously Viktor had come in first, his combined score staggeringly higher than the blond Swiss skater standing on the podium just below him, looking up at the Russian with admiration and a little awe on his face.

Yuuri looked too but admiration was just about the furthest emotion from what he was sure was written across his own face. Through the cheering of the crowd he could just about hear the frantic thudding of his own heart, his exhilaration at winning a medal warring with his crushing disappointment that Viktor had bested him yet again.

Rationally, he knew that it would have been nigh on impossible for him to beat Viktor this season, not while he was still so new to Senior skating and with only one quad securely under his belt but it still frustrated him. He could beat Viktor one day, he knew he could, but the wait was killing him. Each season was another year lost, another year wasted.

Glaring up at Viktor from what felt like miles below him, Yuuri strengthened his resolve, carved his desire deep into his bones. He had tasted victory and he loved it, loved the exhilaration of the skating, the cheers of the crowd, all directed at him and him alone. Now that he skated in the Senior division he would have to work his way back up the ranks again, just as he had done as a junior. Claw his way up piece by piece, performance by performance. Standing on the bronze podium he had already taken the first step and soon, he swore to himself, he would take the next one.

Viktor smiled out at the crowds, the lights of the stadium dancing in his eyes. For a second, his gaze flickered down to Yuuri, standing just below him and glaring back, eyes narrowed to slits. Viktor didn’t say anything but he held the stare, blue eyes searching as they stared deep into Yuuri’s brown ones, gazes locked. For the instant of a second that felt like an hour the two appraised each other, Yuuri heart full hatred mixed with a dogged determination and Viktor’s gaze unreadable. Then the photographer called for them to smile for the camera and the moment was broken.

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After the ceremony Yuuri didn’t see Viktor again. But as he packed his bags and left the stadium for good he could almost swear he could feel eyes following him. Watching him. Always watching. Never looking away.
Back in Detroit, Yuuri threw himself back into training. At his request, Celestino made all of his practice sessions private, keeping the other skaters out and allowing Yuuri the chance to skate in peace. It helped immensely. Without the presence and pressure of having the other skaters around Yuuri could focus on his skating with nothing to distract him. Phichit was always there of course, either skating with Yuuri or watching him from the sides and cheering him on.

Less than a month after the World Championships ended, Yuuri landed a quad Salchow in practice to the elated cheers of both Phichit and Celestino. Phichit had videoed the whole thing and, in a fit of pride, Yuuri had allowed him to post it, surprised by how much attention the video drew.

He had never really considered the wider skating community and whether he had any fans or not, not being active on any social media himself, but it appeared that more people than he had expected that had taken interest in his skating. The news that he could now land a quad Salchow was well received and Phichit took great delight in reading out all the nice comments to Yuuri in their room that night, people expressing their pleasure over his newfound ability and their excitement to see how he would perform the next season.

Yuuri went to sleep that night smiling.
Alexibexi [8 hours ago]
That was probably the most intense 10 seconds of my life

riri456 [7 hours ago]
did you see the looks on their faces!!!

Nikifan12 [7 hours ago]
That Katsuki kid was giving Viktor the glare of his life omg

Marcia Linette [6 hours ago]
I legit thought he was going to climb up the podium to punch Viktor in the face o.O

zazada [5 hours ago]
damn! he must really have wanted to win gold

Arthur Brn  [5 hours ago]
Pretty sure Katsuki wanted to strange Nikiforov with his own medal ngl

Sergey Gold [5 hours ago]
Gentlemen, I think we might have a rivalry on our hands

Theresa4444 [4 hours ago]
Idk, the look on Viktor’s face tho…

Viktor5ever [4 hours ago]
Yeah I agree. I mean, Katsuki looked pissed as hell but Viktor kinda looked…interested???
Curious??? Intrigued?? Idk but it was definitely weird
Phew, getting that chapter written after the emotional devastation that was episode 11 was a challenge, let me tell you!

Sorry for another fillerish type chapter, there’s so much I want to write in this story but I can’t just skip to all the best bits! So this chapter had to be here. I needed to explore how Yuuri would handle the transition to the Seniors, how he struggles but ultimately succeeds in competing at a much higher level than he is used to and how his anxiety doesn’t just disappear because he has won a gold medal. Plus I really wanted to spend some time on the Yuuri-Phichit friendship because it gives me life. I love Phichit in all his beautiful, social media obsessed glory with all my heart. Also, after this chapter I have convinced myself that he has a whole folder of videos on his phone labelled, ‘Yuuri Katsuki falls on his face, a compilation’ from their Detroit days that he can whip out to embarrass Yuuri when needed.

(Sidenote - Phichit's hamsters are named after the characters in 'The King and the Skater'. Arthur is the canonical name given for one of the characters. The other is referred to only as 'The Prince' so I chose the name Mongkut from 'The King and I' on which 'The King and the Skater' is loosely based)

Also, short cameo by Chris! The other skaters we all know and love will be popping up over the course of this story as it progresses so keep an eye out for that.

In case anyone noticed, there has been a change in the number of chapters planned. I’ve added in two extra because some of the major events still to come are too big to fit into the chapter/word count I originally had planned. So there is now going to be extra chapters for maximum Viktuuri entertainment!

Thank you so much for all your support, especially all the wonderful comments I’ve received here and on my tumblr! You all keep me writing <3

See you soon!

Rey xx

p.s come find me on my tumblr

Translations:

■■■■■■■■■■■ – Please

Songs Used:

Yuuri’s FS - Mariage d'amour - Richard Clayderman
Katsuki Yuuri vs Viktor Nikiforov: Will This Be The Year That It All Changes?

By Luciana Sánchez

Over the past two seasons of Men’s Figure Skating, fans of the sport have been privileged to witness what looks to be one of the rivalries of the century begin to unfold. Katsuki Yuuri, a Japanese figure skater approaching his eighteenth birthday in the November of next season, has defied all expectations, shooting up the ranks of professional senior skating to claw at the heels of the so-far undefeated figure skating legend, Russian Viktor Nikiforov.

Katsuki has always been a popular figure in Japan, especially in his small hometown of Hasetsu where he is considered something of a home-grown hero, but he first caught the eye of the wider figure skating community in his final Junior World Championships where he wowed the world with an incredible free skate performance and took home the gold. Prior to his win his career was strong, with two bronze medals at the Junior Grand Prix Finals under his belt, but comparatively unremarkable. After his win however, he rapidly began to gain popularity and his senior debut was eagerly anticipated.

Two seasons ago, Katsuki stepped out onto the ice as a senior for the first time, yet untested against the domineering might that is Viktor Nikiforov, a skater who has already gone down in history as one of - if not the - greatest figure skaters to date. With multiple Grand Prix, European Championship and World Championship gold medals filling his ever growing collection, along with the prestigious title of Olympic Men’s Figure Skating Champion, Nikiforov has been dominating the sport since his Senior debut five years ago. It is a rare year when Nikiforov isn’t found at the top of podium and there was rampant speculation within the skating community that his chokehold over the sport would remain until he retired.

However, this assumption was unexpectedly challenged and from an unlikely source. In his own Senior debut Katsuki exceeded expectations again, making it into his first ever Senior Grand Prix Final in the year of his debut where he placed a respectable fifth before shooting up the ranks at the World Championships the same season to snag a bronze medal to the shock of the crowds. Such a successful first season as a Senior, especially when it is taken into consideration that Katsuki was skating against competitors far older and with more experience than himself, was truly a triumph for the young skater.

This drastic rise to the levels of the elite truly sparked the interest of skating fans worldwide and it was not long before the comparisons to Nikiforov began to circulate. For Nikiforov alone was the only other recent skater to make such a distinguished Senior debut, although his placements were noticeably higher than Katsuki’s, with a silver in his first ever Senior Grand Prix and gold in the subsequent World Championships. Never-the-less, people began to view the up-and-coming Japanese skater as the first person in several years who may finally begin to challenge the Russian.

They were not wrong.

After his successful first season as a senior, Katsuki returned to his training rink in Detroit where his fans were delighted to see various clips of his training posted to a variety of forms of social media, courtesy of his rinkmate and friend Junior Skater Phichit Chulanont. Through the assortment of clips
and photographs, Katsuki’s fans began to gain a glimpse into the gruelling training regime their favourite skater underwent and the rapid progress he began making as he geared up for his second season as a senior.

Despite the hype over Katsuki’s ever-growing talents it was unlikely anyone could have predicted the incredible season that followed, the seventeen year old skater tearing through the competition and snatching not only a bronze medal in the Grand Prix Final but a gold in the Four Continents - where Nikiforov has been permanently absent due to his Russian nationality just as Katsuki is prevented in competing in the European Championships – and finally another silver medal with a spectacular performance in the World Championships culminating in a combined score that landed him closer to Nikiforov’s gold than anyone could ever have expected.

After such a spectacular season Katsuki’s popularity grew exponentially and with it, the ever more realistic hope that a true challenger for Nikiforov’s title had finally appeared. After coming so close to victory when competing against the Russian, it began to look more and more likely that soon Katsuki would be able to take the final step and swipe gold from under the king of figure skating’s nose.

What has made the developing rivalry all the more intriguing however is the personal relationship between the two skaters. Everything skating fans know about their personal feelings towards each other is entirely speculation. Both are notoriously closed lipped as to their opinions of each other, both in interviews and on social media. While fans of the respective skaters are often involved in vicious internet arguments and occasional real life fights at competitions, the skaters themselves have never commented on whether the rivalry between the two of them is as bitter as it is often portrayed. While the truth is far from clear, Katsuki has made his intent to beat Nikiforov very obvious - stating it outright in multiple interviews - and his general air of hostility around the other skater has not gone unnoticed.

Fans have taken the animosity from Katsuki and run with it, spinning the narrative of two rivals at war with each other, with Nikiforov desperate to cling to his titles and Katsuki fighting tooth and nail to steal them away. While the tale may be dramatised and the true feelings between the two still unknown, it is safe to say that whenever the two skaters go head to head they have the audiences on the edge of their seats.

As their third season as rival skaters gears up to begin in less than a months’ time, interest in the two is at an all time high. Will Nikiforov be able to hang onto his titles this season or will Katsuki at last take the final step and score the gold?

The results are still up in the air but the internet forums are running wild with speculation and this year’s Grand Prix is looking to be the most anticipated in decades. Who will finish this competition with a gold medal around their necks and who will be left in the dust? Who do you want to win? Leave a comment below and don’t forget to catch the first event of the Grand Prix Series - Skate America – airing soon.
“So, how does it feel to win your first ever Grand Prix silver medal?” Phichit asked, tone suspiciously casual as he glanced up from his phone to stare at his friend from where he was seated on the floor of the dance studio.

From his position across the room, Yuuri could vaguely make out the faint images of the sports news headlines splashed across the phone’s tiny screen. Presumably similar headlines to those that had been popping up ever since his third Grand Prix Final against Viktor a few weeks previously, where he had come in second place and left the rink with a silver medal in his hand and disappointment in his heart.

Behind his friend’s casual worlds Yuuri could make out the real question, the same one interviewers had been asking him on repeat for weeks, like broken records that he desperately wished would finally stop playing. ‘How are you feeling about losing to Viktor Nikiforov yet again?’ Except from Phichit, Yuuri could hear the genuine concern in the words rather than the vulture-like glee of the tabloid reporters.

“Phichit, do we have to talk about this now?” Yuuri groaned, releasing his hands from the cool metal he was holding and bending over backwards, the strength of his legs now the only thing keeping him elevated on the pole situated in the centre of the practice room. From his new position Yuuri could get a better view of his friend, albeit an upside-down one, where the Thai boy was still looking at him expectantly from his comfortable spot slouched in the corner of the room.

Phichit’s hair was still a little damp with sweat and his workout clothes still stuck to him from the vigorous dance class he had been participating in the hour before. Celestino, on behalf of the skating club, insisted that all skaters take part in a mandatory dance class of some kind to keep up their general fitness and help them learn to incorporate different music and styles into their skating.

Initially Yuuri’s first instinct had been to go for ballet but Celestino had refused, proclaiming that there was no point in Yuuri taking a class in something he was already very proficient in. The man wasn’t wrong, Minako had done her job well while Yuuri still lived in Hasetsu and he still retained her training to that day.

After that declaration Yuuri had bounced around classes for a while, first attempting Salsa and then Tango before deciding that the partner based dance styles were not for him. Skating was a solitary sport and he was much more comfortable carrying that particular element into his dancing rather than attempting to work with a partner.

For a while he had joined Phichit in his breakdance classes which had been enjoyable but still never quite seemed to fit. Phichit was in his element during the classes, full of energy and enthusiasm and constantly coming up with new and inventive moves that he occasionally tried to replicate on the ice, much to Yuuri and Celestino’s entertainment. But Yuuri just never felt the same love for the style. The classes were enjoyable but ultimately unhelpful in improving his skating style, although he would grant the energetic nature of the dances were good for general fitness at least.

Eventually, Celestino had hauled Yuuri to one side and handed him a new dance assignment, one that made Yuuri blush an impressive shade of red and left him so tongue-tied that he hadn’t even been able to refuse the choice, no matter how much he had wanted to. Phichit had teased him mercilessly for a good five minutes before noticing Yuuri’s genuine embarrassment and rushing to convince his friend that it was actually a good idea.
Pole dancing might not be the most conventional of dance styles to learn but at least the lessons were private rather than the group sessions most of the dance classes incorporated and pole was supposed to be incredibly good for core fitness was it not?

Reluctantly, Yuuri had allowed himself to be swayed by his friend’s encouragement and Celestino’s prodding which was how he had found himself at mandatory pole dancing classes once a week.

To his, and probably everyone else’s, great surprise Yuuri found that he actual came to love the lessons. The private nature of the sessions suited him well and he enjoyed the company of the instructor, a smiling blonde woman in her twenties who insisted he call her Sharron. The strength and stamina needed to complete the moves was much greater than that of any of the other dance styles he had tried previously, which allowed Yuuri to take part in the classes without feeling like he was losing an essential part of his training. The lessons on top of his already brutal training regime kept him exceptionally fit and Yuuri was proud of that.

Finally, after years of waiting, Yuuri’s looks had finally caught up to his age. Gone were the childish features, his face lengthening and sharpening and his body filling out considerably. He had always been fit, he had to be considering his particular line of work, but it finally began to noticeably show in his physique. He wasn’t as tall as say, Viktor, but he was lean and strong and determined to keep it that way, even if he had to pole dance to do it. The embarrassment he had initially felt at the choice of class eventually faded away. After all, it wasn’t like anyone was ever going to see him use that particular skillset outside of his private practices so he was left with nothing to be embarrassed about.

Celestino was delighted that Yuuri had finally settled into a class and negotiated with the owners of the dance studio near the skate club to allow Yuuri to practice out-of-hours when he wanted to. Nostalgically, it reminded Yuuri of the times he used to spend back in Hasetsu when the skating rink was finally closed even to him, spending the nights in Minako’s studio practicing to his heart’s content. Pole dancing would never have his love the way ballet did but it was an acceptable substitute and more often than not Yuuri found himself at the studio when he needed to get away from the rink for a while.

That was exactly what he was doing at that particular moment, hanging upside-down by his legs and fixing Phichit with a reproachful look. He had stayed around during Phichit’s own dance class waiting for his friend to finish and now Phichit was returning the favour during Yuuri’s practice, although if all Phichit wanted to talk about was how Yuuri had lost another Grand Prix Final to Viktor Nikiforov again, for the third year running, Yuuri would rather the other boy just left and allowed him to practice in peace.

“Come on Yuuri!” Phichit levered himself from his position on the floor and made his way towards Yuuri in the centre of the room, reaching the other boy and collapsing back to sit on the ground so their eyes were level, nearly nose to nose.

Yuuri huffed out a laugh at his friend’s antics but moved his head swiftly away, hoisting himself up to grab the pole with both hands again and levering his body so that his weight rested mainly on his arms with his legs pointing towards the floor, one wrapped loosely around the pole for support. The move had been strategic, partly because his muscles had begun to burn from holding the same position for so long and partly so that he didn’t have to look his friend in the eye when the inevitable conversation came about.

“Look Yuuri.” Phichit slid stealthily across the floor around the pole so that he was facing Yuuri again. “You need to talk about it. You were so determined that this was the year you were going to beat him and you haven’t spoken about what happened since you came back from the final. And that
was weeks ago!”

Instead of answering Yuuri shifted position again, flipping his legs back up over his head into a straddle so that his face was angled away from his friend and pointing back towards the floor. He knew that he was being rude and standoffish, knew that Phichit was only trying to help, but he really didn’t want to talk about it.

Phichit sighed and stood up, walking around the pole again so that he was now looking down on Yuuri’s upturned face and allowing his friend no chance of escape.

“Look Yuuri, no-one’s blaming you for coming in second. I mean come on, you were amazing! A silver medal at a Grand Prix Final is incredible. You’re one of the best skaters out there, you need to stop beating yourself up over this.”

“Yeah, but Viktor’s better.” Yuuri muttered, before seeing the look in his friend’s eye and dropping down to land lightly on the floor with a sigh. He accepted the towel that Phichit offered wordlessly, wiping his forehead with quick, economic strokes and following the other boy to sit on one of the benches scattered around the perimeter of the room.

When they were both seated Phichit turned to Yuuri again and this time Yuuri met the gaze, knowing he had been putting off the conversation for too long. He knew that he had been reserved the last few weeks, drawing back into himself much to the despair of both Phichit and Celestino but he couldn’t help it.

He had just been so sure that this was the time. After his senior debut he had stood on the podium with Viktor and promised that he would climb those final steps no matter what it took. And the following season he had almost made it, ending up standing just under Viktor in the World Championships with a silver medal wrapped around his neck, so close and yet still so far away. After that he had trained incredibly, brutally hard, promising himself that next time, next time would be his time.

But the Grand Prix Final of this year had come and gone, carrying Yuuri’s eighteenth birthday with it, and still he had failed to take that one final step. Failed to ascend to the very top of the podium, to kick Viktor down to one of the lower levels, to finally finally prove his worth in the eyes of the other skater. To take Viktor’s medal and title and be able to at last look down on him and say the words he had been keeping locked inside himself for years. To tell Viktor exactly who it was who had beaten him and why.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Phichit asked, eyeing Yuuri from his spot seated beside him. Yuuri shook his head, letting the damp strands of his hair fall in his face and cover his eyes momentarily.

“Ok.” He heard Phichit say. “Ok. You don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to. But you’ve got to let out your feelings somehow Yuuri. You can’t just keep bottling them up forever.”

“I am working my feelings out!” Yuuri protested, feeling slightly indignant. “I’m training.”

“Uh no, training doesn’t count.” Phichit poked him pointedly in the shoulder and Yuuri gave him a small, tired smile. Phichit’s tone was light and laced with playful indignance but Yuuri could see the real worry behind dark eyes.

“You’re exhausted Yuuri. You keep working yourself into the ground. You need a break.”

“I need to train.” Yuuri insisted but Phichit shook his head and jumped to his feet, hauling the other boy up by the arm.
“Nope, no more training.” He proclaimed, already starting to drag Yuuri towards the exit. “We’re going to go back to our room and order the greasiest, most unhealthy takeaway we can find, put on a crappy American movie and you can throw darts at the stupid old poster you still have pinned up of Nikiforov or whatever it is you need to do to feel better. You’re officially having a break.”

“And no,” he continued when he glanced back and saw the expression of Yuuri’s face. “You don’t get a choice.”

Yuuri allowed himself to be dragged away from the studio, only putting up a token form of resistance. Phichit was right, he did need a break. He needed something to take his mind off everything that had happened in the Grand Prix Final and everything that was still to come this season. It was hardly over, he still had the Four Continents, conspicuously Viktor free, and then the World Championships to complete before the season was officially finished.

He had to train, had to become better, had to become the best. But for the moment he allowed himself to be dragged along by Phichit and to look forward to an afternoon of just hanging out like normal friends. Just the two of them and none of the pressure and expectation - from the outside world and from within himself - that was now tangled so inseparably and irrevocably into his life.

[Discussion] Yuuri Katsuki and Viktor Nikiforov’s Performances in the Grand Prix Final and Figure Skating’s Big Question – Will Katsuki Ever Win Gold?

submitted by Loopdeeloop

{Kaylee Tsao} · 37 minutes ago
No-one can ever beat Nikiforov – he’s just too good!

{catsuki} · 36 minutes ago
Uhhhh, did you even watch the GPF?? Katsuki was sooooo close to winning.

{Katsukidon} · 34 minutes ago
Yeah, my baby nearly made it! ő·*·(>).<_)>·*·ő He was almost there! So near yet so far

{Yuuriismybae} · 32 minutes ago
The judges totally underscored him! Everyone’s too busy kissing Nikiforov’s ass to pay attention to where the REAL talent lies

{PipperPiper34} · 31 minutes ago

Not to burst your delusional bubble or anything but there was no way Katsuki was going to win. His program was weaker than Viktor’s both technically and presentation-wise. He was good but nowhere near Viktor good.

{VikiNiki25} · 30 minutes ago

Totally Katsuki still can’t even land a quad flip in competition and that’s been Vitya’s signature move since he was fifteen. Katsuki is never going to be able to compete!

{Vanessa B} · 29 minutes ago

Hey, why don’t you stop being such a b***h and realise that Yuuri has 100x more potential than Viktor. He’s obviously going to win soon and when he does that Russian loser is never going to get back onto the podium again.

{VikiNiki25} · 29 minutes ago

Loser???? U mean olympic gold medallist, world champion, probably has a trophy room bigger than your house Viktor Nikiforov???? Stop being so pathetic and accept your stupid fave is never going to compare

[DELETED]

{MODERATOR} · 25 minutes ago

Look people, this is just meant to be a fun discussion about the GPF performances and some harmless speculation. If you can’t all play nice I’ll have to delete the whole thread and ruin it for everyone. There are people here who are Viktor fans and people here who are Yuuri fans and people (like me) who love them both and we all need to start getting along! Stop being so childish and respect other people’s opinions.

{xxEsexx} · 24 minutes ago

Mod is right, every needs to calm down and take some deep breaths jesus
I agree with you but you’ve got to understand Yuuri fan’s frustrations. I personally started liking him around a year and a half ago at the end of his senior debut season and it’s so hard to watch him come in second place to Viktor AGAIN.

I get that but some Yuuri fans need to calm tf down. He has plenty of time to win, he’s only what seventeen? Eighteen? Hating on Viktor who’s worked his whole life to get where he is is unfair just because you like Katsuki instead.

To be fair tho it’s not like his fans are acting any different from Katsuki himself. He HATES Nikiforov XD

uhhhh, that’s a bit of an assumption don’t you think?? I know everyone loves to play up the whole ‘ultimate rivals’ thing but they’ve only been polite about each other in interviews. Katsuki saying he’s determined to beat Nikiforov doesn’t mean he hates the guy, it just makes him a normal competitor. I mean, Giacometti says he wants to beat Viktor and they’re like, super good friends or something.

Yeah but Katsuki says it all the time. Like literally all the time. Kid’s obsessed with it

Fair enough though like, I would be pretty obsessed too if I’d devoted my life to a sport and I kept getting beaten by the same guy!

I think we can safely say that Yuuri legit hates Nikiforov though. Like, have you seen the way he looks at him?? Boy wants that gold baaaad

It’s pretty mutual tbh. I mean, Nikiforov is happily sauntering along being the best in the world and
all that and suddenly this random kid with a vendetta appears who is now constantly coming *this close* to ruining everything he’s worked for and stealing all his titles. I’d be pretty resentful towards him too if it were me.

{Viktorfan444} · 12 minutes ago

Woah, you are NOT giving Viktor enough credit! He respects his fellow skaters, he doesn’t hate them randomly just because they challenge him!

{Kaylee Tsao} · 11 minutes ago

I think you’re right. In fact, I think Viktor may actually like having Katsuki around.

{Vanessa B} · 10 minutes ago

How???????? That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard.

{catsuki} · 9 minutes ago

It’s not actually! I can kinda see where she’s coming from. I mean, Viktor’s the best in the world right? And he’s basically been on top for years and no-one’s ever really come along to challenge that. But suddenly with Katsuki here he has to *work* for the gold again. It’s probably made his life more interesting if nothing else!

{PipperPiper34} · 8 minutes ago

Uh no, there’s no way you look at someone who quite clearly hates everything about you and is doing everything in their power to ruin your career and say ‘oh, I kinda like this kid.’ That’s just plain stupid.

{Vanessa B} · 6 minutes ago

Yeah, they’re *rivals*. As in ‘do anything to beat each other bitter enemies’ kind of rivals. Viktor’s just as determined to beat Katsuki as Katsuki is to beat him!

{iwanttosleep} · 6 minutes ago

Look, does anyone on here actually care about what the two of them think about each other? I thought this was supposed to be a discussion board about their skating. You know, the thing normal people actually watch them for?
Well of course people care about what they think about each other! It’s the most interesting part because literally no-one knows. I mean, I know they super rivals or whatever and Yuuri has made it very clear he wants to beat Viktor but they never slag each other off in interviews or anything and everything about their personal relationship is just speculation. It’s interesting!

Whatever. I just want to watch the Worlds in peace without crazy fans ruining it all with their stupid fan wars

Killjoy

The World Championships loomed, more daunting than they had ever seemed before. Phichit had come with Yuuri again, having already finished his own Junior World Championships where he had won a bronze medal much to the delight of them both. Yuuri had swept Phichit into a bone crushing hug when that was announced and the other boy had had to fight to stop the tears of happiness that were welling in his eyes.

Now it was Phichit’s turn to come and watch Yuuri in his own final and Yuuri was grateful for the support. Pressure was higher than ever this year, with the whole skating world watching with bated breath to see if Yuuri Katsuki could finally knock Viktor Nikiforov from the top spot. Celestino had ordered a complete social media blackout for Yuuri to try and keep his mind focused on his skating and not the opinions of people on the internet but it was impossible to avoid.

Yuuri had caught Phichit scrolling through one of the seemingly endless comment threads, discussing the possible outcomes and placing bets on who was the favourite to win, and the fans present at the World Championships arena were very vocal. Yuuri knew he had an enthusiastic group of supporters but it was hard to hear their words of encouragement when all he could focus on were the boos and chanting from the enraged Nikiforov side of the crowd. Viktor was very popular and there were a lot of people who saw Yuuri as an upstart challenger infringing on territory where he wasn’t wanted.

Even fans who weren’t firmly camped out in the Katsuki or Nikiforov side of the argument were still
very vocal about their opinions. Yuuri knew that, despite being careful not to let any of his true feelings for Viktor slip out during any interviews or press releases, that he had not been subtle enough about his dislike for the other skater. Across the internet there were many pictures and videos, along with pages of analysis written by dedicated fans, displaying Yuuri’s heart, not through his words but through his actions and the facial expressions he was so bad at concealing from the world.

Viktor remained unreadable as always and he had been as careful in interviews as Yuuri had been not to let his true feelings slip through in his words. Unlike Yuuri however he had developed the ability to conceal his thoughts in his actions as well as his speech when required. Despite that, skating fans had been quick to publicise the newly christened ‘rivalry’ between the two of them and it drew a lot of attention from fans and media alike. Everyone loved a good rivalry and everyone wanted to share their opinion on who they thought deserved to win.

While Yuuri was grateful for the support of his fans he just wished they weren’t quite so…loud.

It was always worse in the arena which was why Yuuri had had a tendency to hide backstage in the training areas reserved for the skaters until it was absolutely time for him to come out. It was where he was at that particular moment, performing some simple stretches while Phichit chattered and joked in front of him, occasionally making Yuuri laugh so hard he lost his grip and fell out of position. Celestino watched the two of them from the other side of the room and while Yuuri could tell he disapproved of the distraction, his frown was still tinged with fondness as he watched the two skaters laughing together.

During one of his laughing fits, where Phichit had made a particularly dry comment about Viktor’s personal life that had Yuuri in stitches, Yuuri happened to glance over to the other side of the room in between gasps. His breath suddenly stilled in his chest when his eyes locked onto another pair, a blue-green gaze staring unfalteringly back at him. Phichit noticed Yuuri’s sudden silence and looked over too, eyes widening when he saw who was watching from across the room.

Viktor stared at Yuuri, face as unreadable as ever, eyes searching as he watched the younger skater with an intensity that he usually only reserved for skating. Yuuri stared back, determined not to be the one to break the gaze.

Over the course of their careers as opposing skaters, Yuuri had never once approached Viktor again. After the disastrous encounter in the bathroom he had begun avoiding Viktor and strengthened his resolve to maintain the distance, to not speak to Viktor again until he had won gold, until he could gloat about his victory for the world to hear. Viktor had never approached him either, always keeping a careful distance between them, but Yuuri had noticed the eyes that seemed to follow him whenever the two of them were in the same room. Viktor’s gaze was always intense, as if he were trying to puzzle Yuuri out.

Yuuri was sure he was scoping out the competition, analysing Yuuri for flaws and weaknesses he could exploit. The papers were right, Viktor had never made his feelings towards Yuuri explicitly clear but Yuuri was sure he knew exactly what the other skater was thinking. Viktor’s fans thought Yuuri was an upstart, an arrogant young skater who needed to be put back in his place by the reigning champion and Yuuri knew Viktor thought nothing less.

A shout echoed across the noisy room and the gaze was broken, Viktor turning away to acknowledge his coach who was calling for him to get up onto the ice. Viktor was skating next and he stood with a fluid grace, turning away from the startled pair and striding out of the room. Yuuri and Phichit watched him go, staring at the retreating figure until Celestino finally shattered the moment and yelled at them for not being focused enough, forcing Yuuri to return to his stretching.
On the wall near where he practiced there was a television broadcasting the rink live and Yuuri found his eyes drawn to it as he sat on the exercise mat, bending himself effortlessly in half. Viktor was already out on the rink, costume sparking under the lights of the stadium and waving to the adoring crowd.

Yuuri watched as Viktor slid to a halt in the centre of the rink, a hush falling over the crowds that was audible both from the television set and from the stands high above Yuuri’s head, even through the layers of concrete and stone.

Music started to pour from the speakers and Viktor began his routine, still as stunning as ever. The song playing was delicate, a duet that was a little melancholy and yet a little hopeful, beautiful all the same. The two voices twisted around each other in harmony and Yuuri found himself stilling, forgoing all pretence at practice to watch Viktor skate.

Suddenly a large, solid shape blocked his view of the television set and Yuuri saw Phichit standing in front of him, hands on hips.

“Nope Yuuri, you’re not watching Nikiforov before you skate. You need to keep your mind on your own routine ok? Who cares about what he’s doing anyway.”

“He’s right Yuuri.” Celestino voice came from behind him and Yuuri whipped around guiltily.

“Don’t think about Nikiforov. Don’t think about anything except your own performance and how much you want to win ok?”

Yuuri nodded, flushing in embarrassment at being caught and turned away from the television, determined not to look. He could still hear the song drifting from the speakers and faintly from the rink above him but he tried his best to block it out. Viktor’s choice of music didn’t matter to him. Viktor’s skating didn’t matter to him. What mattered was winning, was victory. Was beating Viktor once and for all.

That was what mattered.

That was the thought that Yuuri carried with him throughout his whole short program. This year he had worked with Celestino, not picking out the music or theme completely independently but having much more of a say in the choice than he ever had done while skating under Celestino before.

The song they had chosen for his free skate was rich and despairing, deep notes ringing out and filling the stadium with their emotion. In his own mind Yuuri could see the images the music conjured up for him, could feel the emotion rising in his chest.

The music was unbearably sad, melancholy in every chord and Yuuri reflected that in his skating, softening his movements, making each one slow and as mournful as the song he was skating to. Filling his chest with the sound, the song brought up all the emotions that Yuuri usually refused to allow to show. His desperation to win that only grew worse with each passing season as another
chance was lost. The gut-wrenching sadness that threatened to overwhelm him every time he failed again, every time he came so close, good but not good enough. Never good enough.

Outside of the skating rink he could never let those emotions show. He had to be strong, had to keep going. But out on the ice he could finally allow them to flow from him, enrapturing the audience and the judges alike, pouring out his heart in the only way he knew how.

He was one with the music and the music was a part of him. The routine he was skating was hard, harder than anything he had ever attempted before but he could barely feel it, so lost in the music and the emotions it conjured.

Everything passed dream-like around him but when the final notes rang out, clear and loud in the silent area, it was like a spell had been broken. In an instant the audience returned, their cheers and screams buffeting him from all directions. The judges suddenly came back into sharp focus, watching him impassively from across the rink. Flowers and stuffed toys rained down all around him and Yuuri grabbed a few on instinct, waving to the screaming fans as he skated his way off the rink, feeling both emotionally and physically drained with the exhaustion finally hitting him all at once.

As soon as he stepped off the rink he was flung backwards as Phichit tackled him into a crushing hug.

“You were amazing Yuuri!” He yelled over the noise of the crowd. From over Phichit’s shoulder Yuuri could just about make out Celestino, arms crossed firmly over his chest but smiling. When Yuuri finally extracted himself from Phichit’s joyful grip Celestino reach out and patted him soundly on the shoulder, giving him a warm smile of congratulations. Yuuri allowed himself to smile back and be escorted from the side of the rink over to the kiss and cry.

As he walked, he thought he caught a brief glimpse of silver hair, of someone high in the stands watching the little group in their celebration. But without his glasses on Yuuri could never be sure and he dismissed the thought almost as soon as it crossed his mind.

In the kiss and cry, Celestino gave his shoulder a comforting squeeze as the scores were being calculated. It felt like an age before they came in but when they did, Yuuri couldn’t stop his mouth from falling open. The people in the crowd roared their approval or groaned their disappointment depending on their allegiance and Phichit gave Yuuri an enthusiastic thumbs up, practically bouncing in his excitement from his place just out of the view of the cameras. Celestino gave Yuuri’s shoulder a congratulatory shake, hauling the skater into an awkward sideways hug but Yuuri barely registered it.

His short program score was higher than Viktor’s.

He was in first place.

That night the three of them celebrated. Celestino took both Yuuri and Phichit out to dinner and they
stayed up unusually late for a competition night, chatting away and toasting to Yuuri’s ongoing victory the following day.

Briefly Yuuri wondered what Viktor was doing, who he was spending the night with. Maybe his coach, although by the displeased look on Yakov’s face when Yuuri’s short program score had been announced it was unlikely. Maybe another skater. Maybe a friend or a lover. For a few minutes Yuuri allowed himself to wonder but after a strange look from Phichit he pushed the thoughts firmly away.

Tonight was his night and he wouldn’t let thoughts of Viktor ruin that for anything.

In the free skate the next day Viktor was skating before Yuuri again, Yuuri being the last skater to take to the ice.

The Russian was dressed in a very different costume to the one he had worn the previous day. A wine red open necked shirt fitted tightly across his chest and covered by a dark black waistcoat that accentuated the lithe musculature of his body perfectly. Tight black trousers clung to his legs to complete the outfit. He looked…incredible. Graceful but masculine at the same time, elegant and perfect.

“Yuuri close your mouth, you’re drooling.”

Phichit’s voice came through the haze of Yuuri’s thoughts, sounding distinctly unimpressed and Yuuri sprang about a foot in the air in surprise, snapping his mouth shut from where it had indeed been hanging open, face turning the same colour as Viktor’s shirt.

“I…I was not!” He spluttered in indignation but Phichit continued to give him the same unimpressed look, one eyebrow raised and Yuuri turned his head away in shame.

So what if he had been staring? No matter how abysmal his personality may be, how insufferable he was or how much Yuuri hated him, Viktor was good-looking. Yuuri had never tried to deny that. It was just he was starting to…notice it a bit more.

Music filled the air and all eyes turned to the rink as the performance started, saving Yuuri from his embarrassment.

The song Viktor was skating to was latin-sounding, a tango if Yuuri’s brief dance lessons had taught him anything. The music started off slow but quickly picked up speed, turning fast-paced and sharp with the sounds of strings filling the stadium as Viktor skated, eyes alight with a fire that Yuuri had never seen before.

The song was sensual and Viktor matched it perfectly, ensnaring the audience everywhere he turned. The innocent teenager that had first captured the attention of the world was long gone and in his place stood Viktor in all his adult glory, twenty two years old and unparalleled in both his skill and
his beauty.

The tango was a sexual dance, a dance between lovers and Viktor captured it perfectly, the fiery heat of the music and moves at perfect odds with the cold ice they were being skated on. Every move was sensual and full of passion, a side of Viktor that he had never before shown to the audience. Over the years he had explored many themes, surprised the audience in so many different ways but he had never skated like this before, each move full of desire, seductive and sexual. Every eye was on Viktor. Every eye wanted him.

Yuuri was as entranced as the rest of the audience, caught up in the performance and so focused it was as if nothing else in the world existed.

When the dance finally came to a close the stands shook with the applause, the screaming from the audience. Viktor smiled and waved to his fans, face far too innocent for someone who had just put on a performance like that, before making his way confidently to the kiss and cry to await his scores.

His coach Yakov was there waiting for him and although he didn’t seem to verbally congratulate Viktor, Yuuri could see the other skater was given a small nod of acknowledgment, a flash of non-verbal praise.

Viktor’s score was announced and the crowds went wild. Yuuri gulped and had to repress the shiver of nerves that worked their way, ice-like, up his spine.

Standing on the ice waiting to begin his own free skate, Yuuri found the nerves increasing, icy tendrils creeping their way up his throat and clenching around his heart. Taking a few deep calming breaths he focused on the exercises he had been taught, fixed on finding the sense of calm he needed to skate at his very best.

With the nerves quashed if not entirely gone, Yuuri took his starting position, allowing the noises of the crowds to wash over him. As the din began to gradually die down the music started and Yuuri moved, focus intense.

The song that had been chosen was a dance, much like Viktor’s own choice, but the dance Yuuri was skating to was a waltz. A dark piece of music that crept and slithered it’s way throughout the room. Moving with the music Yuuri could feel the tension in the air, the gazes of the crowd fixed on him and only him, the collective holding of breath.

As he danced he could feel what was missing and yet present all the same. The partner who existed only in his mind. The one he was dancing with, dancing for. Just like the tango, the waltz was a dance for two and Yuuri danced, constantly circling his invisible partner, perfectly matched and yet never touching.

The partner in front of him was invisible, a phantom of imagination, but as the music built it began to take on shape. Broad shouldered and tall, a masculine figure appearing from the haze of thought, face still darkened and obscured. Yuuri launched himself into a quadruple salchow, watching in his
mind’s eye as the figure mimicked him from across the rink, perfectly in time, perfectly in step.

The waltz he was dancing to was harsh, more of a challenge than a dance. A battlefield on an ice rink. Yuuri poured his heart into the dance, ignoring the burn in his muscles, ignoring the noise of the crowd. All that mattered was the figure he opposed and the skating that was consuming his soul.

The two circled each other, Yuuri picturing the figure before him in perfect detail with only the face still hidden deep in shadow. As he entered his final spin Yuuri watched as the phantom skater finally faded away, spinning his last with Yuuri across the ice before dissolving back into the darkness of his vision. The final rotations ended and Yuuri snapped his eyes back open from where they had subconsciously fallen closed, heaving out deep panting breaths as he held his final position, eyes towards the judges.

The crowd was going wild but all Yuuri cared about was the men and woman seated across the rink from him, the ones who would ultimately decide his fate. Blank faces watched him impassively and he held the stare for a few more minutes, still panting as he willed his breathing to return back to normal and his exhausted body to take him from the ice.

Weariness written in every line of his body he slowly dragged himself to the edge of the rink, holding onto the low wall for support. He had given everything he had both mentally and physically. Everything he had and more.

Celestino and Phichit were there to greet him, both sets of eyes gleaming in excitement. Together they escorted him to the kiss and cry, Celestino allowing Yuuri to lean his weight onto the older man’s shoulder, too tired to even stand properly. It was the most advanced and physically demanding routine Yuuri had ever attempted and it showed.

Once they reached the bench at the kiss and cry Yuuri practically collapsed onto the seat, wishing he was allowed to curl up prone on the bench and just go to sleep. But he couldn’t. He needed to know his score, need to know with a burning desperation that seared even the exhaustion from his bones.

Over the loudspeaker the scores were announced and there was a roar from the crowd, a gasp from Phichit, a sharp intake of breath from Celestino.

Yuuri just stared.

His combined score, the score that decided his final placement, the score that meant everything to him, a score that had just beaten his personal best by a considerable margin, was lower than Viktor’s.

His score was lower than Viktor’s by a single point.

Katie K @actualkatsuki_trash · 10m

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO #onepointbehind
Yo-Yo  @YolandeK · 10m

He was so. f**king. close. #onepointbehind

Amaaaara  @tragedyinanutshell · 9m

This is literally the worst day of my life I will never recover from this #onepointbehind

ClaraM  @ClaraMcDonld · 9m

*hello darkness my old friend plays softly in the distance* #onepointbehind

Maxi  @Hasetsus_hero · 8m

DID YOU SEE HIS FACE WHEN THEY ANOUNCED THE SCORE?? I JUST WANNA GIVE HIM A HUG OMG IM CRYING #onepointbehind  instagram.com/p/BNn3FoAUNN/

JiJi_K  @fuckmeviktor · 6m

Phew! I genuinely thought Suki might have got Niki there but nope – the champion still reigns supreme #onepointbehind #thankgod

Laura Ashburn  @heartlessbitch · 5m

That was the best I’ve seen either of them perform to date oh my god!!! No wonder it was so close #onepointbehind

Just Peachy  @sweetasapeach · 4m

I’m so proud of Vitya! My baby just won a gold for the umpteenth time in a row, he’s truly undefeatable <3<3<3

nkSammy  @skatingsquad15 · 4m

@sweetasapeach undefeatable?? Katsuki was literally one point behind. The gap is closing very fast and it wont be long… #onepointbehind #literallyONEPOINT

MaiMai  @katsukiinglasses · 3m
ok I know all us Yuuri fans are super disappointed but can we all just take a step back and think about how he’s feeling because… 1/3 #onepointbehind

MaiMai @katsukiinglasses · 3m

…I’m pretty sure no-one is more upset with the score than him and seeing all the stuff people are saying in this tag can’t be helping?? Like… 2/3 #onepointbehind

MaiMai @katsukiinglasses · 2m

can we all just congratulate him on scoring a PB and stop comparing him to Nikiforov for once? He did rly well today and we need to acknowledge that 3/3 #onepointbehind

Alex Katsu @mylittlekatsudon · 2m

@katsukiinglasses I totally agree. He did so well and he needs lots of love and support #onepointbehind

Mikkel_M @justfuckmeup · 1m

I’m a viktor fan through and through but even I felt bad for Katsuki #onepointbehind #socloseandyetsofar

Casssea233 @casssea233 · 1m

I know everyone is in shock about the score but can we just appreciate what this means for next year? If he was this close this time… #onepointbehind

That night in the hotel room Yuuri finally allowed himself to break down. Phichit was there, holding Yuuri close and letting him cry onto his shoulder. Celestino tactfully left the room, knowing that Yuuri hated it when people saw him cry.

He had been so close. So close. And yet he still hadn’t made it. He still wasn’t enough.

Phichit wrapped warm arms around his shoulders and Yuuri clung to the back of his shirt, feeling
like a child all over again. He shouldn’t be crying, he should be better than this but all the bitter
disappointment and anger and frustration and crushing sadness welled up inside him and wracked his
whole body with sobs independent of his own will.

You should be proud of yourself! Who cares if you beat Viktor or not?”

“I do.” Yuuri choked out, voice hitching and still clogged with bitter tears. “I care.”

“I know you do.” Phichit whispered, so softly that Yuuri wasn’t sure if he was supposed to have
heard or not. He let Yuuri cling to him long into the night until all his tears were spent and Yuuri was
finally composed enough to pull himself away and slide into his own bed, wanting nothing more
than to sleep and forget.

That night Yuuri’s dreams were a whirlwind of colour and sound, the cheers of an audience swirling
with the bright lights of a stadium, the flashes of colours as skaters in bright costumes whizzed past,
 faster than his eyes could catch. Everything was loud and bright and bewildering and he couldn’t
 escape, not even into wakefulness.

Bright numbers glared down all around him, his score flashing from every available surface.
 Taunting him. Cheers from the audience turned to screams, to boos, a maelstrom of sound that made
 him want to claw his own ears off to escape it. The skaters all around him flashed passed, faster and
 faster until Yuuri thought he was going to throw up, senses assaulted with colours too bright and
 sounds too loud.

Everywhere was filled with light and noise and he was trapped in the centre of the rink, pinned down
 by his own fear. Everywhere he turned the faces of the audience stared at him, judging him, pitying
 him, hating him. Yuuri blinked and suddenly every face in the crowd was Viktor, laughing
 mockingly down at Yuuri from all around. His eyes were bright and cold and his face was twisted in
 a cruel smile. Reminding Yuuri that he had failed again, that he wasn’t good enough, that he would
 never be good enough…

Yuuri screamed and suddenly the illusion shattered, leaving him alone on an empty ice rink. Stands
 bare and the whole cavernous room deserted except for him. All the colour and sound had leeched
 from the world, leaving Yuuri standing in a barren emptiness. He turned slowly, trying to puzzle out
 the drastic shift in the dream but everything was perfect and still and he was completely alone.

Faint trickles of music began to softly filter through the silence, breaking the stillness. Distant and far
 away at first but rapidly coming closer with each beat of his heart. Strings playing sharply, louder
 and louder in a tune that sounded achingly familiar but at the same time was one that his bewildered
 mind simply could not place.

Suddenly Yuuri was aware that he was no longer alone on the rink. Between one blink of his eye
 and the next a distant figure appeared, standing opposite him. A black and white image with its face
hidden in shadow. Hesitantly Yuuri moved and the figure moved with him, not mimicking his movements like a reflection but rather matching them, as if in a dance.

Yuuri skated slowly, feeling the slick slide of ice beneath his booted feet. Without conscious thought, his body moved automatically with the music and the figure moved with him, perfectly in time.

Together the two of them skated, the other figure’s face still cloaked in darkness. Dancing around each other as though they were made to match. A sudden flash of colour caught Yuuri’s eye and he realised the figure wasn’t as black and white as he had first appeared, the shirt he was wearing catching the light and suddenly turning a deep wine red. The colour of blood.

Suddenly curious Yuuri began to skate towards the figure, wanting to see more but the minute he closed his eyes to blink the man was gone, disappeared from Yuuri’s line of vision as though he had never been. Disappointment welled up in Yuuri’s chest. He didn’t know why but for some reason he had wanted the strange dream-figure to stay.

The music was still playing all around him, a slow carnal melody that Yuuri’s rational mind still couldn’t quite remember. A shift in the air just behind him alerted Yuuri to a presence but that was all the warning he got before arms suddenly appeared around his shoulders, hand locked over his chest. Holding him close for a brief moment before sliding down his body in a sensuous grip that had all other thoughts flying out of Yuuri’s head.

The arms pulled Yuuri flush against a tall body, his back pressing against a warm chest. Yuuri relaxed into the grip, thankful that he could now at least recognise the type of dream he was having. He was eighteen after all, dreams like this weren’t a new experience although this one in particular was a strange one.

The arms that were wrapped so tightly around him, pressing him close, were coated in deep red fabric and Yuuri realised with a flash of clarity that the man behind him was the faceless figure from before, the one who’s skating had matched his so perfectly. Desperate to get a glimpse of the man’s face he spun around in the grip, pressing the two of them chest to chest and raising his face to where he assumed the man’s own would be.

Before he could catch a glimpse of the features however a calloused hand was wrapped tight across his eyes, cutting off his vision completely and plunging the world into darkness. Wrapped firmly around his waist, the man’s other hand tightened its grip, pulling Yuuri impossibly closer until he could feel the beat of the other’s heart pressed against his own chest.

Putting up only the barest of protests at the loss of his vision, Yuuri let himself relax into the new position, tilting his head back a little in expectation. If this was the kind of dream he was having then he knew exactly what he could expect would happen next.

As if reading his mind the man before him lent down, pressing warm lips to Yuuri’s own, touch delicate and soft. Yuuri kissed back, pushing his face up towards the figure and reaching his arms up to wrap them around his partner’s back. One gripping the fabric of the shirt in a white knuckled grip and the other threading itself through the short silky soft hairs at the nape of the man’s neck.

Quickly the kiss deepened and Yuuri parted his lips eagerly, allowing the other man to take control, feeling his body become pliant under his partner’s touch. Distantly, his conscious mind registered that he had never been kissed before, had never felt the same feelings that were suddenly coursing through him in the waking world. But in the timeless world of the dream he didn’t care because there was a warm body pressed to his and the kiss was hot and deep and perfect and in that instant nothing else seemed to matter.
Suddenly Yuuri found himself on his back, the scene changed so quickly in the disorienting way of dreams. Ice was cold against skin, the freezing sensation seeping into his shirt and causing him to shiver. But the warm weight from before had reappeared, hovering over him now and driving away even the coldest of chills. The hand was still wrapped lovingly across his eyes, preventing him from seeing but Yuuri could hardly bring himself to care because the lips were back as well, kissing him with a desperate passion until he felt like he could hardly breathe.

Bare feet scrabbled against the ice as he tried to adjust his position for better access and vaguely Yuuri wondered where his ice skates had gone. But soon the thought was driven from his mind as the hand that was not still blocking his view slid from where it had been resting on his hip up underneath his shirt, leaving trails of heat wherever it touched.

Yuuri gasped at the unexpected sensation and he could feel the lips that were pressed against his own break into a smile, could almost feel the man’s amusement rolling off him in waves.

Unexpectedly, the hand that had been covering his eyes for the entirety of their encounter suddenly moved away, reaching down to stroke a finger lightly over Yuuri’s lips as the man pulled back slightly. In the haze of the moment Yuuri barely registered that his eyes were still closed but as the hand finally came to rest, gentle on the side of his face, he allowed them to flutter open, vision taking a few seconds to come clearly into focus.

Viktor Nikiforov was kneeling over him, eyes full of the same fiery passion that Yuuri had seen burning in him just that morning out on the ice. The clothes he wore were the same too, the same rich wine red shirt and dark waistcoat a sharp contrast to the loose practice clothes Yuuri realised he himself was wearing.

Viktor smiled at Yuuri again, an almost predatory look alight in his eyes and he bent back over Yuuri’s prone form, capturing his lips in another searing kiss.

Yuuri didn’t know what to do. His mind was a confused mess, still caught up in the abstract world of the dream. He was pinned down on the ice by Viktor Nikiforov, the man who had beaten Yuuri. The man who always beat Yuuri. The man who he hated above all others. The man who was currently kissing him as though his life depended on it, as though Yuuri was the only person in the world, the only one who mattered in the whole universe.

Yuuri should push him away. Should shove Viktor off of him and get as far away from him as possible. Should wake himself up because this was just some sort of bizarre dream brought on by the stress of losing the final yet again. There was probably some freaky psychological explanation for the things he was experiencing, something about his anger at being bested by Viktor yet again manifesting into this dream that was rapidly spiralling out of control because Yuuri could feel his heartbeat kick up another notch, could feel himself relaxing back against the ice despite his best efforts not to. Could feel the press of Viktor’s lips against his, consuming him. A warm hand running across his chest, burning touches into his skin like a brand, the other tightening it’s fingers into his hair.

Yuuri wanted it to stop, never wanted it to stop, had no idea what he wanted. The lights flooding the empty stadium were suddenly too bright, the sensations too overwhelming. The music that he finally recognised as the tango Viktor had danced so passionately to as he bested Yuuri yet again rising in volume until it was a blaring crescendo that drowned out everything but the sensation of touch.

It was too much, everything was too much and Yuuri couldn’t think, couldn’t breathe and then suddenly…

He woke up, panting for breath in the darkened hotel room, Phichit and Celestino snoring lightly in
the beds beside him.

Gasping in huge gulps of air Yuuri frantically fumbled for his glasses, jamming them crookedly onto his face and watching as the room gradually returned to its usual clarity. The return of his vision allowed him to feel some modicum of control and slowly Yuuri felt his racing heart rate return to normal, the desperate thuds seeming very loud in the quiet of the room.

When his breathing had finally returned to its normal steady rhythm and he could no longer feel his frantic heart trying to beat free of his chest, Yuuri flopped back down onto his bed, lying flat on his back and gazing up at the ceiling with unfocused eyes.

It was a dream. It was just a dream. Just a strange and confusing dream brought on by a stressful day. He hated Viktor, was angry and frustrated and humiliated about being beaten by the other man yet again and those emotions had manifested themselves his mind as…whatever the hell that had been. A twisted nightmare in the dark that would be gone from his mind come morning.

People had weird dreams all the time Yuuri told himself, trying to shake of the last vestiges of memory and pointedly not thinking about what exactly he had just experienced. It was completely normal. It was.

But try as he might, Yuuri couldn’t fall asleep again that night. And when the sun rose the next day, even the bright and burning light couldn’t erase the feeling of lips against his, of hands roaming over his body and the look in the dream-version of Viktor’s eyes when he stared down at Yuuri like he was the most precious thing in the world.

Chapter End Notes

Ah poor Yuuri. He’s just…very confused at the moment

As you all probably noticed there was a bit of a time jump in this chapter. I know it might have been a little confusing but hopefully I explained the events that took place in the intervening year well enough in the start of the chapter. The time jump was necessary for plot and pacing reasons but I can promise it will be the only one, I’ll never skip out a whole year again.

So, finally another chapter! This chapter was a MONSTER to write. It was originally supposed to be half the length but then Yuuri kept having feelings and who was I to deny him? Plus I got a little carried away with the social media aspect because it is way too fun to write fan interactions now that the Viktuuri rivalry is well underway.

Also, for a visual reference for those of you who want one, these are the moves Yuuri was using while practicing his dancing at the start of his chapter. The first two were from this video from 1.42-2.03 and 2.14-2.21 and the third was the opening move from this video. You would not believe the amount of pole dancing videos I watched before writing that scene! My internet history is now looking very strange but I was determined to write about the origins of Yuuri’s infamous pole dancing skills and this was my take on it.

Thank you again to everyone who has supported this fic so far, you’ve all been incredible! Everyone who has subscribed, kudosed, helped with translations and given me such wonderful comments are truly the reason I keep writing. The speedy updates
are all thanks to you!

When I originally started writing this fic I promised myself I would reach chapter 8 by Christmas. Which means that if I can write fast enough, you may all get chapter 7 very soon, as in within the next couple of days, so keep an eye out for that!

Finally, I would love to know what you all though of this chapter! I was super nervous about writing it because it heralded some pretty major changes in the fic and I’d love to know people’s opinions.

Thanks again and I’ll see you all (hopefully) very soon!

Rey xx

Link to my tumblr

Music Used:

Viktor’s SP – Falling Slowly - Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova

Viktor’s FS - Por Una Cabeza – Played by Nicola Benedetti

Yuuri’s SP – Oblivion – by Astor Piazzolla, played by Stjepan Hauser

Yuuri FS - Trędowata; Walc - Wojciech Kilar

Also SPOILERS FOR EPISODE 12

I have just seen the new episode and I am in shock oh my god. JJ making a comeback! Phichit’s ice show!! Chris getting a flower crown just like the one he saw Viktor wear!! Otabek being generally perfect!! YUURI AND YURIO!!! WORLD RECORDS!!! VIKTOR!!! VIKTUURI!!! FUCKING PAIR SKATING OH MY GOD!!!! I don’t think I’m ever going to recover from this I’m an emotional wreck who needs season 2 right bloody now
I'm Always Saying How I Don't Need You

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Seeing Phichit compete in the Senior division for the first time was one of the proudest moments of Yuuri’s life.

His friend had stuck to the Junior division for longer than Yuuri himself, declaring that he had no need to rush into the Seniors as soon as he met the age requirements and that he would make the change when he was ready. The decision had been a good one as Phichit had thrived in the Junior division, quickly accumulating medals and a fan base but eventually he had decided to make the transition, much to Yuuri’s delight.

Strangely, it didn’t feel wrong for them suddenly to be competing against each other. They were hardly rivals and having his friend skating at the same level was more exciting than daunting for Yuuri. They hadn’t faced each other in competition yet but Yuuri knew that there would be no resentment between them when that time did come. In-keeping with their friendship over the years they would always be each other’s biggest supporters and nothing could change that.

In the current Grand Prix Series Yuuri had already won his first event, taking gold in Skate America to the elated cheers of the crowd. Even though he represented Japan, Yuuri knew he was relatively popular among the American fan base - although not quite as popular as Viktor. After completing the competition he had immediately flown up to Canada where Phichit was preparing to skate in his first Grand Prix event.

The two events were very close to one another and for once Celestino had caved and allowed Yuuri to take a short break from training to come and see Phichit make his senior debut. His next event was the Rostelecom Cup and while usually Yuuri would have balked at missing out vital training days in the middle of the Grand Prix Series he wouldn’t have missed Phichit’s debut for the world.

Yuuri had never regretted his decision to move to America, to leave Japan behind for the sake of furthering his career. He had grown to love his life in Detroit and he knew without the help of Phichit and Celestino he would never have made it as far as he did. What he did regret however, was just how much he had missed while being away.

In the nearly four years since he had first left, Yuuri had never once been back to Hasetsu. There had just never been enough time, his demanding schedule keeping him occupied all year round. Though he could never regret his decision to leave, in his heart Yuuri still missed his family desperately. Missed Minako and Yuko and Takeshi and the quiet ocean town he still thought of as home.

His distance had truly hit home the day of Yuko’s wedding nearly a year previously when she had married Takeshi to the delight of the whole village. When Yuuri had left them they had all still been children, blissfully ignorant to the ways of the adult world. Seeing pictures of Yuko dressed in her wedding clothes, looking absolutely stunning and gazing at Takeshi like he had hung the stars had reminded Yuuri of just how much had changed. Takeshi in the pictures was staring back, face frozen in a stunned expression as if he couldn’t believe that he had got lucky enough to even stand by Yuko’s side. Yuuri could barely reconcile him to the grumpy and slightly pudgy child he had once known.

Of course he still talked to them both, not even continents could have pushed them far enough apart to lose touch completely but hearing voices over the phone was never the same. Sometimes Yuko
would offhandedly mention a piece of news as if it were nothing. Something that, had Yuuri still lived in Hasetsu, he would already know as it had become town gossip mere minutes after it happened. She kept forgetting that it was all brand new information to him, living far away across the sea.

That was how Yuuri had found out she was expecting triplets, with Yuko casually mentioning shopping for baby clothes as part of her boring weekly routine and Yuuri promptly freaking out for a full five minutes before Yuko could bring herself to stop laughing and calm him down enough to explain.

Privately, Yuuri mourned the fact he wouldn’t be there to see the children born, their due date falling right in the middle of the competitive season. Yuko had just laughed at him, reminding him that he was as good as the children’s uncle anyway and that she would make sure her babies grew up to love the sport just like they did so that she could bring the three to cheer him along at competitions as soon as they were old enough.

Still, every time Yuuri thought about the life he had left behind, all the small moments in the lives of his family and friends that he was missing to pursue a lofty dream, it made his chest ache with a deep sort of melancholy.

It was why he refused to miss Phichit’s first foray into senior skating. If his chances to witness the important moments in the lives of the people he loved were so few and far between then there was no way that he was going to pass up one of the few opportunities he got.

Phichit was skating second, not as bad as skating first but still a lot of pressure for a relatively new skater. Watching from the side-lines Yuuri could tell he was nervous but Phichit never let it show in his face, smiling throughout the whole performance and skating with all his heart. The audience loved him and Celestino watched on proudly, giving Phichit an enthusiastic slap on the back when he finally exited the rink to the cheers of the crowd.

Yuuri pulled Phichit into a tight hug, pulling back to grin at the other boy, words of praise falling in a rush from his lips, almost drowned out by the noise from the crowd. Like Phichit had done for him the previous season, Yuuri stood just to the side of the kiss and cry while the younger skater was receiving his scores, hidden out of sight of the cameras. This was Phichit’s moment in the spotlight and Yuuri didn’t want to ruin it by drawing the attention onto himself instead.

Phichit’s score were good, boosting him above the young Italian boy who had skated before him, another relatively young skater new to the division named Crispin? Crispini? Crispino? Yuuri wasn’t sure. He hadn’t paid much attention during the other boy’s performance, too consumed with worry over how Phichit would fair. The worry was all for naught however because Phichit had done fine, just like Yuuri had always logically known he would.

“With a score like that maybe this year I’ll have two gold medallists training with me.” Celestino laughed affectionally as he guided Phichit away from the kiss and cry and the three of them made their way to the stands reserved for the skaters to watch the remaining performances.

“Come on Celestino, you know that’s never going to happen!” Phichit replied light-heartedly, dropping himself down in the seat next to Yuuri and turning a wry smile on his coach. “You know with Nikiforov in the same event I’ll never stand a chance at gold.”

In the haze of Phichit’s debut Yuuri had almost forgotten that the Russian skater would also be starting his Grand Prix Series in Skate Canada. Due to their position as medallists from previous years he and Viktor were never allowed to skate in the qualifying competitions together. Their battles were reserved for the final alone. It was easy to forget that Viktor actually had to first make his way through the smaller competitions before he could skate in the main event. There was simply no
question that he’d get through and many people had commented that they might as well just let him straight into the final since that was where he’d end up in the end anyway.

Yuuri was so caught up in his internal musings that it was a shock when the music began, a hush falling over the crowd as the notes flitted through the air. The man himself was standing in the rink, muscles tensed, poised to begin.

Ever since the World Championships earlier that year Yuuri had staunchly not been thinking about the other skater. Losing to him in yet another event had been a crushing blow and one that took Yuuri months to recover from. And on top of that there was still the issue of the dream that Yuuri had definitely not been thinking about ever since the night of the final.

It had been bizarre and confusing and Yuuri had decided then and there to put it out of his mind. There was no use overanalysing it and stranger things had happened. Unfortunately that didn’t stop the occasional flash of memory that sometimes invaded Yuuri’s mind when he least expected it. A flash of red cloth. The ringing sound of a violin. The feel of hands on his skin.

Feeling his cheeks heat up slightly and cursing his wretched brain for reminding him again of the stupid dream that he really needed to stop thinking about, Yuuri turned his attention back to the rink and the performance that was underway.

Viktor was as graceful as ever, still dominating the rink like it was his right and entrancing the audience with every step. He moved as though he was as light as air, as if there was nothing and no-one that could ever hold him down.

It was in the middle of the routine when it happened.

Yuuri was too far away to see exactly what went wrong, sitting high up in the crowds with only the barest of views of the figure on the rink below. All he knew was that one minute Viktor was spinning through the air, executing a graceful quadruple lutz - a notoriously difficult move that was rarely attempted in competition and one that had the audience cheering its approval - and then suddenly he was down and rolling bodily across the ice, the momentum of his impact sending him skidding across the rink and slamming into the barrier that shielded the stands.

Maybe he had landed the jump badly. Maybe he had got distracted and slipped. It could have been a hundred tiny things that went wrong but all Yuuri knew was that the noise Viktor had made as he hit the ice, his right leg crumpling beneath him, was not the noise of a skater who was going to easily get back up again.

The music cut off suddenly as the gasps of the audience filled the stadium and Viktor moved, struggling to push himself up from his prone position face down on the ice, levering himself to his knees. Panting, he tried to stand but the moment weight was put back on his right leg again it buckled beneath him and Yuuri winced at the sharp cry of pain that even he could hear all the way up in the stands.

Viktor flipped himself over so that his face was pointing towards the ceiling, his leg splayed out awkwardly on the ice before him. The skater had his head titled back and Yuuri could see the way Viktor’s breath was heaving in his chest, the way his eyes were squeezed tightly shut and how his hands were balled so tightly into fists the knuckles had turned the same colour as the ice surrounding him.

Medics rushed out onto the rink and Viktor snapped his eyes open again, pushing one of them away when he tried to usher the skater onto a stretcher. Instead Viktor used the other medic as a crutch, looping his arm awkwardly over the smaller man’s shoulder and using the body to support the
majority of his weight. The television cameras that surrounded the rink had all focused in on Viktor’s
determination that he was to put any pressure on his damaged leg.

With determination dark in his eyes Viktor half limped half slide across the rink to the exit where his
couch was waiting, worry clear in the lines of his face. The audience was cheering, applauding their
hero and his bravery even in the face of an injury that Yuuri could only imagine must have been
incredibly painful. But Viktor never let it show. The set of his features was stoic and he gave a wave
and a nod of acknowledgement to the audience who were still calling messages of support from the
stands before being led away.

Yuuri sat staring at the empty rink, still in shock.

Viktor was the best skater out there. Viktor was invincible.

Viktor was out of the competition.

[VIKTOR NIKIFOROV INJURED IN FAILED JUMP ATTEMPT AT SKATE CANADA]
734, 601 views

Comments 689

Anna Fayze [11 hours ago]
Holy shit that looked painful!!! (⊙ O’)

EmmaLee [11 hours ago]
Did you see his face when he left the rink??? He was sheet white oh my god

~gpx~ [11 hours ago]
No joke, I think you can actually hear the sound of his leg snapping
**Booksandothernerdyshit** [11 hours ago]

Yeah, and my heart breaking too!

---

**TripFlip** [11 hours ago]

Don’t be so dramatic! Apparently it wasn’t as bad as it looked. He’s leg’s not broken it’s just pretty messed up

---

**GirlintheFireplace** [11 hours ago]

Ok it may not have been as bad as it looked but it’s still damn pretty bad :’(

---

**Kankan** [10 hours ago]

Does anyone know if he’s going to be ok tho????

---

**xxDatmexx** [10 hours ago]

I heard he’ll recover but he’s definitely not going to be skating this season that’s for sure

---

**SelkieSkins** [10 hours ago]

I can’t believe this happened! He was always so good (T≧T)

---

**ibelieveinmiracles** [10 hours ago]

yeah but it can happen to anyone! Literally every big skater has some kind of major injury at some point. tbh I’m surprise it’s not happened to Nikiforov sooner considering how hard he pushes himself

---

**GamerGirlZ** [10 hours ago]

Yeah but what a way for it to happen :o

---

**^gxx^** [9 hours ago]

plus it’s not like he’s a young skater or anything. Big injuries at 22 can take people out of the game for good if they’re really unlucky
Skating in the Rostelecom Cup felt surreal.

Yuuri still couldn’t quite believe that Viktor was gone for the season, taken out with a leg injury that would prohibit him from skating for months to come. Everything Yuuri had done, everything he had worked for, all of it had been gearing up to beat Viktor this season. To finally come out on top. With Viktor out of the game suddenly everything felt so empty. There was no drive, no desperation to succeed no matter what.

Yuuri didn’t know what he was feeling but all he knew was that having Viktor out of the competition was the last thing he wanted.

The competition flew by in a blur of colour and noise and too bright lights. Yuuri went through the motions but it was as if he was in a dream. Neither Celestino or Phichit were there, his coach far away supervising Phichit’s second event in his senior debut. Yuuri had reassured Celestino that he didn’t mind if the man devoted his attention to Phichit this season, his friend needed and deserved the support after all, but part of him wished his coach had stayed. He needed someone to talk to, needed someone to try and help untangled the knotted web of feelings that were twisted up inside of him.

Yuuri barely registered the placings, only shook himself back into full awareness for long enough to accept the medal and acknowledge the grudging handshake of the Russian skater, the same age as Viktor his unhelpful brain supplied, that he had beaten to the podium. The announcement that he had made it into the final barely settled into his mind, words and sounds flitting in and out of his brain like confused little birds.

Above all else he just wanted to get away to somewhere private, to somewhere where he could think.

As he left the arena he caught the tail end of a conversation between two giggling female skaters who were whispering loudly in English nearby.

“I hear he was banned from the training rink.”
“No way!”

“Yeah, apparently he kept coming down and just sitting staring at the ice until his coach finally got fed up and sent him away.”

“That’s so sad!”

“I know. I can’t imagine not being able to skate. Especially not if I was as good as he was.”

“He’s in Moscow isn’t he?”

“Yeah, apparently he came up with his coach and Popovich but I haven’t seen him around anywhere.”

The voices were loud and grating and to Yuuri’s surprise he found he was irrationally angry at the speculative gossip. He knew it wasn’t mean spirited but somehow the words felt disrespectful and he had to stop himself from turning around and telling the women exactly what he thought of them.

He left the arena in a rush after that.

In another unexpected twist of bad luck Yuuri found that his flight that night had been cancelled due to weather conditions and he wouldn’t be able to leave until the next morning. Left alone with his thoughts in an empty hotel room he quickly became restless, the desire to get out and do something, anything to block the racing thoughts from his mind forcing him out into the unfamiliar streets of Moscow.

If he were back home in Detroit or even Hasetsu he would go to the rink or the dance studio. Both worked equally well for allowing him to lose himself in the physicality of the movements, to calm his mind to the point of numbness.

It didn’t take him long to source out the local skating rink, a small place situated close to the arena where the Cup had been held, private and out of the way. Despite speaking no Russian, Yuuri managed to communicate well enough with the old lady at the counter in a mixture of English and hand gestures to make his desires known. She was a little surprised but agreed. From what he could make out from her broken English, skaters came there after hours quite regularly, looking for private practice time or just to find a bit of peace around the ice.

Thankfully, he was the only one there that night, the main lights of the rink turned off after closing time and the empty ice lit with only a dull yellow glow from the dusty lamps set into the walls all around. It was quiet and it was peaceful. With a surge of nostalgia Yuuri thought back to Hasetsu, to the late night practice sessions he used to have when Ice Castle was closed and the rink was quiet. The dark of the late evening outside and the dimly lit skating rink, illuminated in shades of sepia, reminded him of that. He had always loved it best when it was just him and the ice and it was nice to have that again, even if it was only for a short while.
For a time Yuuri tried to practice his own routines, letting the familiar movements carry him away. But as the clock ticked on he found that he just couldn’t seem to concentrate. The moves that were ingrained so deeply into his bones just didn’t seem to have the power to distract him the way he wished they could.

Instead of continuing with his current routines Yuuri slipped back into some of his older ones, the habitual moves feeling so natural to a body that never forgot. In quick succession his skated through fragments of his senior routines before moving on to his junior ones, even the disastrous sequence that he had failed at so badly during his first ever Junior Grand Prix Final. The moves that had once felt so difficult came easily to him now.

After exhausting all of his old routines Yuuri fell back into aimless gliding, mind still not clear. He needed something better, something that would distract him fully from the madness of the last couple of weeks.

Almost without thought his body fell back into a series of moves, old and half forgotten, tucked away in the back of his subconscious. While his mind wandered his body remembered, taking him through the routine on muscle memory alone.

The routine was old, old and comforting in a way none of the others had been. In the conscious part of his brain Yuuri wryly registered the irony of that thought. But the main portion of his mind was focused on the program he was skating, one that he hadn’t touched for over seven years.

Back when he had been young, before it had all started, so long ago when his future still seemed so far away and he had had no idea the path on which life would take him, Yuuri had skated in Ice Castle with Yuko, the two of them learning the routine of their idol as they watched him advance through the competitions of the Junior Grand Prix Series, destined for the final. A homage to a boy they had both admired and adored above all others.

It was Viktor’s routine. Viktor’s routine from his very last Junior Grand Prix. The routine that Yuuri had learned with a devoted dedication, had watched Viktor perform live, staring down in awe from the stands with a heart so full of emotion he had thought he might burst. The last routine of Viktor’s Yuuri had ever learnt before the other boy had destroyed Yuuri’s devotion to him so brutally and completely and sent him down the path that had lead here. To a quiet Russian ice rink in the dark of early night, surrounded by nothing but memories and ghosts and half-forgotten dreams.

Even through the blurring of so many years Yuuri found he still remembered. His body took him through the moves with an easy grace, so much more than he had once been. Phantom music filled the ice rink, a distant melody that echoed through the years and guided Yuuri’s movements as his mind finally fell into unthinking bliss. Lost in the music and the movements that even time could not dispel.

So caught up in his own head, Yuuri didn’t notice the figure quietly enter the rink on the opposite side from where he skated, hidden deep in the long shadows of the room. At the sight of someone already out on the ice the figure froze, staring silently, gaze transfixed. Eyes widened at the scene before them and the figure remained motionless, caught in the moment.

Yuuri skated on, the music ringing out from each movement of his body. Still hidden in the shadows the figure watched, unable to look away. The moment hung in the air, perfect and unbroken.

Finally, Yuuri brought the routine its end, finishing with a camel spin, eyes still closed from where they had fallen shut at the beginning of the routine as he lost himself in the skating. He came to rest in the centre of the rink, illuminated only by the soft yellow light that was cast across the room, feeling more at peace than he had in years.
Unbeknownst to him his silent observer slipped away, a pronounced limp in his step as he disappeared back through the doorway. The figure turned one last time, looking at the man alone on the rink for a second that seemed to stretch on for an eternity. Then he turned and left, as silent as he had been from the moment he had arrived.

Yuuri, still lost in the eddies of his own thoughts, never noticed a thing.

At the Grand Prix Final Yuuri breezed through the competition, winning gold with an easy grace that had the audience on their feet cheering for him. Three months later he did the same at the World Championships, sending the crowds of fans into a frenzy of frantic applause.

He didn’t care. He didn’t care about the gold medals strung like a dead weight around his neck. He didn’t care about the audience or their praise or the way that the crowds were chanting his name.

It didn’t matter because he hadn’t beaten Viktor. He had won but only by default. Only because Viktor hadn’t been there to defend his title. Yuuri didn’t care about the medal because it was just metal, lifeless and cold. What mattered, what really mattered, what had always mattered was beating Viktor. Was winning against his final competitor, his ultimate rival, the man he had sworn to defeat. He had kept that promise carved deep into his heart for so many years and now he could never let it go.

Yuuri had won. But the victory felt hollow.

NBC Sports @NBCSports · 13m

Report: Japanese skater Yuuri Katsuki wins his first ever Figure Skating World Championships gold. tw.nbcuniversal.com/9BQ23

Spinit54 @spinit54 · 12m

YEEEEEEEEEEEEESSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS #GoldforKatsuki
Carrie Kashni @missKash · 12m
my skin is clear, my crops are flourishing and Yuuri Katsuki just won gold AGAIN
#GoldforKatsuki

Mel @mellie4543 · 11m
WHAT A SEASON!! I Clean sweep through the GP, FC and WC I love him so much
#GoldforKatsuki

Mandy_Moore @mandypandy64 · 10m
HE DESERVED IT! AFTER ALL THIS TIME!! #GoldforKatsuki

xxStormxx @girlshapedstorm · 10m
yeah yeah yeah Katsuki won but lbr it’s only because Viktor wasn’t there #GoldforKatsuki
#notthatthedeserveditoranything

ItFigures @figureskatingfan24 · 9m
Yuuri Katsuki only wins gold when Nikiforov isn’t competing #GoldforKatsuki #onlythisyear

KadyK @hohohoe · 8m
Katsuki just won another Gold and people are still looking down on him??? How???
#GoldforKatsuki

MewKitty @Mewkitty32 · 8m
@hohohoe because clearly he can only do it when Viktor’s not around. It doesn’t count unless you can beat the reigning champion #GoldforKatsuki #GoldforNikiforovnextyear

KadyK @hohohoe · 7m
@Mewkitty32 doesn’t count???? He won gold. As in an actual physical gold medal. How does that not count??? #GoldforKatsuki

MewKitty @Mewkitty32 · 6m
@hohohoe did u not read what I just said? If you can’t beat the champion then ur not really a winner are you hmmm #GoldforKatsuki #notforlong

Po56o @Po56o · 5m
Can everyone stop comparing Katsuki to Nikiforov FOR ONCE. Boy just had a spectacular season can we not just be happy for him? #GoldforKatsuki #DontBeDicks

~DanaP~ @dannapebbles · 5m
Enjoy it while you can Katsuki. It wont last for long lmao #GoldforKatsuki

Flammixox @burningbright87 · 4m
I hate at least 50% of the people using this hashtag #GoldforKatsuki

Katie @Katiesmarts · 3m
@burningbright87 that’s because 50% of the people using this hashtag are on the right side #GoldforKatsuki #Nikiforovforever

Martha_Golden @goldengirl · 3m
Why are all Nikiforov fans such b**ches oh my god #GoldforKatsuki

LennaLee @babygotback · 2m
@goldengirl Like Katsuki fans are any better. Don’t act so high and mighty when you were all laughing when Viktor got hurt like three months ago #GoldforKatsuki #theirony

Natya @NatyaN · 2m
Am I the only one here who likes both of them?? Can we not like and congratulate Katsuki and still want Nikiforov to get better for next season #GoldforKatsuki #PrayforNikiforov

Allaya_Sec @AllySec22 · 2m
@NatyaN Nope, pick a side #GoldforKatsuki
Chapter End Notes

Ooops, sorry Viktor!

This chapter was mainly inspired by the conversation Yuuri and Viktor had in I think episode 4 when Yuuri wants to keep practicing the jumps and Viktor has already started to tire. Viktor points out that Yuuri is younger than him and also has never had a major injury which implies that Viktor himself has. Which tbh is not a surprise considering how physically demanding the sport is and how most of the top athletes get injured at some point or other. It was going to happen to Viktor eventually.

To bad for Yuuri it happened riiiight as he was getting ready to win. You didn’t think I’d make it that easy did you ;)

This was a quick update because I promised I would get to chapter 8 by Christmas. Chapter 8 is very special to me. Chapter 8 is one of those chapters that I’ve been wanting to write since this fic began although I won’t tell you why…

So anyway, keep an eye out for chapter 8 which will be posted at some point on Christmas/Sunday afternoon/evening. You can consider it my Christmas present (for those of you who celebrate it) and happy winter holidays present (for those of you that don’t) and as a thanks for sticking with me so far and for all your incredible support! I couldn’t have done it without you!

As always I adore reading your thoughts on the chapter, all the wonderful comments really make my day and keep me inspired!

See you very soon

Rey xx

Link to my tumblr
Music Used:

Viktor’s routine music - O Mio Babbino Caro - Sung by Renee Fleming
When Viktor finally returned to figure skating - almost a year after his very public injury had taken place - Yuuri was waiting for him.

Rumours about the older skater had been flying from the minute he had left the ice but eventually official confirmation came in the form of Viktor’s coach a few months after the incident, publicly stating that Viktor was in recovery and already preparing for the next season. According to reports, the leg injury that the Russian had sustained was bad but not debilitating and after months of intensive physical therapy and gradually easing himself back into training, Viktor had worked his way back up to top form.

Yuuri was surprisingly relieved to hear the news that his rival would be returning for the next skating season. For a brief period of time there had been several rumours circulating that Viktor might retire but they had thankfully been proven false. If Viktor had left skating before Yuuri had had the chance to beat him he would never have forgiven the other man. Yuuri was still waiting for his chance to crush Viktor in competition and even competing against other top skaters seemed paltry in comparison.

Skating and Viktor were irrevocably tangled together in his life now and he couldn’t imagine one without the other.

During the Grand Prix Series he actively tried to avoid any news about Viktor and his routines, knowing that if he did he would psych himself out before the real competition had even started. From the brief snippets of news that had slipped past his guard he knew that the other skater was apparently back at his peak and skating like he had never been injured at all.

Yuuri knew what people had been saying about him in the past year. Knew that his gold medals, his success, everything he had worked for were all being dedicated to Viktor’s absence. People were hailing Viktor’s return as that of a triumphant hero, come to take back his titles and position on top of the world. Yuuri knew he couldn’t let that happen.

If he couldn’t beat Viktor this season then he feared he never would. To be the World Champion, the best of the best, only to have it snatched away again would break him. Yuuri was standing on the verge of twenty, in the prime of his skating career. It had to be this year. He had so much to prove, so much he still wanted to do. Wanted to stand at the top of the podium again, finally validated, finally wanted, but this time he wanted to look down on Viktor standing below him and have the other skater know. To finally see his worth, to see him for what he truly was. To see it and regret.

The qualifying competitions sped by and before he knew it Yuuri was standing in the arena preparing for the Grand Prix Final. Viktor was there as well of course. There had never been any real doubt as to whether he would make it to the final stage. Yuuri had been staunchly avoiding him, only passing the other skater briefly once in a crowded corridor.

He had given the Russian a brief nod of acknowledgment, curt and sharp as he passed. Yuuri had noticed the other skater’s eyes widen a little at the gesture and he turned his head to watch as Yuuri passed him and disappeared swiftly into the crowds. The gesture was a brief one and done out of only the barest of courtesy. Yuuri was pleased Viktor was back and skating but only because of how much he wanted to grind the other man into the dirt. He refused to give him any more
acknowledgment than that.

He was so bitterly desperate to win. As the competition progressed it began to feel more and more like everything was riding on the one final showdown. The first time Katsuki and Nikiforov went head to head since they had both gained the title of World Champion. The time when he would have to prove whether he was really winner material or if the last year had just been a fluke. Whether he could really live up to figure skating’s living legend. The papers were eating it up and the fans were wilder than ever before. Yuuri just felt a little sick.

His short program went well but Yuuri could feel the worry mounting with every spin, every jump. This year he was skating before Viktor which meant he had no idea what he was aiming to beat. In the kiss and cry his scores came in, not quite beating his personal best but sitting satisfyingly close. Celestino congratulated him with a grin and a proud pat on the back but Yuuri couldn’t allow himself to relax.

When competing with Viktor, everything counted. Every tiny mistake, every fraction of a point. That fact had been driven viciously home when Yuuri had lost out to Viktor by a single point in the last competition they had skated in together. He refused to let his guard down, refused to take anything for granted.

When Viktor took to the ice Yuuri felt like he could hardly breath. Rationally he knew that this wasn’t the make or break moment, that the free skate the next day was where it really counted. But he couldn’t stop himself from watching Viktor in steadily mounting fear as the other man skated, every move flawless.

Viktor’s short program beat Yuuri’s by a handful of points, sending Yuuri’s panic into full blown terror. Celestino had to calm him down, reminding him that the free skate was where it would really matter, that there was still every likelihood that he could pull it back and claim the title just as Viktor had done to him last time.

It didn’t help much.

In the free skate, Yuuri was skating before Viktor again due to their short program placements the day before. It still unnerved him but at least he had a better idea of what he was facing this time around. Contrary to his resolve to avoid news of Viktor’s skating before the short program, to prepare for the free skate he had spent almost the entire night watching videos of Viktor’s free skating from the qualifying competitions, forgoing sleep to loop the scenes over and over again until the images were burned into his mind.

Viktor had started off simple, changing the jump components over the course of the qualifying competitions as he advanced through the levels, upping the difficulty considerably. Even if Viktor changed nothing in the program the next day, Yuuri knew that the routine he was performing would outcompete his own, even if his own performance was flawless. The technical difficulty of Viktor’s routine alone was much higher and if everything remained as it was the only chance Yuuri had for
winning was if Viktor somehow made a mistake, and a big one. That wasn’t a chance he was willing to take.

He would have to change the jump components of his routine if he really wanted a shot at gold.

Out on the ice the next day Yuuri fought to calm himself, forcing himself to relax into the routine. After discussing it with Celestino he had pushed the majority of his jumps back into the second half to maximise his score and changed his triple salchow into a quad, bringing the total number of quads in his routine up to three, his other two being toe loops, one on its own and one in a combination.

What he hadn’t told Celestino was the final change that he had decided to make, knowing that his coach would ban him from even attempting it for the recklessness and risky nature of the addition.

Over the course of his skating career Yuuri had always struggled with quads. Jumps were never the strong point of his programs and while he could now reliably do the toe loop and salchow in competition his repertoire of quads had never extended any further than that. Usually it didn’t matter but now, up against Viktor’s high difficulty routine with the desperation to win burning in his chest, the gap in their jumping abilities suddenly seemed very wide.

Viktor’s signature move was a quadruple flip, a move that Yuuri had landed rarely in practice and never in competition. But if he wanted to win he was going to have to take a leap of faith. He had to prove to the world that he was just as good as Viktor, that he could do anything the other man could do. He would jump a quad flip in his free skate, he would land it perfectly, and his routine - one of the most technically difficult ever attempted - would surpass even Viktor’s own.

That was the way it had to go.

Yuuri glided through the first minute of his free skate, focusing on nothing but the music and the movement. Everything was perfect. Every jump, every spin. As the first half finally began to draw to a close he took a deep breath, preparing himself.

Shaking slightly he began the preparatory straight line glide with his free foot held forward, feeling his heartbeat racing in his chest. This was the moment. The moment when he would prove himself to Viktor and the world. If he could pull off Viktor’s signature move then no-one could deny his ability anymore.

Using the toe of his right foot to push himself into the final turn Yuuri tensed. The moment was here.

He reached back with his right foot, vaulting into the jump and feeling the rush of air around him, seeing nothing but a blur as the audience spun past. Time seemed to slow and each rotation felt like an age, regardless of the fact that to the awed crowds watching him it would be over in less than a second. One, two, three, four, each twist pushing his aching body further and further past it’s breaking point.
Feeling the twist of the final spin run through his still airborne body, Yuuri knew that he had made it. Had completed enough rotation for the jump to count. But with a sinking feeling in his gut, he also knew before he landed exactly what was going to happen. It was the same thing that had happened countless times before, in every practice session where he had been sent sprawling across the ice, close but never quite close enough.

His right leg twisted awkwardly as he landed, his balance completely off, sending him rolling across the ice. The fall hadn’t been a bad one, Yuuri was able to pick himself up straight away, shaking off the pain in his limbs from the hard impact with the ice and continuing with the routine, but it was enough. The failed landing had lost him the precious points he had been so desperate to gain. He had needed the jump to be perfect and he had failed.

Throughout the rest of his routine Yuuri focused like he had never focused before. Yes he had screwed up the quadruple flip but even without it he still might make it. Pushing the majority of his jumps into the second half and adding in another quad would raise his score considerably, quad flip or no, and if he could just get everything absolutely perfect he might still have a chance.

Yuuri drove his protesting body to continue, ignoring all the pains both old and new. Each jump he attempted in the second half he landed, growing more and more exhausted with each attempt but determined not to falter. Finally he brought the routine to a close, spinning his last on the rink before collapsing to his knees, pressing his burning face into the cool comfort of the ice beneath him, both hands balled up into fists, feeling choked off sobs begin to rise in his chest.

He hadn’t been perfect. He had failed the quad flip, the move that he could never seem to master no matter how hard he tried. The move he had seen Viktor perform with such an easy grace at just fifteen years old. The humiliation burned but he forced himself to put it to one side, to make his way off the ice with his head held high. Regardless of the failed landing, his routine had been excellent and he still had a chance. He still had a chance.

Viktor looked different when he made his way out onto the ice for the final skate.

Yuuri had passed the other skater as he had staggered over to the kiss and cry to await his scores and Viktor had paused, turning to watch him go, a strange look alight in his eyes. Yuuri was sure he looked awful, sweat sticking his hair greasily to his forehead, face flushed bright red from the exertion of the routine. Glaring at the other man he had willed him internally to look away, to stop judging Yuuri’s every move with those bright icy-cold eyes. He just wanted to be allowed to leave in peace without the added pressure of Viktor’s scorn on top of it all. After all, he had just messed up a move that Viktor himself had mastered as a child. The other skater must be laughing at Yuuri inside, simply too polite to show it in front of the cameras.

Once Yuuri had received his score and left the kiss and cry, he and Celestino went to sit up in the stands to watch the final skate take place. Yuuri was a nervous wreck, his fingernails biting painful, red, semi-circular indentations into his palms as he watched Viktor skate out onto the ice, perfectly in
control.

Usually Viktor would do a few laps of the rink, acknowledging the crowd and working them into a frenzy but this time he glided straight to the centre and came to an abrupt halt, looking unusually serious.

A hush fell over the audience, the atmosphere in the room becoming electric in an instant. Yuuri didn’t know quite how but even he could pick up the tension radiating throughout the stadium, the feeling that something important was about to happen.

**Sound** rang throughout the room from the speakers, starting with a single word in a language Yuuri was unfamiliar with, quickly followed by the soft notes of a melody that grew louder with every passing second. The music was beautiful. Haunting. Capturing the audience just as fully as the skater out on the rink who had begun to move with a grace laced with the hard edge of purpose.

It was different from every other time Yuuri had seen Viktor skate the routine. Hunched over his tiny phone screen in the dead of night he had watched every performance. Every recording from every angle that he could get his hands on. He had obsessed over the routine, calculating and recalculating the technical marks over and over again, analysing each move until he knew it off by heart. Viktor’s skating had burned itself into his dreams that night he had seen it so often.

He thought he knew the routine. He was wrong.

The way Viktor skated in that moment it was like he was a whole different person to the man on the screen the night before. Previously Viktor had skated the routine with conviction, confident and sure. This time however there was a new purpose in his movements, a raw emotion that spilled out of every spin of his body, every flick of his hand, every graceful turn of his leg.

Viktor skated the routine like he was consumed by it. There was a fire in his eyes that was matched in his movements, each one perfectly controlled and yet filled with a raw honesty, a twisting maelstrom of feeling that Yuuri couldn’t puzzle out no matter how hard he stared, enraptured by the scene that was taking place before him.

Viktor jumped, launching himself tight and fast in a quadruple flip and suddenly Yuuri was jolted back to reality as he watched the move, the same move he himself had failed to complete mere minutes previously. Jealousy rose up in him, sudden and sickening, a bitter feeling creeping into the back of his throat. Of course Viktor would do it perfectly where he had not. Of course Viktor was still trying to best him, one upping his every move no matter how hard he tried.

Viktor exited the jump with a smooth surety, gliding round the rink with his eyes fixed on the audience, a hard light burning in their depths. Yuuri almost wanted to look away.

Viktor followed the glide with a series of spins, each one growing faster and faster until he was a mere blur on the ice, moving quicker than the eye could catch. Yuuri stood up, ignoring the concerned look Celestino shot him. Members of the audience grumbled and groaned as he made his way down the stands, irritated that their view of the spectacular performance was being blocked but Yuuri didn’t care. He didn’t care about any of them.

Celestino made as if to follow him but Yuuri waved him down, motioning for him to stay. He wouldn’t be selfish enough to deprive Celestino of the show after all.

Viktor danced on out on the ice, eyes still searching the audience, capturing their attention like no-one else ever could. But Yuuri didn’t stick around to see it. He already knew how this particular dance ended.
Viktor had beaten him again. There was no question about it. The program he skated had been so full of emotion, full of a raw beauty that burned Yuuri to the core because how could this happen again? Why was nothing he did ever good enough? Every time he stepped up his game Viktor did the same, surpassing him easily. Every time Yuuri had walked off the ice, full of bursting pride and happiness in his achievements Viktor always came along to ruin it, to remind him that he wasn’t the best and never would be. Reminding him that Viktor had been right all those years ago. That Yuuri would never be good enough, would never compare. Not to him.

Yuuri didn’t stay to watch Viktor finish his routine or for the scores to come in.

He already knew the results.

At the medal ceremony Yuuri could barely bring himself to stand on the podium. The silver medal glinted prettily in the light but he hardly noticed. He could have taken the defeat, borne it with a good natured grace if it had been any other skater. But it was Viktor. It was always Viktor.

Absentmindedly, Yuuri wondered if maybe this was his lot in life. Destined to forever be just one step behind, one step lower on the podium. It made a sick sort of sense in the twisted humour of the world. He had looked up to Viktor all of his childhood. It only made sense that he was forced to physically look up to him now, to stare in envy at where Viktor stood high on the podium above him, holding out his gold medal for the world to see.

With a gut wrenching surety, Yuuri knew what kind of news headlines he was going to see as soon as he checked his phone when he left the ice for good later that night. Ecstatic headlines crooning over Viktor’s victory, lauding a return back to the true days of figure skating where the reigning champion stood victorious on his podium and the challenger was knocked back down again like he always should be.

Social media would be even worse. Many of Viktor’s fans positively loathed Yuuri. It wasn’t surprising considering how bad he was at concealing his dislike for their favourite skater and the fact that he was always one step away from dethroning Viktor for good. They would be vicious in their dislike for him, mocking in their critique of his routine and exactly why Viktor had bested him again, gleeful in his defeat after such a sweep of victories the year before. He wasn’t sure if he could take it.

Looking up at Viktor on the podium, Yuuri let the thoughts consume him, dragging him further and further down in a never-ending spiral. The victorious skater smiled for the cameras flashing before them, bringing his medal to his lips and Yuuri almost wanted to cry. Wanted to break down on the podium because no matter what he did it never seemed to be enough and his desire to make Viktor pay for everything he had put Yuuri through for some many years would never come to fruition.

He wanted to beat Viktor, to pay him back for the cruel words that had clung to him throughout his whole life, digging their claws into the back of his mind and refusing to let go, dictating his every move. For the way he always seemed to be watching Yuuri, picking out each and every one of his faults the way he had that day in the bathroom, always seeing the worst. For the way that no matter
what Yuuri did, no matter how hard he worked, how much love and pain and soul he poured into his work, Viktor would always beat him. Always show the world that he had been right during their first meeting so long ago, that he would never see Yuuri as a fellow skater with a talent that could measure up to Viktor’s own.

He wanted it with all his heart and soul but in the darkest part of his mind Yuuri realised that maybe it was finally time to let that dream go.

As soon as he could he escaped the podium, hurrying back into the private area reserved for the skaters to remove his costume and redress as quickly as he could. He just needed to get out of there, get away from the pressure and the expectation and the place where he had lost not only a medal and a title but so much more.

After the hurried change he met with Celestino outside the changing room and practically dragged the man away down the corridor, trailing his suitcase behind him.

In the general hubbub of the crowded stadium Yuuri went relatively unnoticed. Ever since he had begun skating professionally he knew that as soon as he dropped the confident act he put on during his performances he became completely forgettable. Completely unremarkable. Just another plain-faced boy with glasses and dark hair, hardly special at all. It was unlikely he’d be recognised.

Through the near deafening volume of the crowds a noise caught the edge of his hearing, something that almost sounded like his name being called. Questioningly he turned to Celestino but the man was chatting on the phone and clearly hadn’t been the source of the noise nor had he noticed it. Chalking it up to his imagination Yuuri left the stadium, trying desperately to leave his crushing disappointment behind in the cursed place where he had lost yet another chance at victory.
In the week that followed his defeat Yuuri drew back into himself, retreating from the world. Objectively he knew that he was worrying Phichit and Celestino but he simply couldn’t bring himself to care. In his darkest moments he wondered if maybe he should just retire. It was clear he had hit his peak, had reached as high as he would ever be able to go. Maybe it was time to stop.

After nearly a full week of moping, Celestino finally snapped.

 Practically forcing Yuuri out of his room he marched the younger man down to the skating rink and sat him down on one of the benches, seating himself down opposite. Yuuri resigned himself to getting yelled at for his behaviour during the past few days but Celestino remained quiet for several minutes, appraising Yuuri with eyes that were softer than Yuuri had ever seen them before.

“What do you want Yuuri?” He eventually asked and Yuuri looked up at him in surprise. Celestino remained impassive, still watching him with a pointed gaze.

“What do you mean?” Yuuri asked, confused.

“I mean, what do you want?” Celestino replied, tone firm. “You’ve won a gold in the Grand Prix. You’ve won a gold in the Four Continents. You’ve even won a gold in the World Championships. So tell me, what is it that you still want?”

“I…I want to beat Viktor.” Yuuri mumbled, averting his gaze. Celestino had been his coach for too long now not to know about that particular goal but it was still one Yuuri was slightly embarrassed about. It sounded so petty when he said the words out loud. There was no way, in English or in Japanese, that he could fully express just what beating Viktor meant to him. Not simply a victory but so much more.

“Yes. You want to beat Viktor.” Celestino’s gaze was sharp. “So tell me Yuuri, how exactly are you planning on doing that by locking yourself in your room all day and feeling sorry for yourself?”

Startled by the words, Yuuri looked back up at his coach and was surprised by passion he saw
burning in the older man’s eyes.

“You’re a talented skater Yuuri.” Celestino continued, gaze still fixed intently on Yuuri’s face and forcing him to look the man in the eye. “You’re one of the best. Everyone knows it, no matter what you may tell yourself. And more than that, you have the potential to be the best. You have the skill, you have the determination. I’ve seen you knocked down countless times and you always get back up again no matter what. So what’s changed? You’ve lost your drive, lost sight of your goals. You think you’ll never reach them and so you’ve just given up. And without them you’ll be stuck in the same spot forever. So tell me again, what is it that you want?”

“I want to beat Viktor.” Yuuri said and this time his voice was louder, filled with the confidence that he had slowly been drained of with each successive defeat. Celestino was right. He had been so scared of Viktor’s return to skating, so terrified of measuring up to him that he had lost confidence in himself. And he would never win without believing that he could.

“The Olympics are the next event I have with Viktor.” Yuuri continued, voice stronger now. “I want to beat him there, in front of the whole world where it matters most. I want to prove to everyone who’s ever doubted me that I can do it. Especially him.”

Celestino smiled and this time it was warm and genuine. “Good.” He replied. “Good. Now get out on that ice and show me exactly how you’re going to do it.”

Russia wasn’t as cold as Yuuri had anticipated.

During his career as a skater he had been there a few times but his whole knowledge of the country was confined to Moscow where the Rostelecom cup was held. There, it had always been freezing when he was competing and he was surprised to find that the whole country wasn’t always mired in the same chill that Moscow always had been.

It wasn’t just the weather that surprised him when he arrived in Russia for the Olympics however. The whole atmosphere was different from anything he had ever encountered before. Figure skating was a small world and he was used to being able to recognise everyone, by face if not by name. Being surrounded by hundreds of athletes from so many different sports, plus every trainer, coach, doctor and the myriad of other assorted professionals in each revenue was bewildering.

Not for the first time he wished that Phichit could have come with him. The other boy had been forced to stay back home in Detroit and even though he and Yuuri skyped regularly it wasn’t the same.

During their latest skype session Phichit had wished him luck, promising to watch the whole thing live as it was broadcast to America. Yuuri’s parents and Yuko, Takeshi and Minako had all promised the same. None of them had been able to secure tickets or funds to attend the event in person but it made Yuuri feel a little better to know there were so many people watching and hoping for his success.
Not nearly as many as the thousands of Viktor supporters in the stands who were eager to see their favourite rise up and claim the title for a second time running though but Yuuri tried not to think about that.

As well as promising to watch, Phichit had made Yuuri make some promises of his own. The Thai boy had good naturedly forced Yuuri into agreeing not to stress too much, to find some time to relax and have a little fun amidst the chaos that was the Olympic Games. Yuuri knew that Celestino thought the same. He had barely taken a day off since his loss at the Grand Prix, working longer and longer hours to perfect his performance and he knew the two of them were hoping that he would find enjoyment in the experience of the games as well as the actual competing.

Yuuri wasn’t so sure. Everything about the Olympics was over the top, from the official ceremonies to the wild parties the athletes threw what seemed to be nightly in their closed off little village. Before coming, Yuuri had heard about the hedonism of the Olympics that went on behind closed doors. The copious amounts of alcohol consumed by the competing athletes as they either celebrated or drowned their sorrow. The more intimate liaisons between competitors that Athlete’s Village was notorious for.

Neither option particularly sounded like Yuuri’s idea of fun and he mainly stayed away from the crowd, preferring to remain solitary to mentally prepare himself for what was to come. Phichit had signed off his last skype chat with a cheeky “Don’t do anything stupid” and an exaggerated wink which Yuuri had snorted at. He knew Phichit was joking, Yuuri knew he was the last person to do anything wild or crazy.

Despite the chaos of the events and the sheer volume of athletes crammed into one space, Yuuri had barely run into Viktor at all. All of the competitors were kept in close quarters but Yuuri had dodged most of the social interactions with a dogged determination and he had only caught the briefest glimpses of the other man.

Celestino had lightly reprimanded Yuuri at one point for his bordering on antisocial behaviour but Yuuri had no desire to join in with the celebrations that took place around him every time another event came to its close.

The unofficial parties thrown when a new section of the competitors had completed their last event were always extravagant, the athletes involved finally being able to let off steam in whatever way they preferred best. Many got very, very drunk. Others discreetly pulled partners away from the general throngs, disappearing up to their rooms and presumably not reappearing until the early hours of the morning.

Vaguely, Yuuri wondered if Viktor had ever taken someone home from one of the gatherings. Despite not seeing him around Yuuri was sure he must have attended at least a few of the events. And Viktor was famous even by athlete standards, the best of the best in his field. There were many people, fans and professionals alike, who would kill to sleep with him. Viktor was young and beautiful and successful and had his choice of companionship. It was only logical to assume that he took part in the same kind of destressing activities that it seemed many of the athletes favoured.

For some reason, Yuuri couldn’t seem to get his mind off the topic once the thought had settled into his head. He supposed it was natural. Viktor was his biggest rival in the sport, their professional lives were so intimately intertwined that it only made sense that Yuuri was curious about the personal side too.

It wasn’t as though he actually cared who Viktor slept with. He was only mildly curious that was all.
Despite the hype and spectacle that had been attached to the event, actually skating in the Olympics wasn’t hugely different to skating at any other competition. A little more intense yes but Yuuri’s level of focus and concentration still remain the same. He was prepared, more prepared than he’d ever been before and more confident too. Together he and Celestino had perfected his program, changed completely from what it had been at the Grand Prix Final.

Hindsight was perfect and Yuuri could see in a way that he couldn’t in the heat of the moment what his performance in the Grand Prix Final had been lacking. After having Viktor absent for a whole year he had been consumed by the expectation of him, by the desire to prove he could be just as good. It had been his downfall, sacrificing what made his own skating unique to mimic his ex-idol. The quadruple flip had been the pinnacle of that. Using Viktor’s signature move had been a desperate play and one that had backfired. Yuuri didn’t need quad flips in his program to win. His true talents lay in presentation not jumps. The performances of his that really stood out were the ones where he had performed from the heart. Where the music and his theme had blended perfectly with his own emotions and he could release them on the ice and touch the hearts of everyone who saw. That was what he was planning on tapping into for his performance. That was what would win him gold.

The competition flew by, each day seeming to go faster than the next with no way to stop it. Yuuri skated and skated until his feet were bruised and he thought his heart would burst. But still he skated on. There could be no rest, no reprieve until it was all over completely, for better or for worse.

Watching as the other skaters all performed their final free skates was the most nerve wracking moment of Yuuri’s career to date. They were all the elite, the best of the best from across the globe. Each performance was unique, a shard of the skater’s soul that they sacrificed to the ice for the chance at a spot on the podium.

Yuuri was skating his free skate last which meant he was forced to sit through every performance, watch each skater take to the ice to thunderous applause from the audience, hear every gasp and sigh and groan as his competitors skated their final pieces, the final bow before the curtains closed for good. The Winter Olympics only came around every four years and a title there was the most prestigious any skater could ever achieve, above and beyond even a World title. Most skaters only had a couple of shots at it in their whole skating careers and Yuuri knew that several of the skaters who were fighting tooth and nail for gold in the current games were on their last chance. And it showed. There was a viciousness beneath the surface of the competition that wasn’t present even at the highly competitive World Championships.

Viktor was skating just before Yuuri and the noise of the stadium when he stepped out onto the rink was deafening. People screamed and cheered their support, making Yuuri’s ears ache at the volume. Viktor was the reigning champion skating on his home ground. The support for him here was immense, overwhelming.
Viktor didn’t seemed too phased however, acknowledging the praise with a smile and a wave to the crowd which only drove the noise level higher as the fans roared their response. Unexpectedly, Yuuri felt his breath hitch slightly as he observed Viktor out on the rink. Though his costume was very differently styled, the dark red of the upper half brought back certain memories for Yuuri, ones he had tried very hard not to think about in the intervening years. His traitorous heart disagreed and beat a little faster and the sight and he willed it to return to normal.

His reaction was stupid and he needed to get it together if he wanted to beat Viktor once and for all.

Yuuri didn’t watch Viktor’s routine. There was too much he needed to do before he could go onto the rink himself. Last minute stretches and flexes, quick warmup routines to make certain that he would be in prime form when he himself stepped out onto the ice. After he had watched Viktor take to the rink he had retreated for his final few minutes, determined to make each second count.

Despite his best efforts however, nothing he did could block out the sounds of the audience, the roaring of the crowd, the chanting of a name, over and over as Viktor performed. The noise was deafening and Yuuri had to force himself to breathe through it, to not become distracted the way he knew he was prone to.

This was his time and he could afford no distractions. He had to be perfect, had to be better than perfect.

Celestino stuck by him, giving him what Yuuri assumed was a motivational pep talk. But the noise just washed over him, like waves breaking over a rock at sea. Words were present all around him and yet he took nothing in, too caught up inside his own head.

A bell rang, signalling for Yuuri to make his way up to the rink and he took a deep breath, allowing his eyes to fall closed. That was it.

It was time.

Yuuri stood in the centre of the rink. He didn’t look at the crowds. He didn’t look at the judges. All of his focus he directed inwards. Digging down to the core of his soul, to the place where he held the most intrinsic parts of himself.
For the first time in his skating career Yuuri had commissioned a piece of music for his free skate. In all his previous performances he had matched his emotions to the music, content to skate to the tune of someone else’s song. But this performance was different. In this performance he wasn’t just skating his emotions. He was skating his dreams, his hope, his faith, the deepest desires of his heart. It was the most intensely personal routine he had ever created and he was proud of it beyond measure.

A stream of sound rose from the speaker and he moved with it. Internally he focused on the words of the song, words that had come pouring from his heart in an unstoppable cascade. The story they told was his and his alone, written for the moment when he would step out onto the ice and prove himself in front of the world.

Yuuri felt like he was flying. Each move came effortlessly, each spin, each jump just another part of the story that came not from his body but from his soul. He felt weightless, as though nothing in the world could ever hold him down.

This was his song. His routine. His moment.

It had been so long since his dream had first been conceived, in the angry mind of a child. It had grown with him, woven itself into his life. It had survived, throughout every failure, every defeat, every moment where he was sure that he would have to give up, when he felt like he could never go on. His dream, his desire had survived and he had survived with it.

And now it flourished. The routine, the song, it was a culmination of everything that drove him to get back up, again and again through so many years. The desire, the knowledge, that he could do it. He would do it. That the small chubby child who had wanted nothing more than to skate on the same ice as his hero could rise through the ranks, could get kicked down again and again and keep on getting back up, keep coming back for more. Could prove his worth to the world and to the man who had never believed it possible.

He was going to beat Viktor. Was going to beat Viktor in the most important competition either of them would ever skate in, in Viktor’s own home country in front of all his supporters.

Yuuri had lost faith in Viktor when he was a child. But now he had something better. Now he had faith in himself.

As the song rose to its final frantic notes Yuuri spun through the last rotations of his final spin, coming to a rest on the ice with one hand extended into the air, face upturned towards the heavens. His heart was racing, beating out of his chest, so strong he was sure the whole stadium must be able to hear it.

The audience erupted into cheers. Praise rained down from every side, applause filling his ears and his heart. Flowers and other tokens cascaded down onto the ice all around him. Flags waved from all across the stands, the white and red of the country he would always call home filling his line of vision.

Yuuri could feel his eyes beginning to fill with tears, the emotions welling in his chest suddenly too much for one body to contain. He had bared his soul for the world to see and it was almost too much to bare.

Walking as if in a daze, Yuuri stumbled off the ice, barely registering the ecstatic praise from Celestino. All he could think about was the kiss and cry, the scores that even now were being calculated by the judges sitting far across the rink.
Practically staggering to the bench he sat down, clutching the edge for support. Praying that it had been enough.

When he opened his eyes he could see Celestino on the bench beside him, the judges across the rink and Viktor, sitting in the stands and staring at him with those same blue-green eyes that Yuuri knew so well, better than his own.

The scores came in. The crowd cheered, the noise deafening.

Yuuri stared, his heart halting in his chest.

He had won.

The ceremonies that took place after the rankings were confirmed felt unreal to Yuuri. Everything was like a wonderful dream, a fantasy from which he never wanted to wake up. Standing on the podium and hearing the Japanese anthem being played made his heart swell with pride, ringing out across the stadium and reverberating deep into his bones. He wondered what his family were thinking, what Yuko and Takeshi and Minako and Phichit saw when they looked at him, at the top of the podium at last.

And the best part, the most glorious part, the part he had been dreaming about for so many years was Viktor. Was looking down on Viktor from the highest of steps, finally above him, finally surpassing him. The silver around the other man’s neck was the same colour as his hair and viciously, Yuuri thought that it suited him.

Viktor deserved to be knocked down a step, deserved to have the gold finally snatched from his arrogant grip. Eight years ago he had looked on a child who was so full of hope and admiration and love and told him he was worth nothing, that he would amount to nothing. And now, through sweat and blood and tears that child had clawed and fought his way to the highest place on the podium, to above even Viktor Nikiforov, figure skating’s living legend.

Yuuri wanted to call down at Viktor, wanted to yell everything he had been bottling up for so many years. ‘Do you see me now?’ he wanted to scream. ‘Do you see what I’ve done, what I’ve become? Do you see that I’m worth something now, the way you never did before?’

But they were in public, with thousands of cameras and millions of eyes trained on him. No matter how much he wanted to it was not the place for the confrontation that had been building up for so long in his heart.

Viktor glanced his way, tearing his eyes away from the flashing of the cameras to stare up at Yuuri. A thrill of satisfaction flared in Yuuri’s chest as he registered the way Viktor had to tilt is head slightly to look Yuuri in the eye, had to look up at him the way Yuuri had been looking up at Viktor for years.
There were thousands of eyes and ears trained on them but Yuuri couldn’t quite help himself. The satisfaction of seeing Viktor below him, looking up, was just too much.

“Enjoying the view?” He asked and it was petty, so petty to jab at the fact that Viktor was currently looking at the world from a much lower place than he was used to but Yuuri couldn’t regret saying it. It was worth it for the shocked look that appeared on Viktor’s face and Yuuri could even hear Giacometti snigger from the lowest platform on his other side.

Viktor looked like he wanted to respond but Yuuri could see his eyes flicker to the cameras that were still trained on them, wary and assessing, and before anything could come of the tiny confrontation the photographer called for them to descend from the podiums to take a group photo.

Yuuri was a little put out by the decision. He was enjoying his spot on the podium, maybe a little more than he should have been, and while he still felt on top of the world no matter what it was still a little humiliating to have to descend and end up sandwiched between the other two skaters, very aware of the several inches they both still had on him in height.

The official photographer seemed to be a little too fond of closely grouped photos and he forced the three of them to stand almost uncomfortably near, pressed distractingly close together. Yuuri was pretty sure he could feel Chris grab his ass from out of the view of the camera but what really threw him was the arm Viktor had loosely strung over his shoulder as per the instructions of the camera man.

It had been a long time since Yuuri stood entranced as he watched Viktor skate, since he’d woke up panting from a dream that even after years he was still unable to forget. Yuuri had forced the images to the back of his mind, had refused to allow himself to dwell on them but while his mind refused his body rebelled, his heart rate picking up the pace as he registered the warm touch around his shoulders, the way Viktor was standing so close, almost pressed to Yuuri’s side.

Yuuri pushed the feeling away, furious with himself. This was his moment of victory, the moment that he’d finally beaten Viktor, finally proved the heights that his determination and strength of will could carry him. It wasn’t the time for his exhausted body to react instinctively to the soothing presence of a strong arm around his shoulder and a body pressed close.

He broke the grip as soon as he was able, pulling away from the other two. The cameras surrounding them began to swing away, the event officially over and Yuuri felt like he could finally relax without the fear of the cameras catching every thought. The stadium was still full of thousands of fans but there was finally a little more freedom to breath without every movement being captured.

Even after the moment on the podium, Yuuri still had so much left he wanted to say. So much that he had been bottling up for years. Ever since that fateful day at the Junior Grand Prix Final he had been imagining exactly what he would say to Viktor when he finally beat him. And again, that awful day in the bathroom, when he had stood tongue-tied in front of the object of his resentment, he had been holding back so many vicious words that could only be released when he had finally taken the gold.

But even when the cameras were gone they were still surrounded by people. Yuuri wasn’t stupid enough to start something in public. This was personal, something to be settled between Viktor and himself and no-one else. An intimate part of his history that was so integral to who he had grown up to become and not something he was willing to share with the world. Only to Viktor.

Viktor was looking at him again, the same searching stare that he wore so often around Yuuri. Before, Yuuri had thought he must have been analysing Yuuri, figuring out his weaknesses, picking at his flaws. Now he was sure Viktor was trying to puzzle it apart in his own mind, trying to figure out how someone like Yuuri could ever beat some like him.
In a fit of pettiness that surprised even himself Yuuri pointedly glanced down at the gold medal hanging around his neck and then back up at Viktor, raising one eyebrow as if in challenge. He might not be able to verbally communicate while still surrounded by so many people but he could make his point clear in other ways.

‘I won. And you lost. How do you feel about that Nikiforov?’

Viktor’s mouth parted slightly, whether in surprise or in preparation to speak Yuuri wasn’t sure. But before anything further could pass between them Giacometti stepped into the space dividing them, congratulating Yuuri in his own personal, over the top way. Yuuri weathered the praise well, irritated but resigned. Chris was a good skater and even though he could - and very often did - get on Yuuri’s very last nerve he deserved his respect at least.

When Giacometti was finally done Yuuri turned back to where Viktor had been standing, determined to finally have the conversation that was so frustratingly overdue.

But by the time he turned back round, Viktor was already gone.

Viktor didn’t reappear at the official afterparty, or the unofficial one that continued on well after the majority of the officials had gone home, starting once the pressure of the press had vanished and the athletes were free to celebrate properly at last. Usually Yuuri would have avoided social gatherings like it at any cost but this time he was angry and he needed a way to work out his frustrations.

After so much hard work, so many years, he had finally beaten Viktor fair and square in competition. Finally created the perfect moment to have his full revenge on the other skater, to tell him all the things he deserved to know about exactly why he had been beaten and by whom. And instead Viktor just…disappeared?

It infuriated Yuuri because he had waited so long and worked so hard and Viktor didn’t even seem to have the courtesy to stick around.

In a moment of weakness he accepted the drinks from the celebrating skaters all around him, all riding high on the elation of the day or drowning their sorrows at the bottom of their glasses. Yuuri was the man of the hour, the one who had unseated a legend and claimed a world title for himself and the other skaters flocked to him, plying him with praise and more and more alcohol.

Yuuri was angry, so angry that his victory was sullied by Viktor yet again and he kept accepting the drinks, feeling the swooping lightheaded feeling that accompanied too much alcohol begin to take over. Surprisingly, Yuuri had a reasonably strong tolerance, something he learned to his shock and everyone else’s amusement when he had moved up to university just over a year ago. But even a strong tolerance could only get him so far and soon even he was swaying on his feet, encouraged by the decadence going on around him.

One of the female Russian skaters challenged Yuuri to a shot race, the vodka burning his throat as he
knocked it back from the tiny glasses. Yuuri figured that he already beaten one Russian today, he might as well make it two.

He didn’t remember anything after that.

Yuuri woke up the next morning with a headache, about half the clothes he had begun the night wearing and feeling generally miserable. Someone, presumably Celestino, had clearly taken pity on him and set his glasses on the bedside table before tucking him into bed but in his intoxicated state during the night he had tossed and turned until he was so tangled up in the sheets that it took a good few minutes to extract himself from the mess. With a sense of disgust, Yuuri registered that his skin was sticky with dried alcohol and sweat, his hair even worse.

For a brief moment Yuuri was immensely grateful his memory was completely blank from the night before. He had just been so angry, angry that no matter what he did Viktor never seemed to care, couldn’t even be bothered to stick around and talk to him. Yuuri had waited for so many years for the moment when he could throw Viktor’s own words back in his face and the other man had vanished before he had gotten the chance.

In retrospect, getting blackout drunk was perhaps not the best way to handle the negative emotions but there was no use regretting what couldn’t be undone. Quickly, Yuuri flicked through a couple of the social media sites he preferred, grateful to see that no pictures of his drunken antics seemed to have made their way onto the internet. That meant he must not have done anything too awful of that night. Either that or the athletes at the party had realised that releasing one embarrassing photo would result in a domino of blackmail material, of which there was a plentiful supply, being revealed to the world. While most athletes were fairly active on social media, the worst pictures they took of each other tended not to see the light of day. It was a small world and everyone had dirt on everyone else in some form or another.

Whatever the reason, Yuuri was grateful. He was a relatively inactive presence on social media and his fans ate up any fragment they could get their hands on. Any picture of him, drunk out of his mind and presumably missing more clothes than he was comfortable with, would be all over the internet in seconds and if Yuuri ever wanted to step back out onto the ice again that could never be allowed to happen. He’d never live the embarrassment down.

Whatever had happened the night before Yuuri was just glad there was no evidence left behind. The last thing he wanted was something like that coming back to haunt him.
At the World Championships, Yuuri was still riding the high of his last victory, the thrill of the
success driving him through effortlessly. He only saw Viktor occasionally, at routine practices and
other official events. Although Viktor never approached him the staring had seemed to become even
more frequent. Whenever Yuuri turned to look Viktor always seemed to be watching him, apprising
him.

Yuuri knew that Viktor was eyeing up the competition, trying to work out how to beat Yuuri back
down from the title spot after his unexpected defeat. He didn’t mind. In fact, instead of the unease he
used to feel at the intense stares he began to revel in them. Revel in the fact that no matter what,
Viktor would have to start taking him as serious competition now. Would have to care.

The thought drove Yuuri throughout the competition, the knowledge that he could do it, that he had
done it, and now no-one could deny it, not even Viktor himself.

The thrill of the victory, of beating Viktor to the gold and looking down on him from the top of the
podium was just as satisfying the second time around. Yuuri clutched his gold medal, face split into a
grin wide enough that his lips ached, pride welling in his chest and in his eyes. Retaining his title as
World Champion was even sweeter than winning it because this time he had kept the spot from
Viktor, broken the man’s streak in the way no-one else had ever achieved before.

Viktor had disappeared after the Olympics but there was no escape for him this time. The official
afterparty, held in the reception of the hotel where all the skaters and their coaches were staying, was
mandatory in everything but name and as the silver medallist Viktor would be expected to attend, just
as Yuuri was forced to suffer through the hours of boredom that inevitably came with official events.

As he entered the room, dressed in a suit that was far too formal and restrictive for his tastes, Yuuri
looked around surreptitiously, noting where Viktor was standing with his coach on the other side of
the room chatting to a few boring-looking officials with drab faces and monotone voices. It grated on
him, that he only ever seemed to see Viktor at the official events where conversation had to be
strictly kept in check. He was still desperate to rub Viktor’s face in his victory, to dangle the gold
medal before his eyes and laugh because Viktor had never believed he could do it and look how
wrong he was?

The party was incredibly boring, just as Yuuri had predicted it would be. Skating officials, coaches
and skaters all mingled and talked business. As the night drew on couples began to break away and
take to the dancefloor, twirling or swaying in time to the classical music that was crooning in the
background.

After touring the room for a while with Celestino Yuuri separated from his coach to, heading over to
the drinks table. A warning clench from his gut and the phantom taste of vodka burning down his
throat reminded him not to overdo it, warning him against a recreation of the fiasco from the
Olympics. Instead he only tossed back one glass of champagne, nurturing another in his hands and
taking smaller sips as he pondered over the day’s events, back turned to the room.

“Would you like to dance?”

The question came from behind him, interrupting his thoughts and he spun around, almost spilling
the contents glass on himself as he turned. He knew that voice.

Viktor was standing behind him, his own glass of champagne in one hand and those stormy eyes
fixed on Yuuri with the same intensity that always seemed to be present on the man’s face in his presence.

“Uh…excuse me?” Yuuri stammered, bewildered. He had absolutely no idea what was going on.

“Would you like to dance? With me?” The Russian clarified, clearing his throat slightly and shifting a little as he spoke. “Would you like to dance with me?”

“Dance. With you?” Yuuri was still confused. Part of him wanted to tell Viktor to get lost, to let him enjoy his victory in peace without the Russian coming in and ruining it with his words like he always did. Another part of him wanted to take Viktor up on his offer. He was curious. The other skater clearly wanted something and Yuuri couldn’t figure out what.

Viktor offered out his hand, palm up and Yuuri suddenly understood. It was a challenge. The Russian was challenging him, daring him to take up the offer. For the first time in a long time they were together off the ice, still rivals in every sense of the word but in a very different territory that led itself to much closer confrontations than the battles that they usually fought out on the rink.

Suddenly determined not to back down, Yuuri took the offered hand, allowing Viktor to pull him out onto the dance floor which had grown steadily fuller as the night progressed. The song being played by the musicians hidden away at the opposite end of the room was upbeat, a waltz with a steady and regular rhythm that had the couples around them spinning slowly in time to the music.

Their two hands were still clasped and after a quick look around the room Yuuri mimicked the position of the other dancing couples, placing his free hand on Viktor’s shoulder and after a questioning look from the other man, allowing the Russian to place his own on Yuuri’s waist.

Without any verbal indication they both stepped at the same time, Yuuri moving forwards and Viktor stepping back, beginning the dance in perfect time. Yuuri allowed himself to be briefly surprised at how well they moved together, at how natural the movements felt as they circled the floor.

But he didn’t allow himself to dwell on it. This wasn’t a dance, it was a challenge. It was Viktor’s way of sizing him up, of judging Yuuri’s skill both on the ice and off of it. The Russian was leading the dance and Yuuri saw it for the power play it was, Viktor taking back control in the only way he could now that Yuuri had stripped him of his two most important titles and humiliated him in front of the world.

But that didn’t matter. Yuuri had the upper hand here and he knew it. He was the victor, he had the medal and nothing Viktor did could ever change that.

Suddenly, Yuuri was consumed by the urge to remind Viktor of just that fact. Despite the relative privacy of the dance floor he still couldn’t say the words he was desperate to finally release. There were too many prying ears scattered around the room for him to delve into something so personal, to tell Viktor exactly who he was and what had driven him to beat the other man not once now but twice. Airing out his dirty laundry in public had never been Yuuri’s style. He was too private for that. That didn’t mean he was above a bit of mockery though.

“Your routine was very good today.” He told the other man, careful not to miss a step in the dance they were still moving to. “It was worthy of second place.”

And yes, he knew it was petty but it was still so incredibly satisfying at the same time. It was the same kind of viciously backhanded compliment that Viktor had paid him years ago and saying it out loud brought a thrilling sense of relief at finally being able to pay Viktor back in kind.
Under his hand, Yuuri could feel Viktor’s own clench briefly, could feel the tiny stumble in his step. But whatever else he might be, Viktor was an excellent dancer and he never missed the beat, recovering so fast Yuuri could almost have been convinced he imagined it.

“Thank you.” Viktor replied, not taking his eyes from Yuuri’s face. “Your performance was excellent as well. You must enjoy winning the gold.”

Yuuri narrowed his eyes, searching for the double meaning, the hidden insult in the words but he couldn’t read Viktor, hadn’t been able to for years.

“I do.” He replied instead because it was true and Viktor knew it. Yuuri was hardly subtle. Viktor had to know how much vicious satisfaction he had gotten from beating the other man. He had made it clear at the Olympics and he had made it clear here.

Yuuri had spent too long with Viktor’s insults hanging over his head, too long knowing the other skater had never taken him seriously, never believed in his abilities. He refused to hold back the satisfaction of proving him wrong now for anything, not for politeness sake and definitely not to spare Viktor’s feelings. Viktor had never spared his own after all.

Their next spin took them under one of the gleaming chandeliers and the crystal prisms threw a shattering of light across Viktor’s face, making his hair glow shimmering silver in the illumination, reflecting off the buttons of the waistcoat he wore. Yuuri had to fight to stop himself from blushing a little because seeing Viktor in a waistcoat had brought back some rather vivid memories of the last time Yuuri had seen him that way, both in reality and in the privacy of his own dreaming mind, and it wasn’t something he wanted to think about when trying to gloat over his victory.

Yuuri was suddenly aware of how hot it was in the banquet room, the close press of bodies on the dance floor and tightly enclosed space causing his suit to suddenly feel too tight and a light flush begin to creep up the back of his neck. Viktor must have noticed the rise in temperature too because his breath was coming out a little faster and there was a hint of sweat on the palm of the hand that still tightly clasped Yuuri’s own.

“Yuuri,” He started and Yuuri was shocked to hear his name come from the Russian’s mouth, the accent curling around the word as though it belonged there. “Why…”

The words were cut short as another dancing couple bumped into them, knocking them both off balance and breaking the grip that had held them close. Yuuri had barely even noticed that they had stopped moving but the crash had forced his brain to register the fact that they were standing stationary, blocking the dancefloor, and people were beginning to stare. Embarrassed, he turned away, fleeing the back towards the refreshments table.

“I need something to drink.” He muttered, tugging at his tie to try and loosen the collar of the shirt that had suddenly become so stifling. To his surprise, Viktor followed him.

Viktor grabbed a flute of champagne for himself but when he offered one to Yuuri he waved it down. Drinking alcohol right now was a bad idea, it was too hot in the room and he was having trouble thinking clearly through the haze as it was. Instead he grabbed a glass of water and walked towards the large ornate doors that lead out of the room, wanting to get away from the party and grab some fresh air.

For some reason, he turned back to Viktor, raising an eyebrow. Daring him to follow. He didn’t know why but he did and the other man complied, following Yuuri out of the banquet room and into the deserted corridor beyond.
Sighing heavily, Yuuri leaned back onto one of the walls adjacent to the door, taking a long gulp of the water from the glass in his hand and tilting his head back to allow the liquid to run cooling down his throat. Despite being free of the claustrophobic atmosphere of the banquet room he still felt hot all over and strangely restless.

Viktor had followed him out and was hovering by the closed door, staring at Yuuri with those damn eyes that had haunted his dreams for so many years. The look in them had unexpectedly changed. The sharp intensity was still very present but there was something else there too, something more.

Viktor had been a constant in Yuuri’s life for almost as long as he could remember. First as a hero, then as an enemy. Yuuri had loved him and hated him, admired his skating and loathed his words, looked up to him and been desperate to tear him down. Everything was a turbulent churn of emotions inside of him, a writhing mess that he couldn’t even begin to untangle. He had sought victory over Viktor for so many years and now the moment was finally here and he wanted more.

Yuuri knew in that moment that he was about do something very reckless and very, very stupid.

He tilted his glass up in a mocking toast, a toast to his own victory over the other man. He knew the smile on his face was far from kind and there was the glint of a challenge in his eyes, bright and fierce.

‘Look at me.’ He mocked silently. ‘I’ve beaten you. Now what are you going to do about it?’

A flash of movement was all the warning he got before Viktor quite literally slammed him up against the wall, hands burning brands clutching his shoulders and forcing him back almost painfully. The glass was knocked out of his hand and went rolling away across the floor but Yuuri barely noticed because suddenly there were desperate lips pressed against his and one of Viktor’s hands moved to grip the back of his head, tightening in his hair. Viktor kissed like he skated, with a burning intensity that consumed Yuuri completely, searing into his soul.

As first kisses went, it was pretty fucking fantastic.

Yuuri kisses back because he felt like he was on fire from the inside and he wanted this, more than he had ever wanted anything before and quite possibly ever would again. Viktor’s hand moved from its vicelike grip on his shoulder to clasp at his hip and Yuuri almost melted right there and then because the movement reminded him so vividly of the images from the dream that had been burned into his brain for years, no matter how hard he tried to scrub his mind clean.

The kiss was hot and rough and desperate. Yuuri kissed back viciously, kissed like it was a fight because it was Viktor and nothing between them would ever be anything but that. Everything was just another challenge, another test, pushing each other’s limits because that was what they did. What they had always done.

Viktor had control of the kiss, still pushing Yuuri up against the wall and kissing him so deeply and fully that Yuuri could hardly breathe. Part of Yuuri loved it but a stronger part of him rebelled. This was his night, his victory. He let Viktor take the lead in their dance but this was so much more and it was his turn to be in control.

Using the hidden strength his lithe figure concealed Yuuri flipped them around, reversing their positions so that Viktor was the one pressed against the wall. The other man looked stunning in the dim light of the hallway, with his hair dishevelled and his lips a kiss bitten red, breath heaving in his chest. Determined to keep his advantage Yuuri moved back in quickly, capturing the mouth in another fierce kiss. Letting his desire overrule the more rational part of his mind that was screaming at him that this was a horrible, awful idea and that he should stop right now before he did something
that he would really regret.

Viktor sighed into the kiss, seemingly unbothered by their change in positions. Frustration crept into the back of Yuuri’s mind at the sight. He wanted Viktor to fight back, to kiss him so hard that it hurt, to vent his anger on Yuuri the way Yuuri was doing on him.

Viktor’s hand moved, leaving its place on Yuuri’s hip and sliding up under his shirt and all rational thought was driven from Yuuri’s mind. He gasped at the touch, pushing the two of them closer together, desparate for more. For a second Viktor seemed to oblige, running the hand that wasn’t still twined in Yuuri’s hair over the bare skin, caressing it gently. But when Yuuri kissed harder he used the same hand to push him away, distancing their bodies slightly and moving his face so that his forehead was resting against Yuuri’s own, their lips apart.

Both of them were panting slightly and Viktor moved his hand from where it was tangled in Yuuri’s hair to cup the side of his face, still pressing their foreheads flush together.

“My room. It’s just upstairs.” He breathed and Yuuri wanted to laugh because of course it was. All of the skaters were staying in the same hotel as the banquet after all. But before he did the meaning of the words hit him, along with just exactly what Viktor was suggesting.

He shouldn’t go with Viktor. What was happening was stupid, the most idiotic thing he had ever done. He hated Viktor, he always had and this thing between them was just another power play, their mutual frustrations at each other final reaching its breaking point. It could have ended in a fight but instead it ended in this. Everything was too fast, to overwhelming, too perfect.

He shouldn’t go with Viktor.

He did anyway.

They barely made it into Viktor’s room.

Viktor had backed Yuuri through the doorway, refusing to break the kiss, his hands already working at the buttons of Yuuri’s shirt. Yuuri kissed him back, almost biting, using his teeth and tongue to drag out the little noises from Viktor that make heat pool in the pit of his stomach.

Yuuri knew he was inexperienced, just about as inexperience as you could get, and that it must show in his technique but he couldn’t bring himself to care. Viktor didn’t seem to mind too much either, kissing him eagerly, running one hot hand up and down Yuuri’s side under his shirt as his other fumbled with the buttons of the clothing.

Yuuri had never hated the complications of formal clothes more than he did in that moment. Frustrated, he dug his hands tightly into Viktor’s hair, willing the other man to hurry up because there was a fire burning in his chest and he felt like at any minute he might explode. Desperately he kicked off his shoes, not caring where they fell and willing Viktor to finish working on his shirt. The
other man was distracted, caught between undressing Yuuri and kissing him like he never wanted to let go.

His frustration finally bubbling over Yuuri flipped them both round, pressing Viktor back against the wall and releasing his hair to reach down and unbutton Viktor’s own shirt with quick, nimble hands, finally exposing the pale, smooth skin beneath. Marvelling at the sensation Yuuri ran his hands down Viktor’s chest, feeling the muscles tense and flex underneath his touch.

Viktor gasped at that, letting out a harsh noise that almost sounded like a growl and wrapping his hands tightly around Yuuri’s hips, pushing him backwards and practically throwing him onto the bed. Yuuri bounced a little with the force of his impact with the mattress, breath panting in the quiet of the room, face flushed and hair dishevelled with his shirt still hanging half open.

He barely had time to breathe before Viktor had joined him, climbing on all fours to hover over Yuuri where he was lying prone on the bed, gazing down with eyes alight. Softly he cupped a hand around Yuuri’s face, running his thumb over the tender spot on Yuuri’s flushed lips. Yuuri could feel the heat rising in his face at that, the blush extending from his cheeks down his neck and up over his ears. He could remember vividly the last time they had been in this position, although this surpassed even the heat of the dream all those years ago. The reality was so much more than he ever could have imagined and everything else seemed to pale in comparison.

Bending down again to capture Yuuri’s lips in another searing kiss, Viktor moved his hand away from Yuuri’s face and back to his shirt, fumbling with the tiny awkward buttons that were still keeping it half closed. With a low snarl of frustration he eventually gave up, grabbing each side of the shirt with his hands and ripping the fabric apart, sending the offending buttons flying across the room. Distantly Yuuri registered that he should probably be annoyed by that. He had liked that shirt after all, but the loss of the fabric revealed more of his skin to Viktor’s eager touches and the emotion simple wouldn’t come.

Viktor slid his hand loosely around the back of Yuuri’s neck, guiding him upwards until he was half sitting, giving him room to shrug off the remainders of his shirt. The loose blue tie that had been irritating him all evening was swiftly pulled over his head and carelessly tossed to one side.

Suddenly Yuuri felt a surge of self-consciousness. He was lying half naked under Viktor while the other man hovered above him, shirt hanging open but still covering more of his skin than it revealed. Wanting to even out the score Yuuri pushed up against Viktor and Viktor moved back willingly, allowing Yuuri to sit up fully. Letting Yuuri push the fabric from his shoulders, revealing more of the beautiful pale skin as it slid down Viktor’s arms. The other man shrugged out of the clothes easily, tossing them to one side as carelessly as he had flung Yuuri’s tie, bringing his hands back to Yuuri’s face the moment it was gone to draw him into another deep kiss.

In their new positions they were sitting almost equal, both kneeling on the bed before each other, pressed close together. Yuuri could feel the burning feeling in the pit of his stomach increase, could feel the way that both of their breathing had sped up considerably, could feel the way that Viktor’s kisses had become more frantic as the minutes went on.

In a flash of realisation, Yuuri knew that he needed to decide now whether he truly wanted to go through with this or not. There was still time to pull away. To redress himself and leave the room and pretend none of it had ever happened. But he didn’t want to. He might be inexperienced but even he could understand the most basic desires of his heart. He knew what he wanted and what he wanted was Viktor.

In an unexpected surge of courage, he hooked one of his legs behind Viktor’s own, using the leverage to flip them both over so that he was sitting above the other man, looking down at the
startled look on his face. Despite the sudden reversal of their position Viktor didn’t look displeased, just a little surprised.

Yuuri leant down, kissing Viktor’s lips again while using his hands to explore the expanse of bare skin beneath him. Viktor was beautiful like this, lean and muscular and perfect, his pale skin seeming to glow in the moonlight that was filtering in through the windows.

Quickly Yuuri’s hands had slid all the way down Viktor’s chest to the curve of his hips and the top of the trousers that were still keeping him half concealed. Gathering up his courage Yuuri moved his hands to the fastenings of the clothing, fingers fumbling a little with the nerves that were beginning to build up at what he was planning to do.

Gentle fingers wrapped lightly around his wrist, stilling his movements. Yuuri looked up in surprise to see Viktor gazing at him, eyes soft, such a contrast to the burning passion of the moments before.

“Are you sure?” Viktor asked and his voice was deeper than Yuuri had ever heard it before, accent thicker as it curled around the syllables.

Yuuri nodded, fixing his gaze on Viktor’s own. “Yes.” He relied, his own voice slightly hoarse.

Viktor smiled up at him and took Yuuri’s face in his hands again, bringing him down into a kiss that was more gentle and tender than any they had shared so far. While Yuuri was distracted with the kiss Viktor moved, rolling them both over so that he was on top again, barely breaking the contact. Yuuri must have had a startled look on his face because Viktor smirked a little at him, clearly finding amusement at the shock that he had used the same trick Yuuri had employed so effectively a few minutes before.

Viktor returned to kissing him again, the heat and passion returning and increasing with every movement of their lips. Gradually Viktor began to pull away from his face, kissing and biting down the length of his neck, leaving little sucking bruises wherever he went. Yuuri couldn’t help the shudder of pleasure that rocked through him at the sensation. Everything was new to him and each successive feeling felt even better than the last, pleasure mounting with every passing touch.

Finally, Viktor worked his way down the entirety of Yuuri’s neck, raising his head again to look Yuuri in the eye. Yuuri squirmed a little beneath him, starting to get impatient and Viktor laughed a little, taking both of Yuuri’s hands clasped in his own and kissing the knuckle of one gently before pushing them over Yuuri’s head, pinning them to the bed and immobilising him.

Yuuri wanted to protest at the sudden restraint but the traitorous, animal part of his brain purred at the sensation, enjoying the feeling of being pinned down with Viktor’s lean form still crouched over him. Viktor transferred both of Yuuri’s wrists into one of his hands, leave the other free to fumble in the drawer standing beside the bed. With only one hand pinning him down Yuuri was pretty sure he would be able to break the grip but when he moved he felt the surprising strength in Viktor’s hold, keeping him pinned in place. Yuuri was by no means weak but Viktor’s grip was firm and strong around him.

Viktor drew back from the drawer, having found what he was searching for and Yuuri saw a glimpse of the bottle and square packet as Viktor tossed them to the side, out of the way but still within easy reach. Viktor bent down to kiss him again and released Yuuri’s wrists from the restraining grip, his own hands roaming freely over Yuuri’s body, exploring with every touch. Yuuri used his newfound freedom to dig his fingers into Viktor’s hair, pulling at it with a grasp the bordered just on the right edge of painful, urging Viktor to go faster, to give him what his body was so desperately craving.
Yuuri had never given much thought to what his first time would be like. It had never really been a concern before. In all the years that had passed he had never really felt the need, had never found someone he was interested in enough to try it. If he had been pressed he probably would have said that he was waiting for the right time, the right person.

Of course it was Viktor. Who else could it be?

Viktor had been at the centre of his world for more years than Yuuri could remember. Their careers, their lives, were so desperately entangled in one another that it only made sense that this was how it happened.

Yuuri had always had the vague impression that his first time would be full of love, tender and gentle. But this…this was so much better. It was hot and rough and needy and Yuuri had never felt more than he felt in that moment. All his senses were heightened, all his emotions vivid. Viktor surrounded him, consumed him and it was perfect. A perfect harmony. A perfect irony.

Viktor pulled back from Yuuri again, breaking their kiss to quickly slip his fingers into the waistband of Yuuri’s trousers and the boxers beneath, sliding them smoothly over Yuuri’s hips. Yuuri, quickly picking up on the aim of the proceedings, lifted his hips eagerly, allowing Viktor better access to remove the remainder of his clothing. Not to be outdone he reached up to return the favour, tugging at the last of Viktor’s clothes, feeling the other man help with the process, removing the last vestiges of fabric until they were sitting together with nothing between them but skin.

Viktor sat back a little, gazing at Yuuri, lying there beneath him with nothing to shield him from the piercing gaze. Unwillingly, the self-consciousness returned. Viktor’s gaze was so intense, it was as if he was taking in every little detail of Yuuri’s body, ingraining it permanently into his memory. Yuuri felt exposed, regardless of the fact that Viktor was in the same state as him. Viktor’s body was stunning in its entirety and Yuuri knew he was far less to look at in comparison. Viktor had mocked his body once before and he didn’t want to give the other man the opportunity to do so now. He had been enjoying their previous activities immensely and he didn’t want them to cease just so that Viktor could catalogue his faults all over again.

In the frenzy of their time together Viktor had removed almost all of his own clothing but the black tie that he had worn the whole evening still hung loosely around his neck, dishevelled but present. Yuuri grabbed the end of it, using it to yank Viktor back towards him, breaking the gaze. Viktor made a choked off noise of surprise that devolved into a satisfied moan as Yuuri reinitiated the kiss, more forceful than before, keeping the end of the tie wrapped tightly in his fist.

From his position beneath the other man Yuuri could see how interested Viktor’s body was in the proceedings, could feel the way the other man’s hands flexed and gripped at his hips, so tight they were almost bruising. Encouraged Yuuri dragged Viktor closer, wrapping his legs around Viktor’s waist and digging his ankles sharply into the small of his back, urging Viktor on and registering with a smirk the way that Viktor gasped into his mouth at the feeling.

He was tired of waiting. It felt like he had been waiting forever.

Reaching over to the other side of the bed, Viktor grabbed the little bottle that he had thrown there, snapping open the cap and giving Yuuri a final, questioning look as if waiting for permission. Nodding eagerly Yuuri dug his fingers into Viktor’s back, encouraging him wordlessly.

Gripping his thighs Viktor lowered Yuuri’s legs from where they were locked behind his back, spreading them on the bed and sliding up so that he was nestled comfortably between them. Resting one hand to grip the side of Yuuri’s neck he brought the other one up between them, taking Yuuri’s cock in a warm firm grip and stroking it with sure, smooth strokes.
Yuuri almost bit through his lip trying to suppress the breathy moans that threatened to escape from him at the overwhelming sensation. It was nothing like anything he had ever felt before and he dug his fingers even tighter into Viktor’s back, leaving angry curved fingernail marks marring the pale blankness of the skin.

Removing his hand from Yuuri’s neck Viktor replaced it swiftly with his mouth, kissing his way down the flushed skin as he used his freed hand to squeeze a generous amount of the liquid from the small bottle onto his fingers. Still lavishing kisses onto Yuuri’s exposed neck Viktor brought the fingers up to between Yuuri’s parted thighs, circling but never quite entering the place that Yuuri was so desperate for him to touch, his other hand never faltering as it brought Yuuri flashes of pleasure that burned behind his eyes and set his heart racing. Impatiently Yuuri ground himself down onto the fingers and Viktor finally relented, pushing the first of them in and biting down on Yuuri’s neck at the same time, marking the spot just above his collarbone that would be visible to everyone who cared to look in the days to come.

Yuuri gasped at the feeling of the finger inside of him, squirming a little as he adjusted to the new sensation. Viktor gave him time, stilling his stroking of Yuuri’s cock so as not to overwhelm him. After a few seconds he began moving, the slick lube making the slide easy and painless. When he was sure Yuuri was ready, and Yuuri was sure his heart was about to stop from sheer overexertion, Viktor added another. Yuuri whined at the feeling, frantic need bubbling up in his chest as his ground down on the fingers, desperately seeking more sensation. Viktor let out a little laugh at the sound and bent over to press another kiss to Yuuri’s flushed mouth.

This kiss was soft but Yuuri quickly took control, licking up into Viktor’s mouth and biting so hard at the lips that he was sure he drew blood. Viktor let out his own needy sound at that and Yuuri crowed internally at the victory. Panting into his mouth Viktor added another finger, pulling back to look at Yuuri with darkened eyes.

Objectively, Yuuri knew that he must look a complete mess. Covered in sweat and bruises and bitemarks. Hair dishevelled and slicked back from his head in a mockery of the style he wore while skating. Panting and gasping for breath with blood smeared across the corner of his mouth, completely debauched.

In that at least though, Yuuri knew that Viktor matched him perfectly. Hair plastered to his forehead, chest heaving and eyes alight with fire and passion and a deeper emotion that in his desperate state Yuuri couldn’t quite place.

With a surge of confidence Yuuri reached between them, grasping Viktor’s cock and mimicking what he had done to Yuuri moments previously, dragging his hand up and down the hot skin, hearing Viktor gasp and shudder at the feeling. The other man was already hard, cock already leaking precome that Yuuri used to slicken his hand as he quickened his pace.

Part of him was still shocked, was still screaming at him that this was the most reckless, idiotic thing that he’d ever done. That he’d regret it in the morning. That he should stop now because even though they had come so far it was never too late to change his mind and pull away. But the other part of him, the stronger part, urged him on. This was as much of a battle as the ones they fought out on the ice and this was one that Yuuri refused to lose. Viktor was taking him apart piece by piece, sensation by sensation and the only way to fight back was to answer in kind. He was the only one that could make Viktor look like that, so beautifully wrecked. He was the only one that could drive Viktor to this, their bitter rivalry finally culminating in this moment, in the release of all the feelings he had been bottling up for so many years, all the words he had never been able to say, all the animosity that had been festering in his heart.
"I hate you." Yuuri breathed, knowing the sentiment was returned wholeheartedly, and it felt so good to finally say the words out loud after so long. “Now fuck me.”

Viktor faltered, fingers stilling in their movements but Yuuri refused to let him stop now, not now that they had both come so far. He dragged Viktor down into another kiss by the hair, pouring out every one of his emotions into the action. Viktor moaned into his mouth, one hand tightening on his leg and the other curling its fingers in a way that made Yuuri gasp in response.

Drawing his fingers out at last Viktor grasped Yuuri’s thighs, spreading them further apart and upwards and Yuuri almost whined at the loss. But the sensation didn’t last for long before there was the sound of a tearing wrapper and then something hot and hard and much bigger than the fingers that had just left him pressed against his hole, pushing slowly past the ring of muscle and filling him with heat and pressure and sensation so all-consuming that he could barely breathe.

Viktor pushed his legs up further, almost past his head and suddenly Yuuri was very grateful for the athletic flexibility his training had granted him. The new angle allowed Viktor to slide in even deeper and Yuuri wanted to cry with how good it felt. After so long, so much build up, he was almost ready to come then and there but he forced himself to resist. It wasn’t over, not yet.

Viktor wasn’t moving, allowing Yuuri time to adjust to the burning stretch just as he had done before but Yuuri was too impatient. With the little room that he had he moved, gasping and shuddering at the friction the motions brought.

Seemingly encouraged by Yuuri’s enthusiasm Viktor began to move as well, dragging out of Yuuri torturously slowly before sliding back in and making his whole body shudder at the pleasure of it. Viktor moved again, slowly at first but gradually gaining speed, setting a pace that rapidly turned punishing as he drove Yuuri closer and closer to the edge.

Reaching between them he grabbed Yuuri’s cock again, sliding his hand in time with the movements of his hips and Yuuri couldn’t stop the moan he let out, eyes rolling into the back of his head as he was overwhelmed with the sensation.

Still digging his fingers into the skin of Viktor’s shoulders he dragged his nails down the skin of his back, leaving angry red marks behind him. In the heat of the moment he realised he wanted to mark Viktor, wanted it to hurt, wanted Viktor to feel it for days to come and remember. Remember Yuuri and his victory and the sensation of their two bodies locked together, perfectly in time and perfectly matched.

The heat that had been building in Yuuri since the start of their whole encounter was reaching its peak and he knew that he wouldn’t last for much longer. But he refused to let Viktor have the upper hand. Yuuri may be inexperienced but he was young and strong and his stamina on the ice was unparalleled. There was no reason why he couldn’t carry that over to here.

Viktor was above him, one arm on either side of Yuuri’s head supporting his weight and trembling faintly with exertion. There was sweat beading on his forehead and his breath was coming out in pants. He was so beautiful it hurt.

Employing the same trick that they had both played earlier in their encounter Yuuri moved, using the momentum to flip them over for the last time so that he was straddling Viktor’s lap, looking down at the other man splayed out on the bed beneath him. Viktor’s cock had slipped out of him during the change in position and Yuuri quickly lined himself up with it again, sinking down onto the hard heat and throwing his head back at the feeling of it, the burn up his spine that tingled with both pain and pleasure.
Raising himself up a little he adjusted the angle, sinking back down deeper than before and hearing Viktor let out a broken moan at the feeling. Feeling a thrill at the noise Yuuri raised himself up again and slid back down, setting up a steady rhythm and feeling his muscles clench and flex as he drove them both towards the edge.

Viktor's hands flew to his hips and he dug his fingers in so hard that it hurt and Yuuri knew with a certainty that he would have bruises blooming there come the morning.

“Yuuri.” Viktor breathed out, half a gasp and half a moan. “Yuuri…”

Leaning over Viktor’s prone form Yuuri placed a hand on his shoulder, using the additional support to drive himself harder and faster, the change pace making both of them groan.

Viktor began to come apart under him and Yuuri relished in it, revelled in the fact that he could do this to Viktor, could take him apart in this way with nothing but his own body.

Suddenly Viktor sat up, raising the upper half of his body so that Yuuri was practically sitting in his lap. Startled, Yuuri was forced to cease his movements for fear that he would knock their heads together but the next second it didn’t matter because Viktor tanged his fingers into Yuuri’s sweat soaked hair and drove up into him, every muscle drawn tight.

Dragging Yuuri towards him, Viktor captured his lips in a final burning kiss. Yuuri panted into his mouth, so close and knowing that he wouldn’t be able to hold back for much longer. Viktor broke this kiss but didn’t move away, instead resting his face on Yuuri’s shoulder and muttering something in Russian, pressing the words into Yuuri’s skin. At the same time he reached again for Yuuri’s cock and at the feeling of Viktor’s warm fingers wrapped around him Yuuri finally let go, allowing the release to wash over him, shuddering out his pleasure before going lax in Viktor’s arms, trembling a little as the aftershocks shook through him.

Viktor moved his hand from Yuuri’s spent cock to grip his side, running his hand up and down Yuuri’s trembling flank as he moved his last broken thrusts. Yuuri, even still dazed from his own release, could tell that Viktor wouldn’t last much longer either.

Determined not to be outdone he moved again, gasping as the overstimulation drew the pleasure past the point of pain, his body still reeling. Pushing it aside Yuuri continued to move, dragging his hands down the raised red marks he had left on Viktor’s back and sinking himself down until he could feel Viktor come apart under him, could feel Viktor’s own orgasm tear through him and leave them both shaking in its wake. Yuuri gasping with his head pressed into Viktor’s shoulder and Viktor with his own head thrown back, eyes staring sightlessly at the ceiling as he rode the high of his release.

Yuuri could feel the racing of his heart, could hear the frantic thumps of Viktor’s own under his ear. Suddenly he felt exhausted, wrung out and spent in a way that he never had before, not even after his most gruelling of performances.

Viktor seemed to feel the same because he sank bonelessly back onto the bed, lowering Yuuri down with him until they were lying in a tangle of legs and sweat slicked skin, Yuuri’s head still pressed to Viktor’s shoulder.

Yuuri knew that he should get up. Leave the bed and clean off. Leave the room before the reality of the situation finally hit him.

But instead he found himself drifting off sleep, pressed against the warmth of Viktor’s chest and lulled by the beating of a heart that perfectly matched his own.
Yuuri woke up the next morning, sticky, sore and completely alone.

Slowly he raised his head from where it had been nestled, curled up amidst the mound of blankets and pillows on the hotel bed, blinking in the bright light of early dawn.

Hesitantly he sat up, cataloguing the various aches and pains from his protesting body. His muscles felt stretched and achy like they did after a particularly gruelling practice session and there was a burning feeling in the base of his spine that made him blush a bright flaming red despite the emptiness of the room.

Examining himself quickly he noted the bruises dug into his hips, perfect replicas of the long slender fingers that had held him there the night before. His neck was peppered with smaller abrasions, little red marks marring the skin and the bitemark on his collarbone stood out sharply. There would be no way he would be able to hide all of them from view, even with his shirt buttoned up to its fullest.

Speaking of his shirt…

Yuuri dragged himself out of the comfort of the bed, making his way around the room to retrieve the scattered items of his clothing from the night before. In the heat of the moment he hadn’t cared where they were as long as they were removed but in the revealing glow of the morning light he was embarrassed at the trail that led from the door across the room to the bed he had just vacated.

His shoes, socks and trousers all seemed to be accounted for, along with the unravelled mess of his tie that had somehow made its way to hang crookedly on the bedside lampshade. The shirt however he gave up for lost. Half the buttons were missing from where it had been torn off the night before and there was no way that he could wear it without alerting everyone he came across to just what he had been doing while the banquet was ending.

As he made his way around the room Yuuri catalogued the interior, noting the emptiness of the main room and the complete absence of sound coming from the en suite. The room was completely empty. Viktor must have left already, to where he had no idea. It was a signal as clear as any, that Yuuri was expected to be gone by the time he returned.

It was only to be expected, Yuuri reminded himself. The common courtesy would probably have been to leave as soon as they were finished, one moment of passionate abandon not implying permission to spend a night curled up in Viktor’s arms. But he had just been so tired and pleasantly sated and moving had been the last thing on his mind.

But now it was morning and Viktor was still Viktor and Yuuri was still Yuuri and nothing had changed between them despite the momentous shift that had just happened in Yuuri’s own personal world. They were still rivals, still enemies and it was time for Yuuri to leave.

Quickly he showered, scrubbing the last traces of the night before from his skin and watching as the soapy water swirled away down the drain, disappearing for good. He dried himself as fast as he
could before slipping back into the clothes from the night before. The room he was staying in was only a few floors away and hopefully he would be able to sneak back there without being noticed.

He and Celestino were staying in separate rooms this time around and Yuuri prayed that the other man had not noticed his absence or, if he had, that he had just assumed Yuuri had decided to head to bed early. He wasn’t sure he could bring himself to explain to his coach exactly what had happened. He could only barely rationalise it to himself.

Still standing shirtless in the room, Yuuri discarded the tattered remains of his own shirt and pulled open the wardrobe, taking in the haphazard jumble of assorted clothes piled within it. While he wasn’t exactly thrilled at the thought of having to permanently borrow one of Viktor’s own shirts to avoid being thrown out of the hotel for public indecency, it was the other man’s own fault for ruining Yuuri’s own so completely and Yuuri was sure Viktor couldn’t begrudge him the item.

Pulling out what looked to be the cheapest white shirt he could find, close enough to his own that hopefully the change wouldn’t be noticed but still feeling more expensive than anything he himself owned, Yuuri covered himself quickly. Moving to the mirror he ran his hand through his hair a couple of times, willing the errant strands to lie flat.

Despite his best efforts he still looked a mess, his lips raw and bruised and his neck a damning patchwork of bitemarks and bruises.

Sighing, Yuuri turned away, knowing he couldn’t delay for any longer. Taking one last glance around the deserted room he walked to the door, pulling it open and nearly walking straight into the man approaching from the other side.

“Woah.” Yuuri stepped back, barely avoiding falling at the near collision and Viktor did the same, stumbling a little.

Viktor was looking perfect as usual, every hair in place, clothes fresh and no evidence in his face of what had taken place the night before. Although Yuuri knew, with a small flash of unexpected pleasure, that if he were to lift the back of Viktor’s shirt he would still be able to see the raised red marks that he had dug deep into the pale skin just hours ago.

“I was just…” Yuuri started, motioning to the door while at the same time that Viktor stuttered, “I brought…”

They both stopped again to appraise each other and Yuuri took notice for the first time what Viktor was holding.

He was carrying two takeout cups in a holder, the faint trail of steam rising from them both revealing them as fresh and still piping hot. The fancy logo on the side vaguely registered in Yuuri’s memory as one from one of the upmarket coffee houses near to the hotel and the smell of the dark roasted beans was starting to waft into the room.

“I brought you this.” Viktor finished, holding out one of the cups awkwardly.

Yuuri took it hesitantly, mumbling a quite “thanks” and took a sip, eyes widening at the taste. The liquid inside wasn’t coffee like he could smell coming from Viktor’s own cup but warming green tea, a comforting taste that he knew well. It wasn’t Yuuri’s favourite thing to drink but he preferred it much more than he did coffee. It was common and easily accessible in most countries that he visited and Celestino usually brought him a cup before competitions, when he needed something warm to comfort him but didn’t want the frantic buzz of a caffeine rush that came with a stronger drink.
Viktor must have made a lucky guess when he picked it out but Yuuri appreciated it all the same. The familiar taste of the tea calmed his nerves and he inhaled the smell gratefully before turning back to the man in front of him.

“I was just leaving.” He finished off his own aborted sentence, wanting to reassure the other man that he had no plans to stick around when he wasn’t wanted. Viktor might have brought him the tea as a courtesy gesture but Yuuri was sure he must do the same to all the people he slept with and it definitely wasn’t a signal that Viktor wanted him to stay.

They might have been able to justify what had passed between them in the dark of the night, with the thrill of victory still coursing through his veins and riding high on the tangle of anger and frustration and desire that always seemed to be present whenever Viktor was, but in the bright light of day he couldn’t justify hanging around any longer.

Silently, Viktor moved from the doorway, allowing Yuuri to pass and Yuuri went, still not quite able to look the other man in the eye.

Suddenly wanting to be out of there and free from the gaze that still never seemed to leave him Yuuri walked away. After a few steps he turned back, wanting to say something but not quite sure how to put it into words. A challenge for the next time they competed, an acknowledgement of what had passed between them, an implication that maybe, just maybe, it didn’t have to be both the first and last time.

“I’ll see you next season Nikiforov.” He finally settled on, the words sounding impersonal enough to mask the myriad of emotion building inside him but with enough implication that he was sure Viktor caught the meaning buried within them.

The Russian continued to watch him, gaze unreadable. Yuuri almost turned away, embarrassed, but before he did he caught the soft, “Until next season.” that slipped from the mouth of the other skater, low and quiet even in the silence of the corridor.

Yuuri turned away, feeling Viktor’s eyes follow him all the way down the corridor and out in open space beyond.

He should be ashamed. Should be berating himself for what he had just allowed to pass between them, the clear-cut lines of their bitter rivalry now hopelessly blurred. He had quite literally slept with the enemy and Yuuri knew he should regret it.

But somehow, he didn’t.

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas/Happy Holidays everyone! <3

Songs used:

Viktor’s FS – Belle from Notre Dame de Paris (english translation [here](#))

Also [here](#) is a video of Johnny Weir skating to the same song. Some of Viktor’s routine was inspired by him.
Yuuri’s FS – History Maker by Dean Fujioka

Two other very important things to mention!

Pardonthelitany made an awesome Spotify playlist of all the songs used in the routines so far that can be found here.

leblacknoir on tumblr drew a beautiful sketch of Viktor from chapter 5 in his FS costume which I am completely in love with which can be found here.

I strongly encourage everyone to go check both of them out and give them lots of love!

Link to my tumblr

Rey xx
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Yuuri_Katsuki.gif

cinnamonrollyuuriK

Best Moments of Katsuki Yuuri’s FS Routine

#Katsuki Yuuri #Figure Skating #World Championships #Suck it Nikiforov

2,612 notes

Viktor_Nikiforov.jpg

Viiktor-Niikiforovv

Promo picture of Vitya in his SP costume for this season (˚♡‿♡˚)

#Viktor Nikiforov #Figure Skating #what a babe

2,837 notes

Viktuuri.png

Niki_Trash

Just a few quick twitter sketches I did of everyone’s favourite skating rivals

#Viktor Nikiforov #Katsuki Yuuri #Figure Skating #Don’t tell me this isn’t what actually happened just let me live #Viktuuri

467 notes

Viktor Nikiforov, Yuuri Katsuki and the upcoming season

Ok so I know we’re all very excited for the upcoming season and I’ve had a lot of asks recently about what I think is going to happen so I decided to make a quick post about my thoughts as the GPS approaches.

As everyone knows, Katsuki Yuuri finally (finally!) won not one but two golds over Viktor last season, one in the winter olympics and one in the world championships. He’s been close before but this is the first time he’s ever actually properly won (I know I know, he won all those golds last year too but we all know they don’t really count since Viktor was out with a leg injury). A lot of people (you know who you are) were pretty angry about this but as I spoke about in my post here this wasn’t a case of biased judging or them ‘feeling sorry for him’, his program was actually the stronger
of the two and his performances were deserving of the title.

However now that everyone is gearing up for the next season I decided to run a quick critical analysis on everyone’s two favourite skaters and try and make some predictions as to how it’s going to go down this season.

Firstly, technically, Nikiforov is still a better skater than Katsuki.

Now before the anon hate starts flooding in remember, I like Katsuki. I do! But the fact of the matter is that in technical elements Nikiforov is still a way ahead of Katsuki. As far as we have seen in competition Viktor can perform all the quads (except the quad axel but no-one has ever done that before so I’m discounting it). While Katsuki is by no means technically weak he can still only reliably do the quad toe loop and salchow. So on technical merit alone, Viktor wins.

Secondly, Katsuki has only ever beaten Nikiforov with ONE program, albeit a very good one. Nikiforov has won countless titles in his career with loads of different ones. So while Katsuki is undoubtedly an excellent skater last season might just have been a case of getting lucky, one hit wonder sort of thing. Just because he’s done it once doesn’t mean he can necessarily do it again.

I’m not saying that Katsuki isn’t a good skater. He is, probably one of the all time best, and his rivalry with Nikiforov is really something spectacular he’s always just so close. But what I’m saying is that if I were to place my bets for who’s taking home the gold this season… Well, it is and always has been Nikiforov all the way.

#Viktor Nikiforov #Katsuki Yuuri #Figure Skating #GPS

Source: vityas-girl

976 notes

In the run up to the Grand Prix Final, Yuuri found that he was avoiding Viktor.

It wasn’t really even a conscious decision. Rather it was simply that every time he caught sight of the other man, across the room, beside the rink, practicing on the ice, he couldn’t bring up the courage to face him again. Logically he knew that he had nothing to be embarrassed about but he couldn’t help the hot flush that would creep up his neck every time he thought about what had passed between them.

The problem wasn’t that Yuuri hadn’t enjoyed it. The problem was that he had. And now he couldn’t look at the other skater without flashes of memory, of burning kisses and clutching fingers and the slide of skin against skin, from invading his mind.

Objectively Yuuri knew that what had happened had been a mistake. For Viktor, sleeping with fellow skaters was probably a common occurrence and he could brush it off with ease but Yuuri
couldn’t seem to let go that effortlessly. The usual anger and resentment that he felt whenever he
looked at the other man was now hopelessly entangled with a whole host of new emotion that he
determinately did not examine too closely.

For a while he had considered telling Phichit. Considered explaining everything to the other boy and
letting his friend help him sort through the mess of his own thoughts in the way that he had always
been so good at. Phichit wouldn’t judge, Yuuri knew that. Presumably he would be very unhappy
about what had happened, knowing full well Yuuri’s negative feelings about and sour history with
the other skater, but he wouldn’t berate Yuuri for his bad choices the way that Yuuri knew Celestino
would if he ever found out.

But somehow Yuuri just couldn’t bring himself to tell his friend. It was hard enough to explain what
had passed between Viktor and himself in his own head, there was no way he could vocalise to
Phichit exactly what had happened and why. Sometimes, Yuuri wasn’t even sure himself.

Regardless of whether he told anyone or not, he had to put it out of his mind. Viktor was his rival.
For what seemed like the hundredth time they were pitted against each other, going head to head for
another title and Yuuri couldn’t afford any distractions.

As usual he flew through the qualifying competitions, as did Viktor. Before the short program of the
Grand Prix Final Yuuri stayed out of the way, mentally preparing himself. Despite his victories the
previous year he still had never actually claimed a Grand Prix title when Viktor was skating as a
competitor and he was determined to finally do so. To add the final jewel in the crown and complete
his trio of victories over the other skater.

Throughout the short programs he kept up his elusiveness, only appearing in public when he
absolutely had to. For his own sake he told Celestino it was to try and keep in the right headspace
without the crowds causing him to panic - which was part of the truth at least. His coach didn’t need
to know that Yuuri was also determined not to run into Viktor until he had finally sorted through his
own emotions and figured out what he was going to say. Which at the rate he was going would
probably be never.

Thankfully, his short program went well despite the nerves that Yuuri found gradually returning as
the competition progressed. After performing his own short program, Viktor beat him by a scant few
points but Yuuri wasn’t too bothered. For the first time ever he was secure in the knowledge that he
had beaten Viktor once before and therefore it was perfectly possible for him to do so again. The
burning ache that usually came with ease successive loss was eased with that knowledge and Yuuri
found to his surprise that he was enjoying the competition more than usual.

The next day as he walked to the ice for the free skate, balancing carefully on his skate guards and
trying to mentally drown out the noise of the crowd surrounding him, Yuuri noticed Viktor standing
by the side of the rink talking to his coach. As Yuuri watched the other skater tensed, seeming to
notice something, and turned around, focusing his gaze on Yuuri. Blushing slightly and cursing
himself for it Yuuri turned away but was stopped at the sharp call of “Yuuri,” that was almost
drowned out by the din from the crowds.

Shocked, Yuuri turned back around to see Viktor still looking at him, standing a few meters away
with his body twisted around to face the other skater. If the accent hadn’t given the speaker away,
Viktor’s body language definitely would have.

Yuuri paused, waiting. It was the first time they had been in close proximity since the ‘incident’ and
he had absolutely no idea what Viktor wanted. From their short program scores Viktor was already
in the lead and as the reigning champion he had no need to speak to the lower ranking skaters.
Maybe Viktor was just trying to psych him out, to remind Yuuri that he was watching and waiting
for him to screw up and open an easy path to victory.

For a few seconds, Viktor seemed to struggle with his speech, brows furrowed and eyes slightly averted, his adam’s apple bobbing up and down with motion of the words he wasn’t saying. Finally his gaze flickered back to Yuuri’s face, just as piercing as ever.

“Good luck.” he called and Yuuri nearly tripped over his own skates in surprise.

Good luck? What the hell was Viktor wishing him good luck for? Viktor may be in the lead but Yuuri still had a decent shot at surpassing him in the free skate. If anything Viktor should be wishing him failure so that he could claim another gold medal and redeem himself for his losses the previous season.

Of course, there were plenty of cameras and journalists around, all with eyes trained on Yuuri and by proxy, Viktor. Maybe Viktor was just trying to get more positive press, to turn the attention back onto himself. To play up the good sportsmanship angle to please his sponsors.

But even then it didn’t really make sense. What seemed to be the whole skating world was enamoured with the idea of a bitter rivalry. Yuuri’s win the year before had only driven the hype to new and even more overwhelming heights and it seemed like everyone knew that Viktor Nikiforov and Yuuri Katsuki hated each other more than anything or anyone else. Everyone was waiting for them to throw down on the ice for another year, waiting for the inevitable clash between the best of the best and the one who had stolen it all away. Pretending to support Yuuri would gain Viktor nothing.

Deciding to push the confusion to the back of his mind, Yuuri simply nodded in response. He had to focus on his skate and nothing else if he wanted to win. Trying to puzzle through the mind of Viktor Nikiforov wasn’t part of his job description.

Focusing on nothing but the routine he was about to perform he stepped out onto the ice, giving a brief wave of acknowledgement to the cheers of the crowd. The furious desperation that had driven him to such heights last year was greatly diminished but his determination was just as strong as ever. He still wanted to win. He was sure nothing would ever change that.

After his free skate routine, after the scores had come through in the kiss and cry and after Yuuri had waved down the myriad of reporters who were circling like vultures, hoping for a statement, Yuuri and Celestino made their way up into the stands to watch Viktor take to the rink.

To his surprise, Yuuri had realised just how long it had been since he had watched Viktor skate a full program in person. Usually he was too busy to watch, either preparing for his own skate or running through the required post-skate routines. Or he had deliberately avoided watching the other man like he had in the Grand Prix Final the year previously where he had seen Viktor’s win approaching after less than a minute and knew that he didn’t want to stay and witness his own defeat.
In contrast to the years before, this time Yuuri found himself actually wanting to watch Viktor skate. After all, he needed to at least see the routines in person now that they were rivals in the truest sense of the word. They had both taken home victory from under the noses of the other and were finally standing on equal footing after so many years. Yuuri realised that maybe at last he could finally watch Viktor perform without the impending sense of doom and failure that had always loomed over him whenever he had watched the other skater before.

Viktor slid out onto the ice to thunderous applause and cheers from the audience. Despite losing his title as World Champion and Olympic Champion his popularity hadn’t diminished at all. Viktor Nikiforov was still the living legend of figure skating and nothing seemed to be able to change that.

Viktor did a swift loop of the rink, getting a feel for the ice before coming to rest in the centre to take up his starting position.

A soft female voice came crooning out of the speakers, accompanied by a delicate melody. Viktor inhaled as the song began to play, letting his eyes fall closed as he pushed off with one skate to glide forwards. Tiny shimmers of light danced off the sequins artfully scattered across his costume, making him seem to glow in the centre of the rink.

Throughout every movement Viktor kept his gestures soft, gentle and sweet. The soaring voice of the melody was eventually joined by another in duet but Yuuri tuned out the lyrics, too focused on the performance. Viktor looked beautiful, an innocent sort of beauty that Yuuri hadn’t seen from him for years.

From very personal experience Yuuri knew exactly how false the façade was. Viktor was far from the soft and gentle persona he was putting on. Yuuri had seen the cruelty of his tongue and his mind. And more than that, he had seen the burning passion, the desperate pleading desire, the way Viktor kissed like he wanted to consume.

It was all so at odds with the tenderness of the performance that he was putting on that the contrast almost shocked Yuuri. After so many years of hating everything about Viktor he had virtually forgotten the almost angelic skating, the simple beauty that had enraptured a child, a child full of adoration and no idea of where his twisting future would eventually lead him, so many years ago.

Out on the rink Viktor swept into a quadruple lutz, the move looking so gracefully easy. The audience cheered and Yuuri found himself unconsciously holding his breath until Viktor had landed the jump, the movement flowing seamlessly into another spin. A failed quad lutz had been the move that had taken Viktor out of skating for a whole season. The thought of seeing Viktor injured again made Yuuri’s heart clench a little inside his chest.

Viktor glided through the routine and Yuuri couldn’t look away. Finally he came to rest, his final position held with one hand extended as though he were reaching for something just out of his grasp. Every single audience member leapt to their feet, whistling and cheering and clapping for the skater before them. Finding his view of the rink suddenly blocked, Yuuri stood too.

He didn’t clap. He was too lost in thought, too distracted by the performance he had just witnessed. But he did stand with the rest of the crowd, looking down at Viktor where he stood in the rink with one hand still extended, grasping nothing.
Viktor won.

Yuuri wasn’t surprised. Disappointed yes, but not surprised. Much as it pained him to admit it, Viktor’s routine had been enrapturing and he had skated it beautifully.

To his surprise however, Yuuri found that the bitter burning jealousy that usually rose in him at a loss was dampened down. Still present but less so than it had ever been before. It made sense, he realised. Before he had been so desperate to prove himself, to prove that he could beat Viktor, to prove his worth. But after such a successful previous season he had finally shown everyone that he truly was a worthy skater, a worthy rival.

He couldn’t just expect to suddenly win every competition. Losing was a natural part of competing sometimes and Yuuri found that the sting was lessened somehow. Now that he knew that he could do it, now that the world, now that Viktor knew that he could do it, the sickening desperation to win was dulled to a faint ache.

Yuuri had wanted to win. He had been determined as he had ever been to take home the gold. But despite the loss he knew there would still be plenty of chances in the future. One loss, one failure wouldn’t be the end of his career, not after he had already achieved the first victory. His frustration at the loss was tinged with the reassurance that he had beaten Viktor before and he could do it again. The World Championships were still to come after all.

They were equals now in a way that they had never been before. Suddenly, Yuuri realised that maybe that was why Viktor had wished him luck before his free skate. Maybe Viktor had finally decided to acknowledge Yuuri as a worthy opponent and was treating him with the courtesy that was expected between high class competitors. Viktor may still not like him, and that was a sentiment that was wholly returned, but maybe he had finally acknowledged Yuuri as a proper rival for the titles, a worthy skater in his own right.

Maybe his victories last season had finally proven to Viktor that he was worth something after all.

As they left the stadium to return to their hotel, Yuuri and Celestino had to pass through the reserved areas of the stadium where the other skaters were all winding down after a tiring day. Celestino branched off briefly to exchange a few words with a fellow coach and Yuuri hung back awkwardly, not wanting to interrupt.

Shifting restlessly on his feet Yuuri let his eyes wander around the room, drifting over the other skaters and coaches but not settling on anything in particular. Not until his gaze landed on a head of silver hair, the soft strands falling over a face as their owner hunched over, peering down at the phone in his hands.

Startled, Yuuri blinked for a second, taking the sight in. For some reason he had forgotten that Viktor would probably be back here somewhere. After so long of Viktor Nikiforov being the legendary figure he was it was strange to remember that he still hung around in the areas with all the other skaters, distinguished only by his reputation.

Viktor was sitting alone. Presumably his coach must have left to run an errand or talk to a fellow like Celestino. The graceful costume from his free skate was covered by the standard red and white jacket
and Viktor seemed to be absorbed in his phone, staring down at the tiny screen. From his position a few meters away Yuuri could just about make out the familiar colours of Viktor’s preferred social media site glowing from the screen, although even with his glasses on his vision wasn’t good enough to see more than that.

Seeing Viktor like that, alone, distracted, almost vulnerable, was a shock. For so long Yuuri had only ever seen the other skater when he was performing, or watching Yuuri with the piercing gaze that seemed to follow him wherever he went. Or, more recently, pursuing certain…other activities that still made a hot flush run through Yuuri’s body no matter how hard he tried to stop it. It was strange to see Viktor looking so ordinary.

Clearing his throat awkwardly, Yuuri realised he should probably say something. No matter the animosity between them, Viktor’s previous wishes of good luck had seemed to be a show of good sportsmanship and Yuuri would be damned if he let Viktor one up him and didn’t return the gesture. At the sound Viktor’s head whipped round and he startled, eyes widening as he saw who was standing watching him.

“Yuuri.”

He half stood, turning towards Yuuri but was stopped at the loud call of “Yuuri” that echoed even through the din of the skaters and coaches around them. Both heads turned to see Celestino standing at the door, gesturing for Yuuri to come over, looking impatient. It was clear he had finished his conversation a while ago and was ready to leave.

Not wanting to hold his coach up Yuuri turned to leave, before pausing and turning back to Viktor again. Regardless of his own feelings towards the other man it couldn’t hurt to be civil, especially considering what had passed between them.

“Uh...congratulations.” He finally settled on, making an aborted gesture towards the gold medal that was strung casually around Viktor’s neck. Looking started, Viktor glanced down as if he had forgotten it was there. By the time he looked back up Yuuri had already turned away and was making his way towards Celestino and the exit.

He didn’t let himself look back.

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V-nikiforov
15,678 likes

V-nikiforov: **Gold medal at the GPF #grandprixfinal**

*View all 3,786 comments*

therealJD  HELL YEAH
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Back in his hotel room, Yuuri examined the silver medal, turning it this way and that and watching how the shiny metal gleamed in the light. After so many years of coming second best he had quite the collection, but the soft silvery glow never brought the same fierce pride roaring up within him than when he had glittering gold draped around his neck. It was pretty all the same though. Even Yuuri couldn’t deny that.

Dropping the medal to let it hang shining around his neck Yuuri slouched back on the bed, picking up his phone and flicking absentmindedly through the news pages before remembering what he had seen Viktor doing less than an hour previously. Suddenly curious, Yuuri opened the new app. He didn’t follow Viktor officially but all it took was a hastily typed ‘V’ into the search bar for the device to know what he wanted.

Yuuri tapped on the name and icon that appeared on the screen, opening Viktor’s familiar profile and flicking down to where the most recent photo had been posted.

The photograph looked like it had been taken by Viktor himself, the face cut off from the frame with the red and white skating jacket taking up the majority of the picture, the gold medal hanging around the neck on proud display. Yuuri wondered why Viktor even bothered posting about his gold medal.
It was unlikely there would be a single skating fan in the world who didn’t hear about it the moment it happened.

Casually flicking down the screen Yuuri went to move on to the next picture but was stopped when he caught a glimpse of his own name in the comments written under the photo. Scrolling back up the screen he read the visible comments, then clicked to view them all, throat growing tighter and tighter with each little line of text.

Ever since he had begun skating in the senior division he had known people compared him to Viktor. It was inevitable, his rise through the ranks was second only to Viktor’s in recent memory and the parallels were easy to draw. But the comparisons had always grated on him. He could do nothing without it being compared to Viktor, without his achievements being measured up to Viktor’s own.

After they had finally ascended the podium together for the first time, fans had started to pick up on Yuuri’s feelings for the other skater. It was entirely his own fault. Although he kept things civil in interviews, Yuuri knew he had a hard time keeping the dislike off his face and it hadn’t been long before the newly christened rivalry had emerged in both popular and social media. Viktor had a large and devoted fanbase and their distaste for Yuuri had never been subtle.

Yuuri had known that. He had always known. Despite his therapist’s warnings he had read through hundreds of comments, hundreds of articles and blog posts that criticised everything from his skills to his appearance, furious that anyone dared challenge Viktor for the title time and time again. Every time Yuuri looked at Viktor he could see the cruel comments reflected in his eyes, could see the way no-one in the world seemed to think he could ever measure up.

But he had. After everything, after so many failures, he had pushed through. Had worked and worked until his feet bled and his body ached, until he could finally step out onto the rink and beat Viktor fairly in competition in front of the whole world. After so long he had proved himself. Had proved he was just as good as Viktor, was a worthy rival, was someone whose talents finally, finally could not longer be denied, so far removed from the little boy who had his heart broken on the day his idol told him he couldn’t skate so long ago.

But apparently it wasn’t enough.

Every comment seemed to burn itself into his mind. Each new dash of speech crowing about Viktor’s victory, about how glad they were to see Yuuri beaten again, about how Viktor deserved the gold above all others. About how Yuuri’s achievements the previous season must have been a fluke. About how his skating couldn’t possibly compare to Viktor’s. About how pathetic and weak and stupid Yuuri Katsuki was to ever think that he could rival the great Viktor Nikiforov.

For a brief shining moment, Yuuri had believed that he had at last proved himself. That in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of Viktor they were both finally equal. Both excellent athletes with the skill to compete on the highest level, to fight it out for the title because whatever Viktor Nikiforov could do, Yuuri Katsuki had proved that he could match him. That he could beat him.

But it seemed that didn’t matter. Yuuri’s victory over Viktor didn’t matter, just like all his gold medals had never mattered to anyone when he had first won them with Viktor out of the competition. Viktor was the champion. Viktor was the one that everyone loved. Everything Yuuri had done, everything he had worked for was brushed aside the minute Viktor claimed a gold medal over him again. All his achievements written off as good luck, or a single good routine that caught him a brief but ultimately fleeting victory that he could never hold on to.

Yuuri had thought that he had finally proved himself but he was wrong. He would have to keep
winning, keep succeeding over and over again, victory after victory before anything would change. Beating Viktor once wasn’t enough. It would never be enough.

Feeling a little sick, Yuuri thought back to his meeting with Viktor. Of how the other man had been staring so intently at his phone, at the picture that was now littered with comments grinding Yuuri’s name back into the dirt. Viktor must have read them. Must have seen how little everyone in the world thought of Yuuri Katsuki. Must have laughed to see that his position on top of the world was hardly threatened by the pathetic skater who he had once verbally torn down.

For a brief second, Yuuri had thought that maybe Viktor had finally seen him as an equal. Had encouraged him in his skate because they were fellow competitors who could respect, even if they did not like, each other. Had finally acknowledged that Yuuri had talent, was a real rival for the title.

But now he could see just how wrong he had been. Of course Viktor had never seen him as an equal. Viktor was king of the skating world and Yuuri was just a mild annoyance, briefly in the spotlight but easily discarded, easily dismissed. The words at the rink would have been for the cameras only, to show everyone how kind Viktor Nikiforov could be, how kind to encourage all of the pathetic skaters who would never live up to his greatness.

Yuuri could feel his thoughts getting darker and darker, could feel himself getting caught in the whirlpool of emotion that dragged him down but he couldn’t help it. It was barely believable that just hours ago he had thought that he was content with second place for the time being, that one loss wouldn’t matter because there would be so many more chances at victory.

Second place would never be good enough. Never good enough for the world and never good enough for him. If he wanted people, if he wanted Viktor, to ever respect him the way he desperately desired he would have to win over and over again, every time.

Angrily, Yuuri tore off the medal around his neck and hurled it across the room, uncaring of where it clattered to the floor, it’s shine suddenly gone. Wiping away the tears that had begun to build in his eyes he stood up, desperately wanting to be out of the room. He wanted to skate. Wanted to lose himself of the feeling of being out on the ice, where nothing else mattered and he could think in peace.

But he couldn’t. The stadium would never allow him out on the ice and he couldn’t even find a local rink. Reporters were camped outside the hotel where all the skaters were staying and there was no way Yuuri could get past them. The last thing he wanted was for them to see him like this, eyes red with tears. The pictures would be on the internet within minutes and he couldn’t stand yet another humiliation.

Within the confines of the hotel he wandered aimlessly, traversing random corridors, up and down endless flights of steps. Walking never brought him the same peace as skating but at least it was something.

Desperately, Yuuri tried to cast his mind back to earlier that year. When he had won gold and felt on top of the world. The feeling of the crowd cheering for him, believing in him. The pride of having a gold medal strung around his neck, shining for the world to see. The satisfaction of having Viktor look up at him on the podium. The one glorious moment of knowing that he had proved himself to the other man. Of knowing that Viktor was wrong for not believing in him all those years ago, that Yuuri had proved him wrong.

Still lost in thought Yuuri turned a corner, entering another long corridor with identical doors scattered down each side. It was empty but as he watched one of the doors swung silently open.
Viktor didn’t seem to notice him as he left the room, letting the door swing shut with a click behind him and turning to flip the lock.

Suddenly, Yuuri was angry. Angry at Viktor for winning. Angry at himself for losing. Angry at the world for never thinking him good enough, angry at himself for caring, angry at Viktor for planting the seeds of the thoughts in his mind so many years ago.

Yuuri didn’t want to think. He didn’t want to stay caught up in his own head, dark thoughts swirling and swirling with no way of escape. He couldn’t lose himself in skating, he couldn’t lose himself in practice. But there was something that he could do.

Viktor turned at the sound of approaching footsteps, glancing round in surprise but Yuuri didn’t give him a chance to speak. Instead he grabbed Viktor by the back of his head, dragging him down into a kiss that Viktor responded to on instinct, opening his mouth and allowing Yuuri entrance, body relaxing at the feeling.

Relieved, Yuuri continued the kiss, glad that Viktor hadn’t pushed him away. If he had Yuuri would have gone, would have left like nothing had ever happened but he didn’t want to. He wanted Viktor, hated Viktor, needed Viktor. Needed to vent his anger at the other skater in the only way he knew how. Needed to try and reclaim the feeling of the last time this had happened. When he had felt like he was flying, when he was drunk on victory and Viktor looked at him and touched him like he was the only thing that mattered in the whole world.

Under his lips, Yuuri could feel Viktor responding, could feel him melting into the kiss. Taking it as encouragement, Yuuri licked up into his mouth, pressing himself closer and tightening both hands into Viktor’s hair. Viktor gasped under his touch but when Yuuri tried to kiss him again he pulled away slightly, not far enough to break contact but far enough so that their foreheads were resting together and his lips were distressingly out of reach.

“Yuuri, what…” He trailed off, obviously unsure of what to say. Yuuri didn’t care. He didn’t want Viktor to talk. Didn’t want to hear all of the same things he had read from Viktor’s fans from Viktor’s own mouth.

“If you want me to stop, I’ll leave. But if you don’t then please… don’t talk.”

Viktor opened his mouth, looking surprised and Yuuri pulled back, not wanting to draw it out if all Viktor wanted to do was talk, to gloat about his victory. He’d rather leave and go back to pretending nothing happened between them. Seeing Yuuri start to close off Viktor jerked forward, cupping Yuuri’s face in his hands and opening his mouth again as if to speak. He swallowed once, twice, obviously cutting off the words he was desperate to say.

Yuuri was glad. He didn’t want to talk, to be reminded of his failures. He didn’t want to think, about the medal lying abandoned in the corner of his room, about the thousands of people who were celebrating his downfall, about how neither Viktor’s fans nor Viktor himself would ever see his achievements over his faults. About how much of a bad idea what he was doing was. He wanted to act. That was easy, in a way nothing else was.

Silently, Viktor nodded and Yuuri waited for him to reinitiate the contact, wanting to be sure of Viktor’s willingness. Hesitantly, Viktor lifted his hand from where it was cupping Yuuri’s face, stroking his fingers gently down the side of Yuuri’s cheek and touching his thumb to Yuuri’s lips. Impatiently, Yuuri flicked out his tongue, licking the digit with a confidence that he didn’t feel inside and closing his lips around it, sucking slightly.

Viktor’s eyes widened and Yuuri could almost feel his heartbeat speed up at the gesture.
Yuuri felt a hot flush of embarrassment at what he had just done. It was ridiculous and cliché and he hoped no-one ever found out about it. But regardless of his own feelings he could see the heat rising in Viktor’s cheeks, could see how it affected him and Yuuri was glad. He wanted to return to the heat and passion of earlier, to lose himself in it, to vent his anger at Viktor the way he had done so many months before and for Viktor to do the same to him until he could no longer breathe.

A slight flush of colour crept up Viktor’s cheeks and his hand tightened reflexively around Yuuri’s face, grip firm. Sensing Viktor’s willingness Yuuri leaned back in, reinitiating the kiss and revelling in the feeling of hot lips pressed against his, in the way that he could lose himself in the sensation the same way he could lose himself in skating.

One of Yuuri’s hands slid down from Viktor’s hair to rest lightly on the side of his throat. Under the fingers Yuuri could feel a pulse racing, tripping over itself in a frantic beat. Muscles worked beneath his hand contracting and relaxing as Viktor fought back words, keeping himself silent in accordance to Yuuri’s request.

Viktor kissed him but it still wasn’t enough and Yuuri pressed in closer, deepening the kiss. Thinking back to the fateful banquet he tried to recreate the feeling, the desperate burning passion, the deep needy kisses that had so quickly developed into something more. Using what little advantage he had be backed Viktor against the door, remembering vividly how Viktor had done the same thing to him what felt both like moments and lifetimes ago. Gradually Viktor began to return kiss with the same intensity, his touches gradually moving from hesitant caresses to a grip of stronger surety.

Pressing himself even closer, Yuuri used his position to bring their upper bodies into contact, twining his arms around Viktor’s shoulders and raising himself up slightly to level out their heights. Viktor made a soft whimpering noise at the contact, sliding his hands from cupping Yuuri’s neck and face down his shoulders to rest on the small of his back, pulling Yuuri even closer so that they were pressed chest to chest without even an inch of space between them.

The heat of the kiss kicked up a notch, the frantic desperation increasing until Yuuri could finally feel himself letting go, losing himself back into the feeling that he remembered so well. If he closed his eyes and thought hard enough he could almost believe he was back in that night, when he was so proud of what he had achieved and so sure that nothing could ever take that away.

Despite Viktor still holding him close it didn’t seem like the other skater intended to move any time soon, quite content to keep kissing Yuuri senseless in the empty corridor. Partly out of desperation to hurry things along and partly out of the mortification that came with the thought of being caught, Yuuri fumbled with the unlocked door of Viktor’s room, dragging the handle down and swinging it open without breaking the kiss.

Grabbing Viktor by the shirt he manoeuvred them so that he was facing away from the open door, backing into the empty room and dragging Viktor with him. Viktor followed with none of his previous hesitation, kicking the door closed behind him and allowing Yuuri to drag him over to the bed in the middle of the room.

Yuuri was still caught up in the kiss, trying not to think too hard about what he was doing. With an assertiveness that surprised himself he spun them both around, backing Viktor up against the bed until the frame hit the back of the other skater’s legs and he was forced to sit to avoid falling completely. Yuuri followed him down, straddling his lap and running his hands through Viktor’s hair, letting the other man wrap his own around Yuuri’s hips, encircling them.

There was something strangely perfect about it. About being able to have Viktor, to capture his attention and hold it the way he knew he never could when he skated. Viktor might be the winner out on the ice but here Yuuri felt in control again, powerful and needed and wanted.
Yuuri kept on kissing Viktor, feeling Viktor’s hands tighten on his hips as his arousal grew, breath hitching slightly. Viktor’s hands weren’t the only part of his body that moved. Yuuri could feel a hot hardness grow beneath him where he was still straddling Viktor’s legs, practically sitting in his lap. Taking it as a sign of encouragement Yuuri rolled his hips, grinding down and being rewarded with a choked off little groan from Viktor, watching as the other man’s eyelashes fluttered at the unexpected sensation.

Yuuri loved it. Loved being the one who could do that to Viktor, the one who could make him come apart in his hands like no-one else mattered.

Logically he knew that he was lying to himself. Yuuri was just another dime-a-dozen skater, his loss at the Grand Prix Final again had proved that. No-one saw him on the same level as legends like Viktor. To Viktor, Yuuri was just another insignificant competitor, good only for a brief shine in the spotlight before being relegated back to the shadows. And here, as they were now, Viktor was so much more experienced than him. It was clear in the way he kissed, in the way he touched, in the way he had taken Yuuri apart with expert hands that first night like he had done it a thousand times before and could do it a thousand times again.

Yuuri had none of that. And Viktor was the one, the only one. But Viktor was beautiful and successful and had presumably shared his bed with hundreds of people, all begging for time with him. Yuuri was nothing special, just a brief amusement in a long line of people that had come and gone throughout Viktor’s life. As insignificant as the day they met, seen and instantly forgotten, faded from memory while Yuuri remained, with Viktor’s mark left on him forever.

But lost in the moment, Yuuri could pretend it was different. Could pretend he was special. Could pretend that he was the only one that could reduce Viktor to this, panting and desperate and kissing Yuuri like he wanted to hold him close and never let him go.

Hands that had been clasped around his hips began to move, sliding up under his shirt to dig into the muscles of his back, fingers tensing and flexing at every movement of his body. Heat began to rise in Yuuri, slower than before but gradually mounting until he was almost squirming with it, his body reacting to the touches and begging him to keep going.

Releasing Viktor’s hair for the time being he tugged at the zip of his own jacket, sliding the metal down and shrugging out of the clothing, tossing it to one side. After discarding the first layer he returned to kissing, letting Viktor lead for a moment as he was overwhelmed by the feeling.

It was hot and messy and needy and Yuuri was desperate for more. Impatiently he pulled off his shirt and discarded it alongside his jacket, wanting Viktor to touch him, wanting to feel hands roam over his skin the way they had once before in life and many times more in his dreams. Viktor pulled back a little, eyes wide as his gazed at Yuuri, sitting shirtless and dishevelled in his lap.

Unhappy with the sudden lack of kissing that was going on Yuuri tugged on Viktor’s own shirt, wordlessly indicating what it was that he wanted. In a single motion Viktor pulled off the item and cast it aside, never taking his eyes of Yuuri in the process. Trying to mimic what he remembered Viktor doing to him, Yuuri latched his mouth onto Viktor’s neck, kissing and sucking his way down the skin, trying to draw on what little experience he had to cover his lack of knowledge of what to do. Last time he had left Viktor guide him through it for the most part, content to let the other man take the lead. But this time he had initiated, he was in control and from the way the encounter had progressed it seemed like it would stay that way.

Regardless, Viktor seemed to enjoy it if the noises he made were anything to go by and Yuuri felt his confidence surge again, bolstered by the sounds. From his position above Viktor he placed his hands on the other man’s shoulders and used his weight to push him back to lie flat on the bed. Sliding
from Viktor’s lap so that his knees were resting on the bed he crawled up, forcing Viktor to move with him until they were both lying fully on the mattress.

With none of the hesitance that had plagued him the last time they had been in the same position, Yuuri swiftly unbuttoned Viktor’s trousers, reaching inside the tight fabric to stroke the hot skin beneath. From what he could feel beneath his hand Yuuri could tell that Viktor was already half hard and the rough touches were only increasing that, accompanied by little gasps of pleasure every time Yuuri twisted his wrist just right and brought on another surge of feeling.

It still wasn’t enough. Yuuri wanted to make Viktor fall apart completely, wanted to make him tremble and moan and remember Yuuri long after he was gone, just as he could never forget Viktor.

Without breaking their contact Viktor kicked off his shoes, letting them fall off the end of the bed and allowing Yuuri to slide his trousers and boxers over his hips to be discarded on the floor beside them. Still crouching over him Yuuri marvelled at how much was different from last time, how nice it was to feel in control, to have Viktor beneath him, naked and beautiful and for a tiny fraction of time entirely his.

Reaching up with a swift movement Viktor tangled his hand back into Yuuri’s hair, bringing his head back down into a heated kiss that Yuuri returned enthusiastically. It was only in that moment, caught deep in the kiss and trembling at the rush of feeling it brought him, that Yuuri realised he had no idea how to move on from that point.

He hadn’t intended to come here. Hadn’t been sure Viktor was even staying in the same hotel. Running into him had been an accident and what was happening between them a spur of the moment decision that he was sure he would regret in the days to come. He hadn’t come prepared, wasn’t even supposed to be here. Last time Viktor had taken care of everything and once again Yuuri cursed his lack of experience for his hesitance.

The bedside drawer. If there was anything to be found he would find it in there.

Praying that Viktor was at least a little more prepared than he himself was Yuuri crawled up the bed, scrambling to tug open the little drawer set in the stand beside the bed and fumbling around inside, willing himself to find what he was looking for.

Thankfully, some deity at least seemed to be smiling down on him in that moment because Yuuri’s fingers met with the smooth surface of a bottle and the crinkling foil of a wrapper. Grabbing both he slid back down the bed to where Viktor had half sat up, watching him.

Feeling incredibly embarrassed, Yuuri chucked the wrapped condom at Viktor, refusing to look the other man in the eye and desperately trying to force down the blush that was creeping into his cheeks. Viktor caught it instinctively and stared down at it for a moment before looking back at Yuuri with wide eyes. Yuuri couldn’t stop the blush that finally rose in his face. He knew the gesture had probably been rude and might have served to kill the mood that had been hanging so heavily in the air but there was nothing he wanted less than to admit to Viktor his own inexperience in the matter. Better for Viktor to think that he was rude than for him to realised that for Yuuri, this was far more than one encounter of many.

Still resolutely not looking at Viktor, Yuuri shucked off the last of his clothing and uncapped the little bottle, squeezing the liquid over his fingers and praying that Viktor wasn’t watching too closely. After warming the liquid in his fingers for a few seconds he reached behind himself, trying to mimic what he remembered Viktor doing to him the last time he had allowed this to happen.

It wasn’t the same. Viktor’s fingers had been skilled and had felt glorious as they had teased Yuuri,
bringing him close to the edge but never quite pushing him over it. In comparison his own attempts were awkward and clumsy, still bringing him little flashes of pleasure but interspersed with the general discomfort and embarrassment. Caught up in the heat and passion of kissing Viktor he had been able to lose himself but here he was horrendously self-conscious, feeling awkward and just wanting to get on with it.

Very quickly he gave up, deeming it good enough and moving back over to where Viktor was still lying watching him. As Yuuri approached he rose to meet him, raising the upper half of his body off the bed slightly and allowing Yuuri to claim his mouth again. Yuuri kissed hungrily, trying to shake off his earlier embarrassment. Not wanting to give Viktor a chance to make any comment he swung one leg over Viktor’s prone form again, straddling him and feeling a hot heat press up against his skin.

Viktor let out a tiny groan at that, bucking involuntarily under Yuuri’s body. Crowing internally a little at the reaction Yuuri reached between them, slicking more of the lube up and down Viktor’s cock before lining himself up and sinking down the length to rest balanced on Viktor’s thighs.

It hurt a lot more than last time. Last time Yuuri had let Viktor take him apart for what felt like hours, let the other man tease reactions out of his responsive body until he was practically begging for it. Had let Viktor’s expert fingers inside him, preparing him so that when the moment finally had come Yuuri could barely think through the pleasure and pain was nothing but a distant memory.

This time, with his own inexpert preparations, Yuuri could feel the discomfort a lot more. The burn that twinged and ached a little every time he moved. In retrospect he knew that he shouldn’t have rushed the preparation so much but he had been too impatient and too embarrassed to let Viktor see him the way he had been, hesitant and unsure.

Yuuri had enjoyed being in control of the encounter, of having Viktor submit easily to his desires. But in that moment he wished, not for the first time, that Viktor would take the control back, would touch him with such surety again, would distract Yuuri with his body and mouth and tongue until Yuuri didn’t have to worry anymore.

Beneath him, Viktor had remained motionless. Giving Yuuri time to adjust to the feeling, although from the faint tremble in the arms that were propping him up Yuuri could see how much effort the restraint was taking him.

Not wanting to wait any longer Yuuri moved, wincing internally a little at the sting the movement brought. Reaching down between them he grabbed at his own cock, running his still slick hand up and down the length, teasing himself back to full hardness as he moved again.

Hot hands suddenly clasped his sides, running burning trails up and down his ribcage in what could almost be misinterpreted as a soothing gesture. The touch was electric and Yuuri could feel his previous desire begin to return, building slowly in the base of his stomach. Viktor was looking at him intently, throat working at the words he wanted to say but still remaining silent, honouring the unspoken promise he had made when the encounter had started.

Wanting to break the piercing gaze Yuuri bent back down again, allowing Viktor to capture his mouth in another kiss, holding his upper body still while he rolled his hips, riding out the sensation. Under his lips he could feel Viktor panting a little at the movement, his skin flushed, and Yuuri was so glad he was able to have this again, was able to reduce Viktor to this not once now but twice.

Gradually the discomfort began to retreat and pleasure began to take over again, growing with every slick slide of his body. As Yuuri quickened his pace Viktor’s fingers slid over his shoulders to grasp the tops of his arms almost painfully. Thrown off balance slightly by the movement Yuuri used his
own momentum to brace himself against Viktor’s shoulders, pushing the other man back to lie fully sprawled on the bed while Yuuri moved for both of them.

The hands clasping him slid further down his arms almost to the elbows, fingers digging into the skin as Viktor restrained himself. From the sweat beginning to bead on his forehead Yuuri could see how much effort it was taking the other man not to move, to let Yuuri set his own pace. To restrain himself from flipping them both over and fucking Yuuri senseless like he so clearly wanted.

Part of Yuuri was grateful, grateful that Viktor was letting him take back the control he so desperately needed, take victory in his body the way he had been unable to on the ice. The other part of him secretly mourned the loss of what they had had before, of the feeling over Viktor being over him, in him, surrounding him. Of feeling so perfectly, irrationally safe in Viktor’s arms.

Yuuri pushed that part of him away almost as quickly as it surfaced.

Yuuri reached back to grasp at his own cock but his hand was quickly stilled when another joined it, smooth skin sliding over heated flesh and making him gasp and almost bite through his lip to hold back a moan. Viktor’s hands were much more skilled than his own, knowing just how to move, just how to vary the touch of skin on skin to have Yuuri gasping and quivering at the feeling.

With one hand occupied, Viktor tangled the other into Yuuri’s hair again, pulling him down into a gentle kiss that was lacking all of the fire and passion that Yuuri so desperately craved. Returning the kiss, Yuuri opened his eyes from where they had fluttered closed at the feeling of Viktor’s touch, eyes focusing not on Viktor’s face but into the distance behind him.

A faint gleam caught his eye, a tiny flash of light illuminated by the faint moonlight that was falling through the large windows beside them. Focusing his eyes on the object, Yuuri suddenly recognised what his eyesight had failed to notice before that moment. The faint shine of gold reflecting off a medal, laid out carefully on the desk by the window adjacent to the bed, glowing softly in the moonlight.

Suddenly, Yuuri remembered why he was here. Why he had come, what had driven him to leave the relative safety of his room and out into Viktor’s arms. The anger that had somehow died long ago roared back to life, invigorated by the spark of gold that was all Yuuri could see.

Viktor was still kissing him gently, too soft, not enough. Yuuri hadn’t come here for gentle. He had come for hot and rough and needy, to vent his emotions onto Viktor and allow the other man to do the same the way that they had done before.

Picking up the pace of his movement he drove them both faster, kissing harshly and trying desperately to tear his eyes away from the shining flash of gold. For a second Viktor faltered but then he responded in kind, meeting the kiss with a rival passion and finally moving, snapping his hips up to meet Yuuri with every thrust. At the new and unexpected sensation Yuuri could feel himself start to unravel, could feel the heat rising in his body almost to breaking point.

The ease with which Viktor was able to reduce him to that only drove his frustration further, forcing him to move with even more driven thrusts, faster and faster, so close to the edge but not quite able to push himself over, feeling the way his body gasped and trembled.

Viktor reached up with a shaking hand to match Yuuri’s own, cupping the back of his head and stroking Yuuri’s hair softly, trailing a finger lightly across his cheek and never once breaking eye contact. At the sensation Yuuri finally allowed himself to let go, turning his head away from Viktor’s gaze as his body shook, not wanting to look the other man in the eyes. Too many emotions to count were swirling within him and he could never think clearly when that familiar gaze was fixed so
At the feeling of Yuuri’s body contracting, muscles clenching down in his release, Viktor moaned too. Tearing his eyes away from Yuuri’s face he pushed his own head back into the bed, the smooth pale expanse of his throat exposed as his whole body arched upwards. It didn’t take him long to finish too, fingers tightening in Yuuri’s hair as he came.

As Viktor’s pleasure rocked through them both Yuuri could hear Viktor let out a sound, not quite fully formed but a gasp that sounded suspiciously like Yuuri’s own name. Viktor seemed to notice the slip too, his expression changing quickly from bliss to sudden worry at breaking the silent agreement he had made not to speak.

For a few seconds Yuuri stayed where he was, body and mind still reeling. Just like before he wanted nothing more than to sleep. To curl up on Viktor’s chest and lose himself to dreams.

But he couldn’t.

Last time he had stayed and it had been a mistake. The type of encounter they had just had, the type they always seemed to have, was not one that ended together. It ended with Yuuri doing the responsible and expected thing and leaving before things got even more awkward.

Bracing his arms on the bed, Yuuri swung himself off of Viktor, feeling the burn in is thighs from holding one position for too long. In the heat of the moment, the heat and slick slide of skin against skin had felt amazing but in his right mind Yuuri could feel the disgust at the state he was in, the internal recoil at the damp stickiness that clung to his skin and plastered his hair to his forehead.

Standing on slightly shaky legs Yuuri looked back to where Viktor was still lying on the bed, looking flushed and dishevelled but nowhere near the disgusting, rumpled mess that Yuuri knew himself to be. Viktor was watching him and Yuuri turned away, pulling his clothes on as quickly as he could and hoping to avoid the inevitable conversation.

They hadn’t even talked about what had happened the first time. The worst thing Yuuri could possibly have done was jump head first into another encounter without even clearing the air between them about the first and yet he had. He had just been so angry and upset and so, so confused by all the conflicting emotions that were battling within him and Viktor had been there, like a gift, like a dream and he hadn’t thought. He had just acted.

Yuuri knew that at some point he would need to talk to Viktor about it, even if it was just to reassure the other man that he knew that these things, these moments between them meant nothing. Were just a bit of stress relief between two athletes with a mutual dislike who had spent half their lives dancing around each other.

But he didn’t want to talk just now. Not covered in sweat and other bodily fluids that he didn’t really want to think about. Not still riding high on the pleasure of what had just happened, no matter how hard he tried to hide it. Not while his own emotions were such a mess and he was sure to say something he would regret.

“Yuuri.”

The voice was quiet, soft. Yuuri turned back to look and saw that Viktor had sat up, kneeling on the bed and looking towards him with an unreadable expression on his face.

“I’m…”

Yuuri trailed off. He didn’t know what he was trying to say. I’m sorry I told you not to speak, I just
couldn’t bear to hear you tell me all the things I already know you think of me. I’m sorry I jumped
you in the middle of a corridor with no explanation. I’m sorry I’m leaving. I’m sorry I still hate you
and I know you hate me and I just keep making things more complicated between us.

“I…” He tried again but again, the words simply wouldn’t come. He didn’t know what he was trying
to say, didn’t know what he wanted to say.

“I’m…leaving.” He finally settled on, picking out the safest option, the one he knew Viktor would
want to hear.

Without giving the other skater a chance to answer, he turned and practically ran out of the room,
trying desperately to still his wildly beating heart and hearing the door slam shut with a harsh finality
behind him.

Once he was back in his room, Yuuri went straight to the shower, washing away all traces of the
encounter. It was only when he was alone that he realised just how badly he had messed up. He
never should have gone to Viktor, not then, not for that reason. In some deep, buried part of him he
felt bad for practically running away but it had been the only option for him at the time. There was
too much at stake and he had to get it together before he ruined himself completely.

From across the room, the silver medal glinted innocently in the corner. Yuuri ignored it.

1-20 of 157 Works in Katsuki Yuuri/Viktor Nikiforov

[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10]

Rating: Explicit

Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply

Category: M/M
Fandom: Figure Skating RPF
Relationships: Katsuki Yuuri/Viktor Nikiforov
Characters: Katsuki Yuuri, Viktor Nikiforov
Additional tags: PWP
Language: English
Stats: Words: 3,458  Chapters: 1/1  Comments: 26  Kudos: 102  Bookmarks: 35  Hits: 2,013
Summary:
They like to wear their medals when they fuck

Rating: Gen
Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply
Category: M/M
Fandom: Figure Skating RPF
Relationships: Katsuki Yuuri/Viktor Nikiforov
Characters: Katsuki Yuuri, Viktor Nikiforov
Additional tags: Secret Relationship, Kissing, Hand Holding, Fluff
Language: English
Summary:
Everyone thinks Katsuki hates Nikiforov. Everyone is wrong.
Or the one where everything is for publicity and they actually love each other a lot uwu

Rating: Explicit
Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply
Category: M/M
Fandom: Figure Skating RPF
Relationships: Katsuki Yuuri/Viktor Nikiforov
Characters: Katsuki Yuuri, Viktor Nikiforov
Additional tags: Semi-Public Sex, Dom/Sub Undertones, I like to believe this is how it happened ok
In the intervening months between the Grand Prix Final and the World Championships, Yuuri tried very hard to put Viktor Nikiforov out of his mind. After his semi breakdown and subsequent terrible decision making that night in the hotel he decided it was safer for everyone if he just ignored what had happened and moved on.

After all, the Worlds were his chance to redeem himself, to prove to all the people who had claimed last year was just a fluke that he was more than any of them believed. If he wanted to win he needed to not be distracted and to not be distracted he needed to forget, to push aside all thoughts of Viktor and the confusing mess of emotions that rose within him whenever thoughts of the other man crept back into his mind.

Yuuri was going to beat Viktor again at the World Championships and then he was going to keep doing it over and over, season after season until finally he was the name that everyone remembered and Viktor was just a shade of the past, to the world and to Yuuri both.

Throughout the short program Yuuri held his resolve, staunchly avoiding Viktor and skating at his peak, thrilled when the scores came in and placed him well at the top of the results table. That night he went to bed smiling, replaying the cheers of the crowds over and over again in his mind and reminding himself just why it was so important to win.

The next day was the free skate and Yuuri and Celestino arrived at the stadium early along with the other skaters, determined to get in as much practice time as they could before they were forced onto the ice to perform. Under the pressure of being top of the scoreboard, Yuuri flubbed his quad salchow in the early practice, cursing himself as he rolled across the ice. It had been a while since he had messed up that particular jump but he was always prone to severe nerves just before a big competition and in high pressure situations like the one he was in he found it could still affect his performance, no matter how much it had improved over the years.

During the final six minute warm up, Yuuri decided to concentrate on practicing his jumps, determined to nail it before he had to go and perform for real. For the first few minutes he glided round the ice, dodging the other skaters and launching himself into the jump when the space became
Gradually the hesitancy faded away and Yuuri relaxed back into the familiar move. Even sudden nerves couldn’t dispel the years of muscle memory that had engrained the well worn jump into his body. As he went through the motions over and over again, correcting each tiny flaw until it was perfect, Yuuri felt his mind begin to wander. To drift back to the last competition and everything that had come after.

Sleeping with Viktor had been a bad move on his part. Sleeping with him again had been an even worse one. He hated Viktor, they were rivals and Yuuri was crossing so many boundaries that should always remain uncrossed that he could barely count them all. Every time it happened he made the lines of his emotions just a little more blurred, just a little more confused.

And yet nothing, not logic nor rational thought, could dispel how much he loved the feeling. Not what came after, with all its awkwardness and shame, but in the moment, when he could finally capture Viktor’s attention like no-one else could. When he felt confident and powerful and recognised in a way that he had always seemed to lack, from the very moment his idol had dismissed him all those years ago.

Viktor was like a burning flame, a fiery star shining so brightly that he drowned out everything and everyone around him and for some reason, through all his hatred and all his resentment, Yuuri couldn’t seem to stay away.

Lost in thought, Yuuri skated backwards mindlessly, picking up speed for another quad. At the height of his speed he flipped himself back around, preparing to jump.

Everything happened at once.

Yuuri turned, realising too late that he hadn’t been paying enough attention and that the ice before him wasn’t as clear as he had once thought. There was no time to stop, no time to even slow down before he slammed into the body that had just skated into his path, both of them colliding at high speeds and knocking the breath out of Yuuri as his head and upper body collided into the taller figure.

The force of the impact sent him reeling, his momentum carrying him forward to slam bodily into the ice, feeling the shock of contact reverberate through him. In his preparations to jump, Yuuri had tucked his arms in close to his side and he had no time to stretch them out, no time to break his fall, no time to even think before his head slammed into the cold surface, sending a sharp crack of pain stabbing through his skull.

Still out of control of his own body Yuuri rolled, skidding a few meters across the ice away from the crash where he could vaguely make out another form, on their knees but still upright in contrast to his own horizontal position.

Groaning, Yuuri lay, panting on the ice with his body twisted out awkwardly from the fall. Pain was still bursting behind his eyes and twisting through his skull and for a second he thought he might throw up. In desperation he tried to roll himself over to lie on his back but even the slightest movement sent fresh waves of pain slamming into him, causing him to let out a whimper that was drowned out by the noise of the crowds.

Everything was too loud, the noise a wordless roar of sound in his ears. The lights were to bright, searing his retinas and Yuuri squeezed his eyes shut, desperately willing the world to stop spinning. The scene before him slid in and out of focus as the pain in his head mounted and suddenly the noise dimmed, present but as though it was coming from very far away.
Through the haze of his vision Yuuri could see movement. A figure appeared in front of him, too blurred to make out and wavering with each fresh pulse of pain through his skull. A sound echoed around him, rippling as though through water and it was only after a few seconds that Yuuri realised that someone had called his name.

Blinking rapidly he tried to answer, tried to bring the world back into focus but it wouldn’t come. The pain in his head spiked again and he could feel his thoughts begin to fade.

Realising what was about to happen, Yuuri sank into unconsciousness gratefully, allowing the darkness to strip him of his pain and carry him swiftly away.

Gradually, Yuuri dragged himself back to consciousness, blinking rapidly at the bright lights that assaulted his eyes when he finally pried them open. A face hovered above his, silver hair falling into eyes that were full of worry. Recognising the features Yuuri sat up, forcing Viktor to pull back to avoid colliding with him again.

“Ah good, you’re awake.” A crisp, accented voice spoken from the other side of the bed he was lying on and Yuuri turned to see one of the rink doctors standing by him. Wincing, Yuuri sat up fully, raising a hand to probe gently at the lump that was forming on the side of his head.

He could remember the crash, could remember the impact of his head on the ice and the pain that had shot through his skull. He could remember passing out on the rink and the memory made a swell of mortification rise within him. How many people had seen his mistake? How many people had seen him carried away like the idiot he was, injured in practice through sheer stupidity.

“Mr Katsuki, I need you to look at me for a moment.”

Shaking his head a little to try and rid it of the fog that was still lurking around the edges, Yuuri focused back on the doctor. The woman smiled, obviously trying to be reassuring and placed a hand comfortably on his shoulder.

“Mr Katsuki you just had quite a nasty crash. I just need to run a couple of things through with you to make sure you’re ok is that alright?”

Mutely, Yuuri nodded and the doctor smiled, holding up the finger of one hand.

“Just follow my finger with your eyes, I need to make sure that hit to your head wasn’t any worse than we originally thought.”

Yuuri obeyed, following the finger without moving his head, although he jerked back slightly when the woman shone a small light into his eyes, peering at them briefly.

“That’s good.” She encouraged when she had finished. “There’s no fracture or major injury to your skull, just a bad case of bruising. Your pupils seem to be responding normally and your eyes are
tracking so we can rule out anything too serious. I just need to ask you a few questions to make sure your memory is fine and then I can leave you alone.”

Yuuri nodded his consent, still not quite feeling up to speaking. Even though the world had stopped spinning and the pain was dulled it was still very present, an aching throb in the back of his skull that refused to go away.

“What’s your name?” The doctor asked, still smiling encouragingly at him.

“Katsuki Yuuri.” Yuuri replied, glad that the words came out sounding reasonably normal.

“And how old are you Mr Katsuki?”

“Twenty one.”

“Where do you live?”

“Detroit. But I was born in Hasetsu in Japan.”

“Good.” The doctor made a small note on the clipboard she was holding, followed by a tiny flick of her wrist that looked like a tick.

“What are the names of your family members?”

“My mum’s name is Hiroko and my dad’s is Toshiya. My sister is called Mari and my dog is Vicchan.”

Hastily Yuuri flickered his eyes to the so-far silent figure that was standing on the opposite side of the bed, watching the doctor intently. If Viktor had recognised the name he didn’t show it and Yuuri was grateful. There was no way he would be able to explain that one away if Viktor had picked up on it.

“Right.” The doctor made a final note on her clipboard and looked back up at Yuuri, smiling reassuringly. “It looks like there isn’t any serious or permanent injury but I just need to run through a couple of things you’ll need to do to avoid any nasty side effects.”

Yuuri tuned out the sound of her voice, nodding at the appropriate moments but too busy trying to sneak glances at Viktor without being caught to pay her much attention.

It had been Viktor that he had crashed into. In the chaos of the moment he had hardly registered but his unconscious mind had made the connection, had noted the flashes of colour that were present in his memory and matched them to the jacket Viktor had been wearing as he glided around the rink.

Viktor was standing next to him still, hovering by the bed and seeming to be paying more attention to the doctor than Yuuri was. The jacket and the top half of his costume had been stripped away, leaving him standing naked from the waist up in the chill of the room. Faintly, Yuuri could make out the beginning of bruises blooming across on side of his chest, light marks that would surely deepen to ugly yellows and greens in the days to come. A token of their collision.

Thankfully, the bruising seemed to be the worst of the damage across Viktor’s body. Vaguely Yuuri remembered Viktor on his knees after the crash, knocked down but still upright and seeming, for the most part, unhurt. It must have been him that had run over to Yuuri before he had blacked out. None of the medics could have gotten there fast enough.

Yuuri wanted to hate Viktor for what had happened. To rant and rave at the other man for the crash
that had left Yuuri feeling sick and dizzy and unsure if he’d even be able to stand up straight let alone skate. But he couldn’t.

It hadn’t been Viktor’s fault. Yes maybe the other man should have been paying a bit more attention to the other skaters when out on the rink. But Viktor had been running through his routine, something Yuuri had noticed as they practiced around each other. That gave Viktor unspoken right of way over skaters like Yuuri who were just practicing their jumps and therefore had more flexibility in their manoeuvres. It was Yuuri who had been distracted. Yuuri who hadn’t been paying attention, who hadn’t noticed the danger until it was too late.

There was a lot of things in his life that Yuuri could blame Viktor for. But the accident wasn’t one of them. Accidents happened, especially in risky sports like skating when there was multiple people out on the ice at one time, all moving at high speeds with frequent and sudden changes in direction. Crashing into each other had been both of their faults, with Yuuri shouldering the majority of the blame, and it would be unfair to hate Viktor over something that had been, for the most part, beyond his control.

Yuuri didn’t blame Viktor but he wasn’t sure Viktor knew that. He wasn’t even sure if Viktor blamed him, if Viktor was angry at him for ruining his warm up. Viktor may not have been nearly as badly hurt as Yuuri but the crash had still left its mark on him.

Eventually, the doctor finished speaking and walked away, leaving the two of them alone. Viktor turned to him immediately and Yuuri mentally braced himself, preparing to get shouted at for his incompetence out on the ice.

“Thank god you’re alright.” Viktor breathed and Yuuri’s eyes widened in shock at the statement. That hadn’t been what he had been expecting at all.

“I was so scared when I realised what had happened.” Viktor continued, oblivious to Yuuri’s shock. ”I’m so sorry Yuuri. I didn’t see you and I couldn’t stop in time and I didn’t mean…”

“It’s ok.” Yuuri cut him off before he could finish the sentence, feeling a hot flush of embarrassment rise in his cheeks. “It was my fault. I wasn’t paying enough attention to where I was going.”

He averted his gazed, embarrassed to have to admit his own flaws to Viktor but Viktor just waved the statement away, dismissive.

“It was my fault too. I wasn’t watching what was happening around me well enough, I didn’t even register what was going to happen until it was too late. I honestly didn’t mean for you to get hurt.

“I know.” Yuuri replied, surprised. Thoughts of sabotage hadn’t even occurred to him, not with the worried expression he had seen on Viktor’s hovering face the minute he had woken up. And now that Viktor was mentioning it he could read the open honesty in the man’s face, the plea to be believed. Viktor might be a lot of things but he was a good skater and never one to play dirty. Whatever else he might have done, he always skated - and won - fairly.

Viktor looked relieved at the statement and seemed to be getting ready to say something else when a call from the door of the room interrupted them.

Yakov was standing in the doorway, arms folded and looking unimpressed.

“Vitya.” He called, voice laced with warning. “It’s time for you to skate. Get back on the rink.”

Viktor turned back to look at Yuuri again and Yuuri could see the hesitancy in his eyes but at another call from his coach he turned away, grabbing the upper part of his costume from where it
was draped over a chair in the medical bay and tugging it on with practiced ease.

When he was ready to leave he made his way over to the door, throwing one last parting glance over his shoulder. Yuuri smiled awkwardly, trying to assure the other skater that he was alright. He wasn’t sure why Viktor was so concerned about his health, probably wanting to make sure his public image wasn’t going to be tarnished by seriously injuring another skater, but he wanted to reassure the man all the same.

Viktor had seemed so honestly worried when he had made sure Yuuri was alright. Despite his best efforts to dispel it, Yuuri could feel a tiny blossom of warmth bloom in his chest at the thought.

A few minutes after Viktor left Celestino entered the room, carrying a glass of water in one hand and a coffee in the other. At the sight of Yuuri sitting at the end of the bed he smiled warmly.

“They told me you had woken up.” He exclaimed, walking across the room to where Yuuri sat and handing him the glass of water. “Of course it happened the minute I left the room.”

Yuuri forced a smile back, hoping he hadn’t worried Celestino too much. The man seemed jovial enough but Yuuri could see the darker concern that was hiding just behind his eyes.

“Sorry.” He mumbled, still filled with shame over what had happened.

“It’s alright Yuuri.” Celestino sat down on the bed next to him, far enough away that Yuuri didn’t feel smothered but close enough that the gesture was comforting. “It happens to everyone sometimes, even the best of us. Now what was it the doctor told you.”

Quickly, Yuuri gave him a run down of his condition and the instructions he had been given. Cold compress for the bruising, painkillers, rest, not to be left alone to make sure nothing worsened for at least the next day. All the usual things. Celestino listened carefully before nodding and standing again.

“Alright.” He said after Yuuri was finally done. “If you stay here I’ll call a taxi to come and pick us up and take you back to the hotel. You can rest there and I’ll pick up some painkillers for you on the way back.”

“Back to the…wait Celestino no!” Yuuri jumped up too, regretting the action immediately when the room spun sickeningly at the movement. “I can’t go back yet. I haven’t even skated.”

Celestino levelled Yuuri with a disbelieving look but Yuuri held the gaze, firm in his resolve. Yes he had been hurt but that was no excuse to just give up. He had worked through injuries before and he could do it again.

“Yuuri, you can barely stand up.” Celestino’s voice was abnormally gentle in the quiet of the room. “The doctor told you to rest. How can you expect to skate in the condition you’re in.”
“I’ll figure it out.”

Yuuri was determined. He wouldn’t let one stupid mistake ruin his chances for the gold. A lot was riding on his performance in the free skate. He was top of the score table from the short program, the reigning World Champion two years running. After the Grand Prix a few months before he had a lot to prove and he wouldn’t give that up for anything.

“Youri…” Celestino began but Yuuri shook his head, forcing the dizziness that came with the action away.

“No Celestino. I have to do this. I have to. Please.”

Looking slightly pained, Celestino sighed, closing his eyes in defeat.

“No matter how much I wish I could I can’t actually stop you. But Yuuri, I’m warning you, don’t do it. You’re in no condition to skate. You need to rest. Let it go, just this once.”

“You know I can’t” The words were quiet, almost whispered but Celestino heard them all the same. He followed Yuuri out of the room, hovering around the skater as if he expected him to fall again but Yuuri forced himself to keep his balance.

He had a medal to win.

____________________________________

It was awful.

From the moment the music started, Yuuri knew that he had already lost. Even though the pain had lessened and his balance had begun to return he still couldn’t even begin to focus his mind back to the same honed intensity that he knew he needed to win. Every time he turned the crowd spun sickeningly around him and he could barely even remember the moves let alone fill them with his usual emotion. During the spins he thought he might throw up and he stumbled on every exit, willing away the pounding in his head.

The jumps were the worst. Quads turned into doubles, triples into singles. Yuuri could barely find his feet as it was and he fell on more landings than not. By the time the routine came to an end he was just praying for it to be over.

In the kiss and cry Celestino wrapped an arm around him, rubbing his shoulder soothingly and trying his best to comfort Yuuri.

It didn’t work. When the scores came in Yuuri could feel the hot sting of tears burn in his eyes, salty wet trails sliding down his cheeks no matter how hard he tried to fight them back. Unsurprisingly he had dropped all the way to the bottom of the rankings, lower than he had been in so many years and with the worst score of his senior career by a significant margin.

Bending his head away from the cameras Yuuri wiped furiously at his eyes, willing himself to stop
crying. He didn’t want people to see him like this, especially not the thousands that were gazing at
him from the stands and the many more that were watching all across the world. But try as he might,
nothing could stop the tears from coming, or the silent sobs that shook his shoulder as the defeat cut
through him.

He just wanted to leave.

Viktor Nikiforov and Katsuki Yuuri Involved in Serious Crash During World Championship
Warm Up

Earlier today, top skaters Viktor Nikiforov and Katsuki Yuuri were involved in a major crash during
a warm up that left Nikiforov bruised but mainly unhurt and Katsuki with a significant head injury
that lead to…

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Comments:

KatsNiko  · 9m ago

Can you imagine hating someone enough to sabotage them like this????

Babs28  · 8m ago

That was such a dirty move on Nikiforov’s part I can’t believe it. It was so brave of Katsuki to get up
and skate even after what happened and my heart broke for him when kept falling. I hope Nikiforov
is ashamed of what he did.
fanwithafan · 6m ago

Are you kidding me?? Of course it wasn’t intentional what the hell???

LadyNiki · 5m ago

You can quite clearly see in the slow mo video that it was an accident. Like, neither of them were paying enough attention and Nikiforov took a hit too. He was just lucky enough that Katsuki hit his shoulder and just knocked him off balance so he could break his fall. It was pure bad luck that Katsuki took the hit to the head (and then smashed it again off the ice like ouch!). There was nothing malicious about it it was obviously just an accident!

spirktoenterprise · 4m ago

Plus did you see how scared Viktor looked when he saw what had happened! He legit looked devastated. I mean, they might be rivals and they might not like each other or whatever but he would never go as far as sabotaging a fellow skater!

Danni29 · 4m ago

Yeah but there were cameras everywhere he could have been faking it.

YuuriiKat_suki · 2m ago

I don’t care what y’all are saying we can all work out what really happened. I mean…look who got the medal after all…

+ View More Comments
Yuuri didn’t want to stick around for the medal ceremony but after some convincing from Celestino he forced himself to, knowing that his coach was right. If he didn’t show his face at least he would be pictured as a sore loser, a bad sportsman, unable to congratulate other people on their victory when he wasn’t also in one of the top spots. He had to stand and watch as the medals were awarded to others with a fixed expression of blankness on his face. There was no way he could manage a smile.

As soon as the cameras shut off he escaped, walking swiftly back to the skater’s only area to collect his belongings. He was almost at the door when a shout stopped him, the sound of his name echoing across the room.

Viktor was standing across from him, medal stuffed hastily into the pocket of his jacket, face flushed as though he had run all the way from the podium.

“What do you want.” Yuuri snapped, knowing the words came out rude and blunt but hardly being able to bring himself to care. After losing to Viktor again he could barely look the other man in the eye let alone speak to him and all he wanted was to be left in peace.

Viktor stopped short at the words, licking his lips nervously and stuffing his hands into his pockets as though he were trying to push his medal further out of sight.

“Ah…I’m…uh…I’m really sorry about what happened Yuuri.” Viktor told him, stuttering a little over the words.

“I know.” Yuuri dragged a hand over his face, hoping the gesture would hide his expression from the other man.

There was still a deep, clawing feeling of resentment digging into his chest at the sight of Viktor, at the sight of the medal he possessed with ease when Yuuri had failed so dramatically. But for that at least, Viktor didn’t deserve the sharpness of his words. After all, it had been more Yuuri’s fault than his that the crash had happened and it wasn’t like Viktor had walked away completely unscathed. It was just pure chance and bad luck that Yuuri had taken the hit so badly while Viktor had come out of the crash with nothing worse than some nasty bruising.

“Can I make it up to you somehow?” Viktor persisted and Yuuri wanted nothing more than for him to leave so that he could wallow in self-pity alone. The offer was shallow and meaningless and Viktor had nothing he could offer that could make Yuuri feel better, unless he had somehow been concealing the secret ability to turn back time for years.

“How?” He asked instead, hoping the question would make Viktor aware of just how precious little he could do. How it would be better to just leave Yuuri alone and go back to being rivals the next time they saw each other rather than trying to be nice to him out of some misplaced feeling of guilt.

“I could take you out to dinner?”
“What?” Yuuri’s gaze snapped back to Viktor’s face and the other man coloured slightly but held the gaze.

“As an apology. For what happened. I could get you something to eat?”

“I already told you, it wasn’t your fault.”

“Is that a no?”

Yuuri frowned, trying to process what Viktor was saying. For someone full of misplaced guilt he sure was pushing it far and other people in the room were beginning to take notice. There was no way Yuuri could turn him down without looking rude and ungrateful and the last thing he needed was more bad press, no matter how much he wanted to decline the offer and just crawl into bed and stay there.

“Fine.” He agreed reluctantly, ignoring the relieved look on Viktor’s face. “What did you have in mind?”

Back at the hotel room later that evening Yuuri stood in nothing but his underwear, gazing into his wardrobe and trying not to panic.

Viktor had suggested they go to a small local restaurant close to the hotel they were both staying in, just a few streets away. As far as Yuuri knew it wasn’t a smart enough place to wear a full suit but he didn’t want to risk looking too casual and being shown up if Viktor had dressed up for the occasion. Not that he would. It wasn’t like they were doing anything significant after all. Some skaters ate out together after competitions all the time. Yuuri regularly did with Phichit and from his social media accounts he knew that Viktor did the same with Chris on occasion. The only difference was that he and Viktor weren’t actually friends, far from it, and this was all just some strange ritual to appease Viktor conscience.

Finally, after hours of mulling it over, Yuuri had worked out why Viktor had seemed so concerned by his injury. After all, hadn’t he been just as worried when Viktor had been hurt a couple of seasons ago? It was natural to react badly to another skater having an accident on the ice, it reminded everyone just what the consequences of a mistake could be. And more than that, when Viktor had gotten injured Yuuri had been concerned because skating wasn’t the same without Viktor to skate against. Rivalries were only rivalries if both competitors could compete and just as Yuuri had disliked Viktor being out of the competition so to must have Viktor felt the same for him.

Despite his failure, Yuuri couldn’t help but he slightly proud that apparently he had made some kind of impression on Viktor after all.

Giving up on the problem that was his clothing Yuuri grabbed the first pair of smart trousers he could see, tugging them on and slipping one of the few semi-formal shirts he owned over his shoulders.

Although…

Suddenly Yuuri was unsure again. Maybe he should change into something that looked better. Viktor might have said that the meal was an apology but his intentions might be very different. After all, they had slept together twice, both times after the last two major competitions they had rivalled each other in. Once could have been written off as a mistake made in a moment of passion but twice was teetering dangerously into the territory of a pattern.

Viktor might just be using the meal as an excuse to sleep with him again and Yuuri wasn’t entirely sure whether he would refuse or not. Which made the decision to accept Viktor’s offer of food even more inadvisable than it had already been.

Taking a deep breath, Yuuri forced the thoughts out of his head. He was overthinking things. All that the evening would be would be some food and incredibly awkward small talk to ease Viktor’s conscience and then they could go right back to their mutual dislike when the next season rolled around. That was it.

Forgoing a tie on the basis that it would probably be overkill he looked himself over in the mirror, running a hand through his hair and willing it to lie flat for once. Belatedly he wondered if maybe he should have slicked it back in the style he wore for skating and gone without his glasses but it was too late for second guessing and he was almost late as it was.

After deeming his appearance acceptable enough to be seen in public, Yuuri made his way out of the hotel and down into the street in the soft glow of the evening light, spotting the restaurant after a couple of minutes. It was fancier than he had expected but not enough that he would stick out unduly.

Slipping inside the door he glanced around, spotting Viktor almost instantly. The other man was sitting at one of the booths in the corner, slightly cut off from the rest of the restaurant. At Yuuri approach he waved him over, gesturing to the seat opposite him with a smile.

“I see you found the place ok then?” Viktor asked, the fingers of one hand tapping out a quiet little beat against the wood of the table.

“Uh...yeah.” Yuuri answered lamely, wishing he was anywhere but there. It was awkward, even more awkward than he had predicted. There was nothing he could think of to say to Viktor. Nothing appropriate anyway.

‘So, even though I can’t blame you for me losing I still resent you for it and I’m only here because I couldn’t think of a good way to say no.’ That was one option. Or maybe ‘remember how we slept together those couple of times. Well now I can’t stop thinking about it and even though I hate you I can’t get you out of my head.’ Or even better ‘you broke my heart when we were both children and I’ve hated you ever since and you don’t even remember it. And now every time I look at you I’m reminded of it but I still haven’t told you because there’s never been a good time and now I’m not sure if there ever will be.’

Not exactly the kinds of conversations he wanted to start in the middle of a crowded restaurant, still reeling from his loss and wanting to eat and leave as quickly as he could.

The short conversation dissolved into awkward silence and Yuuri picked up the menu, hiding his face behind the book and pretending to read. When the waiter came over a few minutes later he ordered blindly, not paying any attention to what he had chosen. Viktor chose too and ordered wine
to accompany the meal, looking questioningly at Yuuri as he did so. Shaking his head, Yuuri dismissed the offer. He had already proved to himself that he made bad choices when Viktor was involved and he didn’t want alcohol worsening it even more.

Thankfully, the food was quick to arrive. The time in between was scattered with almost painfully bland small talk, both parties testing the waters and unwilling to delve into deeper subjects.

When the food was placed in front of him Yuuri inhaled the smell, letting his eyes flutter closed at the aroma. It smelt wonderful and he dug in quickly, grateful to have something to distract him from the conversation. The dish he had chosen was soft and creamy, thin slices of pork adding little bursts of extra flavour to the rice and sauce surrounding it.

Viktor watched him tuck in with an amused smile creeping onto his face.

“Good food?” He asked and Yuuri nodded through his mouthful, awkwardness momentarily forgotten.

“It reminds me of the food my mother used to make, back when I was living at home in Japan.” He mumbled, still entranced by the taste of the food. “It’s not as good but it still reminds me a bit of her.”

“What kind of food did she used to make?” Viktor had leaned forward in his seat a little, quickly latching onto the new topic of conversation.

“A lot of stuff. Traditional dishes mainly. My family runs a hot springs and most of the guests want authentic things, you know? But my favourite used to be katsudon. No-one could make it like she could.”

Viktor tilted his head slightly in an unspoken question and Yuuri realised he had been thrown by the unfamiliar word.

“Katsudon.” Yuuri repeated, trying to think how best to describe it. “It’s a pork cutlet bowl, pork and rice and eggs and that sort of thing. I used to eat it a lot but not any more. I’ve tried a couple of places in Detroit but it never tastes the same.”

“I know the feeling.” Viktor laughed, taking a careful bite out of his own food and swallowing quickly. “When I first started competing internationally I used to try the borscht from foreign restaurants after competitions to remind myself of home. But it was never quite the same.”

“Have you ever tried cooking it yourself?” Yuuri asked, thinking back to his own semi-successful attempts to recreate his mother’s katsudon in his and Phichit’s shared kitchen, attempts that usually resulted in a considerable mess and Phichit stealing the food from the pan before it was done cooking.

Viktor laughed again, the sound light and airy in the hubbub of the restaurant.

“No.” he replied, smiling a little self-deprecatingly. “I’m a terrible cook. I usually eat out when I’m not at home, or order room service if I’m too tired. I might poison myself before a competition otherwise. I just save it for when I’m back home in Russia, as a celebration of sorts for making it through another season.”

“Back when I still lived in Japan I used to do something similar with katsudon. I wouldn’t let myself eat it unless I had won a competition.”

Yuuri trailed off at the words, flicking his eyes back down to his food, the memory of what had happened that day suddenly hitting him again full force. Seems to pick up on his sudden change of
mood Viktor’s smile dropped from his face, expression changing in an instant.

“About today Yuuri…” He started but Yuuri cut him off, not wanting to hear it.

“It’s over now. There no use talking about it. I humiliated myself in front of the whole world and I’d rather forget about it now if you don’t mind.”

“Yuuri…” Viktor’s voice was hesitant and soft. “I don’t think anyone considers it a humiliation. Most people are saying you were brave for doing what you did after what happened. Stupid, but brave.”

Surprised at the jab Yuuri looked back up but there was a teasing note in Viktor’s voice that he had never heard before and there was a surprising absence of malice in his eyes.

“Yeah, well…” Yuuri stuttered, not quite sure how to respond. “It was embarrassing.” He finally settled on, deciding to ignore the comment for the time being. “That was probably the worst any skater has ever skated. I was awful.”

“Oh no.” Viktor smiled again, eyes lighting up. “That was not the worst any skater has ever skated and I speak from personal experience. Trust me Yuuri, I’ve done much worse many times before.”

Yuuri practically choked on the slice of pork he was eating, grabbing his glass of water to chase it down and trying not to splutter too much.

“You?” He asked incredulously. Viktor was a brilliant skater, the best in the world. Saying he had embarrassed himself in worse ways that Yuuri was almost mocking in its inconceivability.

Realising Viktor must have been talking about his single failure on the quadruple lutz, where he had damaged his leg and been relegated to the side-lines for a whole season, Yuuri protested the comparison. “Falling once in a competition doesn’t count.

“I’m not talking about that.” Viktor told him, eyes still sparkling with mirth under the bright lights of the restaurant. “I mean it when I said I’ve skated much worse than you did today Yuuri.”

Raising an eyebrow, Yuuri let Viktor continue, still indignant but intrigued to hear the rest of the story.

“When I was sixteen, just after I had won the World Championships for the first time, I got a little too caught up in my win and drank far too much at a party a few days after the competition. I had training the next day and Yakov literally dragged me out of bed in the morning to practice. He forced me to put on my skates and get onto the rink, regardless of how awful I was feeling. It was the first time I had ever been really drunk before and I could hardly stand up on the ice, let alone skate.”

Yuuri grinned despite himself at the mental image the words created and Viktor carried on, encouraged.

“I was like a baby deer on ice. My legs kept slipping out from under me and all my rink mates were laughing from the side-lines. But Yakov wouldn’t let me leave, he forced me through the whole training session. And since I could barely stand up you can imagine how my attempts at jumps went.”

Yuuri snorted at the thought, of Viktor at sixteen, still long haired and innocent, hungover and tripping over himself on the ice. Amusing and ungainly and so very human.

“And is the moral of this story that you learned never to drink too much again?” Yuuri asked, finding that his voice came out light and teasing to his own surprise.
“No.” Viktor grinned back at him. “I just taught myself to have a higher alcohol tolerance so that I could make it through practice the next day.

Yuuri laughed and the sound shocked him. It was honest and pure and real and he couldn’t believe that Viktor Nikiforov had managed to make him laugh like that.

Suddenly, the reality of the situation hit him again. He was sitting across from the man he had despised for years, he wasn’t there to have fun. He wasn’t there to laugh at Viktor’s stories or stare at the way his eyes lit up in his excitement. He was there to eat out of politeness and leave. And during the course of their conversation they had finished the food. Which meant there was only one thing left to do.

Setting his chopsticks down next to his empty bowl, Yuuri stood suddenly and Viktor stood with him, the sound of the chairs scraping against the floor seeming very loud even surrounded by the constant chatter of the restaurant.

“It’s time for me to go.” Yuuri told him bluntly, dismissing the laughter and trying to pull himself back to the cool uninterested mask he had worn at the start of the evening. “I have an early flight tomorrow.”

“Oh, of course.” Viktor’s face seemed to fall a little but he followed Yuuri anyway, stopping off briefly to pay their bill. Yuuri considered insisting that he pay for his fair share but he had a feeling that Viktor would refuse for the same reason he had insisted on the meal in the first place and he didn’t want to stay in the restaurant any longer.

They walked together back down the street in silence. The warm light of the evening had faded and in its place was the sharp chill of night. Yuuri could feel the cold start to eat into his skin and he sped up his pace, making it back to the hotel in a matter of minutes.

Both of them were staying in the same building but on different floors. Together they waited for the lift and Yuuri turned the evening over again in his mind, unsure of what to say. Objectively, he knew that Viktor had only done it to appease his guilt at Yuuri’s loss but Yuuri was shocked at how much of a good time he had had. After so many years, the encounters where Viktor had shown his true self as the blunt and cruel sort of person who said exactly what he believed and had no hesitance tearing other people down, Yuuri hadn’t once thought that he would be able to sit across from Viktor and have no only a pleasant conversation but a funny one. He never would have believed it of the other skater, it was so at odds with who he knew him to be.

Regardless, the evening was over and Yuuri had to put it out of his mind. He had a lot to redeem himself for next season and he needed to focus on beating Viktor, not the sound of his laughter as it lit up the room.

Lift doors swung silently open and they both entered, hitting the buttons for their respective floors. After a couple of seconds once the doors had closed Viktor broke the silence.

“Are you sure you’re going to be alright Yuuri?” Viktor asked, making an aborted gesture to Yuuri’s head and the spot where Yuuri knew an ugly bruise was still blooming, a final souvenir of his own misfortunes.

“Yes.” Yuuri forced himself to keep looking forward, to not turn around to face the other man. “I’m sharing a room with my coach, Celestino. He’s promised to wake me up every couple of hours to make sure everything is ok.”

“Ok. Well that’s good then.”
They lapsed back into silence until the door let off a sharp ding and slid open, revealing the corridor
that held Yuuri’s room. He stepped out of the lift, grateful to be away from the heavy atmosphere but
at the last second he turned around, taking in the sight of the man before him.

For a second he wondered if maybe he should invite Viktor back to his room. The other man might
be expecting it and Yuuri would by lying to himself if he said that there wasn’t a small part of him
that desperately wanted to. But the stronger, more rational part of him warned him away. He was
tired and confused and his head was beginning to hurt again and it wasn’t the time. Not when he
suddenly couldn’t separate the anger he felt at Viktor from the tiny spark of warmth that had grown
in his chest when he heard Viktor laugh.

Viktor made no move to follow him out and Yuuri took that as conformation that nothing was going
to happen that night. Which was for the best, he reminded himself.

He almost turned away again but something stopped him, some deeply buried part that rebelled
against the idea of leaving so suddenly. Viktor was still watching him from inside the lift and in a fit
of thoughtlessness, Yuuri blurted out the first thing that came into his mind.

“Goodnight Viktor.” He called to the other man, and he just caught the expression on Viktor’s face
change, the slight widening of the eyes, the way his lips parted a little as though he wanted to
respond before the lift doors slid shut, carrying him away.

Yuuri retreated back to his room, stripping off his clothes and sliding into the comfort of his bed,
intending to let sleep carry away all the confusions of the day and leave him feeling a semblance of
normality come the morning.

It was only as he was drifting off that he realised why Viktor had looked so surprised as Yuuri had
bid him goodnight.

It was the first time that - to the man’s own face - Yuuri had called him by his first name.

Sally_Bate  @vodka_aunt · 10m

I’ve got to say, I’m disappointed in the results. I wanted Nikiforov to win but not like this #FSWC

Yoshimosh  @Yoshimosh · 10m
That crash really was something else #FSWC

Rita  @rita_37an56173ma · 9m

How did Nikiforov walk away practically unscathed when Katsuki got completely taken out??? #FSWC

KeKsuki· 9m

@rita_37an56173ma Pure blind luck that’s how #FSWC

Hayleyuuri  @hayley1998 · 6m

Katsuki Yuuri is apparently ok and will have no permeant consequences as a result of his injuries http://bbc.in/2hzKYc #FSWC #thankgod

Clara_M  @Katsukidon · 5m

Ok so like I don’t want to derail the conversation or anything but I’m pretty sure I just saw Nikiforov and Katsuki on a date together???? #FSWC #Viktuuri

Mrs-Nikiforov  @goldforviktuuri · 4m

@Katsukidon pics or it didn’t happen
Clara_M  @Katsukidon · 4m

@goldforviktuuri I don’t have any pics bc it was dark and I was driving past but I legit saw them through the window of a restaurant I’m like 99.9% sure it was them

Sam K  @donttalkaboutskateclub · 3m

@Katsukidon Oh please. Like you actually saw the guy who just got sabotaged and the saboteur on a date together. This tweet is just #desperate

DodeD  @DavidDodds · 3m

@Katsukidon yeah I’m pretty sure 2 people who hate each other don’t tend to go on dates you idiot. You probably just saw some randomers lbr

Vikturilove  @noticemeviktorsenpai · 1m

@Katsukidon VIKTUURI IS REAL I KNEW IT NONE OF YOU CAN TELL ME OTHERWISE

MaxiMillion  @Maxi000000 · 2m

@Katsukidon @noticemeviktorsenpai all you shippers really need to stop. It’s pathetic

Clara_M  @Katsukidon · 2m

@Maxi000000 hey dude I’m just telling you what I saw! No need to be rude about it
Chapter End Notes

This chapter aka Yuuri manages to chill for five whole minutes before it all goes to hell, he also could now write a book titled ‘Really Inadvisable Sex and How Not To Deal With Emotions’ and then shit goes down all over again.

I hope you all enjoyed it and I’d love to hear what you thought!

Also, an important announcement I need to make is that I know a lot of people really want to see a chapter from Viktor’s POV. I totally get that but unfortunately a huge amount of this fic relies on it being told purely with Yuuri as a narrator. HOWEVER I do desperately want to tell Viktor’s side of the story so once the main fic is done I will be writing a companion piece from Viktor’s pov to tell his version of the events and let you all know what he’s been thinking this whole time. That’s why this fic has been listed now as a series so if you subscribe to the series, or me as an author, you’ll be notified when that gets written too!

Also another VERY IMPORTANT ANOUNCEMENT! There has been some absolutely stunning fanart drawn of this fic since last chapter which you all need to go and look at immediately!

Leblacknoir drew a beautiful compilation of sketches from the fic which you can find here

mybabiesaregay drew a really adorable sketch of Yuuri and Viktor’s meeting in the bathroom from chapter 4 here

ravenspencil drew an amazing picture of the podium scene from the Olympics found here

vivalawiva drew a really cool picture inspired by Viktor’s FS in chapter 8 here
Also for those of you who prefer 8tracks to spotify rreese996 made an 8tracks playlist of all the programs songs

here

Thank you so much for all the incredible support you have been giving me, I was blown away by the response to last chapter and I’m just so so grateful to you all!

Thank you and see you next time!

Rey xx

Link to my tumblr

As a final note, if anyone is still a little confused as to why Yuuri still hates Viktor so much even after all these years, I answered a question about it on my tumblr that was just a quick run down of where he stands in terms of his dislike at the end of chapter 8. here

Music Used:
Viktor’s FS - Sun and Moon from Miss Saigon
And The Best Reward

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

During the next Grand Prix Final, Yuuri found that he was more aware of Viktor than he had ever been.

In the same way the other man had always used to watch him, Yuuri found that his eyes now seemed to follow Viktor wherever he went, without even his conscious decision for them to do so. Part of him wished he could brush it off as simply observing the competition but he knew deep down that it wasn’t true. Somehow, Viktor seemed to be more magnetic that usual. He had always been able to draw almost every eye in the room just by being there and suddenly Yuuri was surprised to find that he now counted among that number. There was just something about Viktor. Something that made him not want to look away.

Of course, that meant nothing though and Yuuri was still as determined to beat Viktor as ever. For his observations he had noted that Viktor was performing excellently as usual but Yuuri knew that he could do better. He had worked so hard for the World Championships last year only to be taken down by injury, his own fault but devastating never the less. Yuuri was sure that if he had been competing at top form he would have taken the gold from Viktor again and he was determined to redeem himself for the unexpected loss.

Something that drove his desire to win even further was the fact that for the first time in a few years, Phichit had been able to come and watch him perform. His friend had also been competing in the Grand Prix Series but while he had proudly won a bronze medal at the Trophee de France, he hadn’t scored highly enough to qualify for the final. Luckily he didn’t seem too upset about it, having done well in the Four Continents the previous season, and he had demanded to come and watch Yuuri skate in the final.

Celestino had long ago given up on trying to keep them apart during the competitive season and had allowed Phichit to come under the solemn oath that he wouldn’t distract Yuuri too much from his practice. Yuuri was infinitely grateful for Phichit being there but he understood where his coach was coming from. Even after everything, Yuuri still hadn’t won a Grand Prix title against Viktor and he was desperate to do so. Celestino wanted nothing more than for his students to reach their full potential and he knew how much winning the title meant to Yuuri.

The only downside about having Phichit by his side during the competition was the guilt that gnawed away at Yuuri’s stomach every time he remembered that he still hadn’t told Phichit what had happened between him and Viktor. From the very first moment, he knew that he should have told his friend everything but somehow he still hadn’t. They shared everything together, hopes, dreams, fears, even the apartment they lived in when they were both in Detroit. Yuuri knew in his heart that he should have told Phichit, that he would have to tell Phichit. He just…didn’t quite know how to bring it up.

More than that, he didn’t know what he was going to say. If he had told Phichit straight after that banquet after the World Championships nearly two years ago it would have been easy. He could simply explain that he had been riding high on the thrill of victory, that Viktor had challenged him both on and off the ice and all of his pent up anger and frustration and damning attraction to the other man had finally burst. He could explain that it was a mutual thing, two people with a mutual hatred and a mutual frustration finally taking their emotions out on each other in a way that was unexpected but not unreasonable to comprehend.
It wasn’t that simple anymore.

Back then everything had been clear cut and Yuuri understood exactly what was happening, exactly what he was feeling. Now, he wasn’t so sure. After his loss in the Grand Prix Final of last year he had gone to Viktor again, upset and angry and desperate and he had realised just how much he wanted Viktor, just how much he craved having the other man’s attention fixed on him and only him. Yuuri had always been so desperate to prove himself, for so many years. A desire to prove himself that stemmed from the other skater’s dismissal of him all those years ago, a desire that grew and grew with each successive loss. He knew that he was nothing special, knew that he had failed to show his worth and capture Viktor’s attention on the ice as soon as he lost the gold medal but he had found another way to keep Viktor’s eyes on him. Had tried to recreate the feelings from their first time together because for a reason that he couldn’t justify, even to himself, he wanted Viktor’s attention. For Viktor to see him and only him. To release his emotions and try and drive away the crushing feeling of failure and loss and prove himself to the other man the way he couldn’t seem to do while skating.

It had been a mistake, an emotion driven mistake but it was one that Yuuri had made and couldn’t forget. After the second time he couldn’t keep denying to himself that it was an accident, a one off thing, that he didn’t want it. He wanted Viktor, revelled in the feeling of being wanted back even if it was only for a fraction of time in the dead of night behind locked doors before reality came creeping back in.

And then later, after the crash, when Viktor’s guilt had driven him to be nice to Yuuri out of pity. Yuuri’s hatred of him had always been so clear cut, something he could understand easily and use to his advantage. But Viktor had been kind. Driven out of guilt or not, no matter how insincere or how much of a façade it may have been, Viktor had been kind to him. Had made him smile and laugh and share stories and suddenly nothing was clear or easy anymore.

And so now, Yuuri had no idea how to tell Phichit. Had no idea how to explain the tangled mess of emotions inside him because he still hated Viktor, of course he did, he still wanted to beat him but his traitorous heart was beating a new rhythm in his chest that Yuuri didn’t understand and couldn’t ever explain, not even to his friend.

But he would have to tell Phichit. No matter how complicated or how hard his friend deserved to know the truth of what had happened at least.

‘After the competition’ he promised himself. When I’m not so stressed and I can think clearly about what I’m going to say. After the competition. Then I’ll tell him.

Regardless of his feelings of guilt, having Phichit there helped his nerves immensely and Phichit, after years of knowing Yuuri, stuck by his side with no prompting. Yuuri had protested that his friend didn’t need to sacrifice so much of his time to watch endless dull practices when Yuuri knew how much Phichit loved sightseeing in all the new countries he visited but Phichit had insisted that he didn’t mind at all and would rather stay.

When the day of the short program finally arrived, performing with both Phichit and Celestino in the stands supporting him bolstered Yuuri’s confidence tenfold and he flew through his routine, scraping a mere fraction below his personal best to the cheers of the audience and the delighted whooping of his coach and friend from the side-lines. After his victory that day they all went out in the evening for a meal to celebrate and Yuuri was suddenly reminded of the fateful competition years ago that mimicked their current situation with such distressing similarity. Winning in the short program, celebrating with Phichit and Celestino that night and then being beaten by a single point in the free skate the next day. Of all his defeats that one still stood out as particularly painful in his mind and he
had to fight to keep himself calm. History wouldn’t repeat itself. He wouldn’t let it.

That determination drove him throughout all the practices the next day and into the final skate. In what was by now familiar territory, the final two skating slots were his and Viktor’s, with him being the last to take to the ice. Yuuri had watched Viktor’s short program the day before and had marvelled at the other man’s performance but he had no time to watch Viktor’s free skate. His time was better devoted to the final warm ups and stretches Celestino pushed him through before he was ready to go up to the rink and skate for the final time.

Through the thick layers of concrete that separated him from the stands he could hear the applause, the stamping of the feet and the cheering as Viktor skated his routine. Yuuri tried to pay them no mind. Focus was essential and he had to focus on himself and nothing else.

Through the steadily mounting nerves he kept that focus, refused to relinquish it even when Celestino finally lead him from the sanctuary of the reserved areas and into the cacophony of the arena.

Yuuri made his way over to the rink, trying very hard not to look around. He knew that to see the crowds, to acknowledge the thunderous noise would only make his nervousness worse and so he tried to ignore it all as he took off his skate guards and stepped onto the ice.

This was his moment. His dedication, his determination to prove himself, he would skate it all in his routine and be rewarded with the shining gold that he had seemed to be chasing his whole life.

As his music started he allowed those emotions to flow through himself and out into his movements. The ringing sounds of a violin filled the stadium and he skated with purpose, each move precise. The tune started out slow but it built, a crescendo of sound that was soon joined by a drumbeat like the pulsing of a heart. The song was half a march and half a dance, graceful movements blended with a soldiering determination and ferocity. A challenge in musical form and one that Yuuri replicated in his skating.

He might have lost the year before but he wouldn’t let that happen again. He would prove himself to everyone, reclaim the gold and stand at the top of the podium once again. He had turned that dream into a reality once and he could - he would - do it again.

As the last frantic notes soared through the air he raised his arms, executing a final graceful spin and coming to rest in the centre of the ice, breath heaving in his chest and a smile threatening to split across his face. Everything had been perfect. He had been perfect. There was only the slightest wobble on the landing of his quad toe loop but it was a miniscule mistake and not one that should have any significant impact.

Celestino was standing at the side of the rink, looking proud, and Phichit was next to him, giving Yuuri an enthusiastic thumbs up and waving him over. For courtesies sake Yuuri stayed on the ice for a few more seconds to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd and collect a few of the stuffed toys and flowers that were thrown his way but he left the ice as soon as he could to be greeted by the hugs and the pats on his back from the two waiting for him by the rink.

Once they were finished congratulating him, Celestino escorted him to the kiss and cry and Yuuri found his nerves suddenly returning in full force. Above everything he hated this part, the moment when there was nothing he could do but wait. Wait for the judges to decide his fate with nothing he could do to change it.

Unconsciously he realised he was bouncing his leg in a nervous gesture and willed himself to stop, aware of the many cameras and thousands of eyes that were trained on him. Nervousness, weakness,
wasn’t something he could afford to show. Not here.

Overhead the screen shone brightly, displaying the score tables as they stood. Viktor’s familiar name was at the top of course but without his glasses Yuuri found that he was unable to read the scores listed beside it. Noticing him squinting at the board Celestino leaned over and murmured the results, Yuuri’s heart beating a little faster when he heard Viktor’s combined score. It was high. Not unbeatably high but high all the same.

A voice spoke over the loudspeaker and the board switched from the score table to an enlarged picture of his own face, still squinting up at where seconds ago the results had been listed. Startled, Yuuri looked around. He had been so absorbed in the other skater’s scores that he had completely missed what the announcer had said. His own face peered back at him from the screen but the scores listed below him were too fuzzy to make out.

The crowds were cheering but Yuuri didn’t know if they were cheering at his success or his defeat. Suddenly, the large screens switched back from the view of his face to the scoreboard.

Even without his glasses Yuuri could see the colours of the flags next to each skater’s names standing out clearly. The white, blue and red of the Russian flag waved next to where he knew Viktor’s name must be and above it was the white and red that he knew so well. The white and red of the Japanese flag that always flew next to his name.

Yuuri’s name was above Viktor’s in the score table.

Yuuri had won.

phichit+chu

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phichit+chu: Yuuri receiving his gold medal at the #GPF

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Lilly_looper  YAAAAAS YOU KILLED IT YUURI I’M SO PROUD

Hewhowanders  Nice job kicking Nikiforov off the podium!

RubyRed24  You did fantastic! We were all rooting for you <3<3<3
After his win, Yuuri felt like he was flying.

After so many years, so much work, finally his achievements couldn’t be denied. He had won gold, had beaten Viktor multiple times in multiple seasons. He had finally won a Grand Prix Final against Viktor, the one achievement he had previously still lacked. There was no-one who could look at him now and say that he didn’t deserve it. That it had all been luck or a fluke. He had earned it and he was proud.

Despite his joy at winning the medal, Yuuri still found the banquet as tedious and uncomfortable as ever. For the first half he was forced to stick close by Celestino, accepting the praise and compliments of other skaters and their coaches, some sincere ad some less so, along with endless small talk with bland ISU members and sleazy sponsors who only cared about the medal around his neck. While Yuuri enjoyed the feeling of success he still felt awkward when confronted with being praised. He never quite knew how to respond to the compliments and the never-ending line of important people to talk to became overwhelming after a while.

Phichit was there too, Celestino having secured him a spot through means which Yuuri decided it was better not to question. It was Phichit’s first banquet and he was revelling in the experience. Unlike Yuuri, he wasn’t shackled to Celestino’s side and forced to make bland small talk and he easily mingled with the other skaters, chatting and laughing and swapping stories.

Yuuri would never begrudge his friend anything and he loved seeing Phichit having such a good time but he was sometimes envious of his friend’s easy ability to socialise. Unlike Yuuri, who was quiet and found it hard to talk to many of the other skaters off the ice, Phichit made friends effortlessly. While Yuuri struggled for things to say Phichit never ran out. He was as much a social creature as Yuuri was a private one and while Yuuri loved him for it, he did sometimes wish some of his friend’s outgoing nature could have rubbed off on him a bit over the years. At the very least it would help him deal with situations like the one he was currently stuck in.

Eventually it all became a little too much for Yuuri to deal with and he slipped away with a muttered apology to Celestino and a hasty line about getting a drink, needing to have a little breathing room. After he had extracted himself from the line of well-wishers he practically fled to the other side of the room where the drinks table stood in an isolated corner.

Thankfully there was only one other person standing beside the table and Yuuri counted himself lucky until the figure moved slightly and he recognised the flash of silver as the light of the room danced off the other man’s hair. Damn.

For a moment, Yuuri considered turning away but he stopped himself before the thought could even fully develop. After all, a lot of people had heard his hasty line about getting a drink and if he returned empty handed it would be embarrassing for both him and Celestino, revealed as the excuse to escape that it was. And more than that, he wasn’t about to let Viktor Nikiforov scare him away from anything. If they had shared a surprisingly civil meal together, Yuuri was sure they’d be able to stand interacting on a superficial level over glasses of champagne for a couple of minutes.

Even with that reassurance in his mind Yuuri still almost fled before he could be noticed, but one glance over his shoulder showed him Celestino talking to one of his potential sponsors, a greasy man who’s assessing gaze always made Yuuri intensely uncomfortable. Unfortunately, Yuuri understood
the pressing need for good sponsorships but many as he endured, that particular man was not the kind that he would talk to by choice and he found that surprisingly, Viktor Nikiforov was by far the better alternative.

Deciding to simply act as normally as he could, Yuuri walked over the drinks table, determinately keeping his face impassive. At the sound of approaching footsteps Viktor turned around, a rehearsed greeting already falling from his lips before he recognised Yuuri. When he did the false pleasantness he must have rehearsed for talking to officials died away, replaced by a wry but genuine smile.

“Looking for a drink?” Viktor asked, indicating to the glasses of champagne resting on the table.

Yuuri nodded and Viktor scooped up one of the glasses, handing it over. Yuuri accepted the glass gratefully, needing the cool liquid to stave off both the hot stuffiness of the room and the nerves that always plagued him at official events, especially the highly social ones like the banquets. Ignoring the rules of propriety for the moment he forwent the polite sipping people usually used for champagne, instead swallowing the whole thing in a few quick gulps and setting the empty glass back on the table. Viktor looked mildly impressed at the motion and leaned up against the table, facing Yuuri fully with his profile turned to the rest of the room.

“You look like you needed that.” he commented, the same dry humour written across his face.

“It’s been a long day.” Yuuri countered, before flushing and feeling a sudden rush of guilt at what he had just said. He had just beaten Viktor to a gold medal after all, it seemed a little callous to complain about his day to the same man whose title he had just stolen, especially when Viktor was seemingly content to keep it civil.

“I, uh, just mean…” Yuuri trailed off, making a vague motion towards the crowds in front of them and wishing again that he had Phichit’s easy way with words.

Instead of commenting on what he had just said Viktor simply nodded in acknowledgement, eyes flickering around the room in a quick once over. While he was distracted Yuuri snagged another glass of champagne from the table, taking a quick gulp and trying not to cough as the bubbles tickled their way down his throat.

“It can be a little too much sometimes.” Viktor agreed casually and Yuuri looked at him, startled.

“I always thought you loved the press circuit?” he blurted out, thrown by the implication that sometimes even the great Viktor Nikiforov found fame hard to deal with.

Viktor looked towards him with a questioning expression and Yuuri fumbled for words, trying to justify the statement and hoping that he didn’t look too embarrassed despite the feeling that was rising inside him at the impulsive words.

“It just, uh, you always seem to enjoy interviews and paparazzi and all that. And you’re always posting on social media and stuff. I thought you loved all the attention?”

Viktor let out a short laugh. “I do. Most of the time anyway. Paparazzi I could do without but you’re right, I do enjoy interacting with my fans through social media. Which is not something we share I gather since you never seem to post anything at all.”

The statement was accompanied with a teasing smile and Yuuri laughed a little self-deprecatingly, knowing the truth of the words.

“Yeah, I know. My friend Phichit, the Thai skater, he set them all up for me but I never really use them. He keeps trying to make me but, well, it’s not really my thing.”
Viktor made a small noise of understanding and took another sip from his own glass. Yuuri watched him, finding himself strangely transfixed by the way the other skater’s muscles moved, the tendons in his neck tensing and flexing as he swallowed.

“Like you said, I do enjoy the attention.” Viktor continued, seemingly oblivious to Yuuri’s scrutiny. “I’ve been doing this for so many years that I’m used to being in the spotlight by now. And pleasing the audience is what we do. I couldn’t be a skater if I didn’t enjoy people watching me.”

His eyes flickered back to Yuuri and their gazes held. Viktor still had a small smile on his face but his expression was more serious and more open that Yuuri was used to.

“But I understand the need to get away from it all sometimes. Especially here. These events, they’re all the same every year. The same people, the same conversations, the same empty praise. For so long, nothing ever changed.”

Viktor looked at him and for a second Yuuri was sure he saw something flash in Viktor’s eyes, there and gone again in a second but he had no chance to try and work out what it was. Before he could even properly consider it, Viktor smiled at him again, tone changing to become much lighter. “I don’t blame you for trying to hide for a while.”

Yuuri wanted to protest that he wasn’t exactly hiding per say but in the end, that was exactly what he was doing and he didn’t want Viktor Nikiforov to call him out on a lie. Instead he just nodded, acknowledging the words. It was strange to hear Viktor - skating legend, beloved by millions, crown jewel of the skating world - talk about disliking attention in any way, shape or form. Yuuri had always assumed he basked in the glory and somehow, the new knowledge that Viktor sometimes felt the way that Yuuri himself did suddenly made the pedestal Viktor stood upon not seem quite so unreachably high.

“And what about you Yuuri?” Viktor asked and Yuuri startled from his thoughts, unsure of the question he was being asked. “You always seem to enjoy winning. Why are you not out there enjoying your praise?”

It took a few seconds for Yuuri to respond partly because he was shocked that Viktor was interested enough to ask the question and partly because he found that he needed time to gather his thoughts, to form them into something vaguely coherent. It was true, he did loving winning. Loved the sound of the crowd cheering for him, loved the knowledge that he had proved himself yet again. And yet the pressure still sometimes threatened to crush him, the thought of so many thousands of expectations making him want to buckle under their weight.

During events like this he struggled because he had never been a particularly outgoing person. He could put on a show of confidence on the ice when the crowd were just nameless faces, he could revel in the general feelings of success and validation that came with winning but dealing with praise from individual people was so much harder. One on one there was nothing for him to hide behind and he was terrified people would be able to see how awkward and unsure of himself he really was.

“I’ve never been…particularly good in situations like these.” he finally settled on, hoping the vague words were conveying his thoughts well enough without delving too deep. “Out on the ice you can be anything you want to be. Everything is easier to deal with. Here, it’s harder.”

He blushed at how stupid and immature the words sounded and took another gulp of champagne, hoping to hide his embarrassment. Unfortunately the gesture did nothing to improve his image, instead causing him to cough as he practically inhaled half the liquid in his haste.

“Not a fan of champagne?” Viktor asked, watching him choke, and the teasing note was back in his
tone. When Yuuri looked at him, the other skater seemed to be trying and failing to keep a straight face. Viktor’s eyes were alight with mirth, seeming to sparkle in the bright lights of the room and the corner of his mouth was twitching as if he was restraining himself from smiling. Despite his embarrassment Yuuri could acknowledge that the action had probably looked pretty funny from the outside.

“Not much of a fan of alcohol at all actually.” he replied when his airways were finally clear again and Viktor’s eyebrows shot up, his face morphing into an expression of surprise.

“I try not to drink too much at competitions.” Yuuri added, realising that after seeing him down his first glass of champagne like it was water that Viktor might have gotten the wrong impression. “Alcohol and I don’t mix very well. I have a high tolerance but I have a bad habit of doing embarrassing stuff when I’m drunk. I don’t like it that much either so I usually try to avoid it.”

“Oh really?” Viktor asked, looking amused and Yuuri fought down a blush, some of the memories of his early days at University springing to mind. Thankfully, Phichit had agreed to delete the pictures but he was sure if any of his more embarrassing moments were to be made public he would have to retire from figure skating and go and live as a hermit in a mountain cave for the rest of his life to avoid the humiliation.

“Yeah, it’s, uh, not pretty.” he finished lamely, praying he had been successful at keeping his face relatively neutral. Viktor looked like he was trying to hold back laughter and Yuuri’s brain unhelpfully noticed how nice the expression looked on his face. The way Viktor’s eyes shone and pleasant curve of his mouth as he smiled.

Yuuri wondered briefly why he was being so open with Viktor, why the words seemed to come so easily and naturally. He should have been on his guard, should have kept the conversation short and professional. Multiple times in the past when he had talked to Viktor the other man had insulted him, used words to tear him down and Yuuri had never forgiven him for it. But somehow he wasn’t on edge, wasn’t on the defensive in the way he always used to be when Viktor was around. Just like the night that they had talked together over a meal Yuuri found out that, irrationally and against everything his instincts were screaming at him, he was enjoying talking to Viktor. Was enjoying the company of the man he had sworn to hate and he didn’t understand it but knew the truth of it all the same.

One of the ISU members wandered past the table and shot the two of them a brief glance, as if wondering why the gold and silver medallist were hiding at the edge of the room rather than mingling with the crowd like expectation decreed. From the look on Viktor’s face he had caught the look too and he turned back to Yuuri, laughter fading.

“You should get back to the party.” he commented and the thought of returning made Yuuri’s gut clench in unhappiness. “After all, you are the winner of the Grand Prix Final, for the second time. You have celebrations to enjoy I’m sure. People to talk to. Fond memories to relive.”

The statement shocked Yuuri but it took a full second for him to work out why. Viktor had called him a two time Grand Prix winner, something Yuuri had never heard before. While technically true, he was so used to people dismissing his first ever win as a win by default due to Viktor being out of the competition that the acknowledgement felt strange to him.

Something warmed within him at the words. It wasn’t praise, he knew that logically, Viktor was just stating a fact, but he reacted to it all the same.

Yuuri didn’t want to go back to the banquet. Viktor’s words were a clear dismissal, he was obvious bored with talking to Yuuri and wanted him gone but Yuuri found that he didn’t want to leave.
Viktor was still looking at him and suddenly Yuuri felt captured by the gaze, unable to move. Unable or unwilling. Viktor might not want to talk to him anymore but Yuuri had learned over the years that there were two sure-fire ways to capture and hold Viktor’s attention, even if it was just for a little while. One was winning a gold medal, was beating Viktor at skating, showing his worth and proving he was a worthy opponent. The other...

“People won’t notice if I’m gone for a while longer.” he started, not quite sure where he was going with the words but allowing them to fall from his lips anyway. Viktor’s comment about relieving fond memories had brought up very vivid images of a banquet from years past. Yuuri had won the gold medal, just like he had now, and Viktor had finally taken notice of him for it. He could still remember that night with perfect clarity. Of the feeling of Viktor’s hand on his waist as they danced, Viktor’s lips on his mouth as they kissed, of skin on skin and heat and passion and all the things Yuuri could tell himself he didn’t want but did.

“But you’re right. There are some memories I do want to relive.”

Yuuri hoped the implication in his tone was enough, that Viktor would pick up on what he was trying to say without words. If he didn’t, if Yuuri had to say it out loud he would never be able to find the courage. He wasn’t use to this. Not the situation, not the careful dance around each other, filled with words unspoken and things left unsaid. He was working from nothing but instinct and hope, praying that his naivety in the matters would never be picked up on. He didn’t know how to play the game, not in the way he knew that Viktor did.

Luckily, Viktor seemed to catch his meaning immediately because his eyes widened slightly, pupils dilating in the soft light of the banquet room. He looked at Yuuri, his gaze searching and after a few seconds he seemed to find what he was searching for.

Viktor closed his eyes briefly, sucking in a short breath of air and exhaling sharply. His face contorted slightly, brows furrowing a little as though he were thinking something over very quickly, thoughts flashing across his face faster than Yuuri could catch. Finally, having clearly come to a decision he opened his eyes again, looking at Yuuri with an unreadable expression on his face.

Yuuri wondered for a minute if Viktor was going to refuse, thought that maybe he had misread the situation and he prepared to apologise, to slink off in embarrassment and never mention it again. But Viktor’s words stopped him.

“If that’s what you want.” he said and Yuuri felt his heart skip a beat at the tone of the words, the way Viktor’s voice had come out low and inviting. “Then I will happily do anything.”

This time, they didn’t linger in the corridor.

At the fateful banquet after the World Championships nearly two years ago they had stayed in the
empty space beyond the banquet room for quite some time, out in the open where anyone could have
seen them. Yuuri could think of nothing worse than being discovered and so as they left the crowded
room, slipping away silent and unnoticed, he looked around quickly for a place to go.

They couldn’t go back to his room. He was sharing the space with Phichit and there was no way he
could risk the other boy walking in on them. He was still intending to tell Phichit everything but that
wasn’t how he wanted his friend to find out. Aside from that it seemed rude and presumptuous to ask
Viktor about his own room and Yuuri was too nervous. He had suggested this, Viktor was following
his lead, which meant the responsibility fell to him.

Yuuri knew that what he was doing was a bad idea, just as he had known it was a bad idea the
previous times and yet still he couldn’t stop himself. Despite everything, secretly he treasured the
memories of the first time this had happened, so similar and yet so different to what was happening
now. The desperation, the passion, the feeling of possessing and being possessed, mind body and
soul, even if it was just for a few hours. The feeling of being wanted and needed just as much as he
wanted and needed, even only briefly.

Viktor was like a searing light and like a moth to a flame, Yuuri couldn’t seem to stay away. He
would keep coming back, over and over to revel in the brightness until he burned.

In a small alcove off the main corridor Yuuri spotted an ornate door, hidden almost out of sight. The
familiar symbols were carved into a plaque in the centre and he figured that would have to do. It was
better than the corridor at least.

Slipping through the door he held it open to allow Viktor to follow him in and then closed it swiftly,
flipping the lock and hearing it click shut.

The bathroom they were in was classy, fancy in the elaborate way bathrooms in expensive hotels
tended to be. All marbles floors and countertops and elegant looking paintings that surely could have
found a better home somewhere other than there. Yuuri spent a few moments taking in the room,
allowing the superficial thoughts to dominate his mind as he tried to calm the racing of his heart.

Inviting Viktor here had been a bold move and one that he was surprised at himself for trying.
Somehow he had managed to keep up the confident façade that he had perfected out on the ice for
long enough to get here but now, he couldn’t keep up the act. He never could, not when it was just
the two of them and nothing between them but air and the words always left unsaid. Now he was
back to being just Yuuri, plain and ordinary and hoping to hold on to Viktor’s attention for the small
fraction of time he was allowed.

It made him nervous and unsure of himself but all his fear was assuaged when he felt Viktor’s hand
cup his face, gently using his thumb to brush the strands of dark hair away from Yuuri’s eye. This
was familiar. This was what he knew, what he understood, what he loved.

Encouraged by the gesture he reached up and met Viktor’s lips in a kiss, surprising himself by how
gentle the action was. Despite his desire, the kiss had held little of the demanding passion that he had
somehow grown used to. Instead he had unconsciously followed Viktor’s lead and kept the
movement soft, letting Viktor reciprocate with the same soft touches.

The last time they had done this, Yuuri had been angry, desperate to take back the control he had
thought he lost. Frantic and needy and rough. But this time he had none of that. There was no anger,
no control to regain. All he had was his desire to touch Viktor, to have him again in the way he had
missed for so long.

Viktor laughed a little under his mouth, pulling away slightly to look Yuuri in the eye, one hand still
cupped round his face.

“Katsuki Yuuri,” he said, a softness in his tone that was still laced slightly with amusement although there was a sadness to his voice that confused Yuuri for a moment. “You are nothing like I ever expected.”

‘I’m better than you ever believed I’d be’ Yuuri thought, the old mantra slipping back into his mind uninvited. ‘All those years ago you thought I was nothing and look at what I am now.’

“And you’re exactly like I always knew you were.” Yuuri replied, still slightly thrown by the tone of Viktor’s voice. After being reminded again of those fateful meetings all those years ago that had shaped him so thoroughly he blurted out the automatic response but something about the words rang false in the air between them.

“And what’s that?” Viktor asked, all the amusement suddenly dropping from his tone to be replaced by a seriousness underlain with a genuine curiosity.

Faltering in his speech, Yuuri couldn’t quite get the words to come. He used to be so sure he understood Viktor in his entirety, knew to his core what kind of a man he was. For so many years he had planned the words he wanted to say, to remind Viktor of his cruelty and how Yuuri had surpassed him over and over again to prove him wrong. But somehow it seemed almost wrong here.

Viktor had been nothing but polite to him at the banquet, having a casual conversation like two friends rather than the rivals that they were. And before that, when Yuuri had gotten injured he had seemed genuinely concerned. And when they had sat together in that brightly lit restaurant talking and joking in a way Yuuri never knew they could, Viktor had made him laugh. Really truly laugh, in a way he had never expected or realised was possible.

And now, Viktor was here and his hand was gentle on Yuuri’s face and Yuuri couldn’t bring himself to say the words that would shatter the moment, that would spill spite like poison into the conversation. Not here, when for the first time they had passed the night without Viktor saying a single thing to raise Yuuri’s defences and when Yuuri had found he had done nothing in return to break Viktor’s. It was peace, a fragile sort of peace but peace all the same, and for the first time in his life Yuuri didn’t want it broken.

He had used to be so sure that Viktor was entirely the man he expected. But suddenly, he wasn’t so sure anymore.

The thoughts confused him and threw him off balance. Viktor was still standing watching him, waiting for a response and Yuuri found that he had no idea what to say. In a fit of uncertainty he reinitiated the kiss, hoping the familiar action would distract both Viktor and himself from the question he had still left unanswered.

Kissing was safe. Kissing Viktor he understood. But the kiss was still too sweet and gentle and it didn’t help Yuuri’s confused tangle of thoughts and emotions one bit.

Instead he deepened the kiss, trying to push it back into more familiar territory. The other times this had happened it had been full of passion and desperation and burning anger and he understood that far more than the new emotions he had somehow strayed into without really understanding how or why.

Viktor made a slightly frustrated noise into his mouth but he returned the kiss, meeting Yuuri’s demanding kisses. Gradually he melted into the feeling, his hand sliding from Yuuri’s face to twine tightly into his hair.
Wanting to push the encounter faster to distract himself from the confusion of earlier Yuuri slid his hands under Viktor’s shirt in the way he remembered Viktor doing to him not so long ago and bit down on his lip, dragging the sound out of Viktor he remembered so well. It was a move he had used before, after the first banquet when they had slept together and he remembered how Viktor had reacted, the desperate needy sound he had made and how he had responded with a passion to rival Yuuri’s own.

Viktor’s reaction didn’t disappoint. He gasped into Yuuri’s mouth and the hand in his hair tightened, almost wrenching his head back involuntarily. Viktor licked back into his mouth, his kisses suddenly turning hard and bruising and Yuuri relaxed into the feeling. This was much more familiar territory. This he understood. Passion and need were much easier for him to focus on than the traitorous thoughts that had blindsided him so thoroughly earlier.

Yuuri slid his hands across the smooth skin of Viktor’s waist and Viktor touched him back, hands running across his skin like a starving man finding food for the first time. Yuuri pushed them both closer and spun them around so that he was standing with his back to the low marble countertop running across the wall and Viktor was pressed close, almost leaning over him.

In their last encounter he had been desperate to stay in control, to take back the power he had lost with the medal. But this time was different. On their first night he had let Victor take the lead, had let the other man take him apart piece by piece and touch by touch and he had revelled in it. Had secretly loved the feeling over Victor being over him, surrounding him, pressing him into the bed and gazing down at him with bright and burning eyes.

Being backed into the counter with Viktor pressing close, one hand in his hair and the other roaming across his skin brought back the memory of that night and Yuuri melted into it, satisfaction mingling with his desire.

Viktor was the only one that could do this to him. Since their first encounter that fateful banquet so long ago, Yuuri had never touched anyone else, had never let himself be touched, in the same way. Had never even kissed anyone else because much as he loved the carnal feeling of it the greatest part of his desire came from the fact that it was Viktor he was with, Viktor that was touching him, Viktor whose attention he had fully and completely for a fraction of time that was longer than he could have ever before dreamed to hold it.

With his back pressed to the low marble surface Yuuri found that he was being bent backwards under the weight of the kisses, Viktor’s hand in the hair the only thing keeping him upright. For a while Viktor seemed content to hold that position but eventually he seemed to grow frustrated at the lack of access it gave him. His hands, which had been running scorching trails across Yuuri skin suddenly gripped tight and Yuuri gasped a little as he was hoisted up onto the low surface, the hidden strength in Viktor’s arms picking him up like he weighed nothing and sitting him back down on the smooth ledge so their heights were more level.

The more rational part of Yuuri felt slightly insulted that Viktor could lift him so effortlessly but the deeper, animal part of his mind basked in the feeling. Due to their change in position they were levelled out almost eye to eye and Yuuri could see the desire glinting in Viktor’s irises, something he was sure was reflected in his own. For a second Yuuri wondered how eyes that had once looked so cold could be filled with so much heat. Viktor was normally like an ice carving, perfect and untouchable on the rink but here he was different, brought to Yuuri’s level and desperate and passionate and human and it was something Yuuri had never realised he needed until he possessed it and never wanted to let it go.

Wanting Viktor to come closer he wrapped his legs around the other man’s back, drawing him in.
Viktor complied, sliding as close as he could so that they were pressed flushed together, Viktor cradled in trap of Yuuri’s legs and Yuuri sitting wrapped around Viktor with his back pressed into the cold surface behind him. Belatedly Yuuri realised that it was a mirror he was leaning against, a fancy gold edged one that stretched the entire length of the counter top he was sitting on. From his position with his back to the glass he couldn’t see anything but he was sure that Viktor would be able to see a reflection of his own face, staring back.

Absentmindedly he wondered if maybe Viktor enjoyed being able to see himself like this. He was stunning, a much more interesting sight to look at than Yuuri and Yuuri wouldn’t blame him if that was the case. He loved looking at Viktor too after all.

Moving slightly from their previous positions Viktor broke the kiss to press his mouth along the line of Yuuri’s jaw. Yuuri could feel himself starting to get flushed, squirming a little where he sat and tilting his head back to give Viktor better access.

Instead of continuing the trail of kisses down his neck like Yuuri had hoped he would, Viktor pulled back, breaking the contact. Yuuri whined a little at the loss but Viktor only pulled back more, moving their faces apart so that they were further away than they had been since the whole encounter started.

There was an ache in Yuuri’s chest at the loss but he stayed still, not wanting to push Viktor further than he was comfortable with. A part of him still felt sharp twinges of guilt when he remembered how suddenly he had accosted Viktor last time, how he had denied the other man his chance to speak. Viktor had still consented then but if he wanted to pull away now, Yuuri wouldn’t try to stop him. He would mourn for the loss but he wasn’t selfish enough to try and force Viktor to stay.

“Are you…do you want to leave?” he asked, his voice rough from all the kissing and catching slightly on the words. He always knew that he was one of many for Viktor, that their time together was limited to moments and that one day it would all have to end, one way or another. He just hoped that it wasn’t today, not here, not now. Being able to capture Viktor’s attention might be a fleeting thing but he would cherish it while he had it and mourn it when it was gone.

“No.” Viktor breathed, eyes dark and seeming to pin Yuuri in place, freezing the breath in his lungs. “But the hotel was full so Yakov was forced to stay with me. We can’t go back to my room.”

His gazed turned questioning and Yuuri realised what he was asking.

“Oh. Uh, mine too. Is occupied I mean.” Internally he cursed himself at how unintelligible he always seemed to become when Viktor looked at him like that but Viktor seemed to understand his meaning fine. He frowned a little at the statement and Yuuri felt disappointment rush through him as well.

It was his own fault for starting this, for somehow still not being able to stay away. He should have thought it through before he acted. Just like before he hadn’t intended for this to happen, hadn’t come prepared and presumably Viktor hadn’t either unless he was in the habit of carrying condoms and lube in his suit pockets.

Maybe it was a good thing, he told himself, trying to push down the rising disappointment. After all, he had known this was a bad idea before he even started it and this was probably the world’s way of trying to stop him making another stupid, reckless mistake.

Averting his eyes from Viktor he made to slide down off the countertop and leave with as much dignity as he could scrape back together but Viktor’s hand on his arm stopped him.

“There are…other things. If you want to.” Viktor asked and there was a question in his eyes and in
his voice that Yuuri couldn’t stop himself from answering.

“Yes.” He replied on instinct and it was only after the words had left his lips that he realised that he had just condemned himself again. After being given the perfect sign that he should leave, that he shouldn’t go any further, he had decided to continue anyway. There was no-one he could blame for this, not Viktor, not coincidence, not luck. This was all on him. He had made his choice and he had chosen Viktor and all the consequences that came with it.

Viktor leaned back in hesitantly, hovering at the midpoint between them and waiting for Yuuri to meet him halfway. Leaning up Yuuri pressed their mouths together again in a kiss, pulling back fractionally and letting Viktor take control of the movements. He had nothing but their previous encounters to work from and he was content to let Viktor take the lead.

Gentle hands found the fastenings of his trousers and Viktor pulled back again to look at him.

“Is this alright.” he asked and Yuuri nodded, not trusting himself to speak.

Viktor’s hands made quick work of the task and soon he was sliding the fabric down, cool skin meeting heated flesh. Yuuri gasped a little at the sensation and Viktor silenced him with another kiss, pulling slightly on Yuuri’s lower lip with his teeth and turning the gasp into a little choked off moan.

It had been so long since Viktor touched him last and for a minute Yuuri wondered how he had lived without it. Viktor’s hands knew just where to press, just where to pull, the exact pressure and heat that had Yuuri panting and gasping for breath within minutes.

Not wanting to let Viktor touch him so expertly and give nothing in return, Yuuri fumbled for the fastenings of Viktor’s own trousers, reaching inside to grasp Viktor’s own cock. To his surprise, Viktor was already almost completely hard despite the fact that Yuuri had barely touched him. Then Viktor twisted his wrist in a movement that had Yuuri moaning again and he lost that train of thought very quickly.

He was flushed and panting and already so far gone that he wondered if he would ever be able to piece himself back together. Viktor pulled back a little, breaking the kiss to look at him and never ceasing the movements of his hand. Yuuri looked back, trying to focus his eyes on Viktor’s face and ignore the pleasure that was threatening to drown out everything else.

“You’re so beautiful.” Viktor whispered, the words hushed and intimate even in the echo of the empty room. “Beautiful when you skate and beautiful like this. I…” he trailed off as though he couldn’t find the words.

Yuuri knew that the words were empty praise, said only in the heat of the moment but he couldn’t help the feelings that rose within him at them anyway. Realistically he knew he was nothing special, plain looking and boring and everything Viktor wasn’t. Viktor probably said similar things to everyone he was trying to charm. But in that single moment, Yuuri could allow the words to work, the praise to flow through him and make him feel wanted and desired and special in a way no-one else ever could.

But the words meant nothing and he had to remember that, least he be lost.

Not wanting to give Viktor the chance to say anything more Yuuri captured his lips back in a kiss, pressing all he want and need and desire into the soft skin. At the same time he moved his own hand again, a clumsy and inexpert movement but one that had Viktor moaning a little into his mouth at the sensation. Encouraged, Yuuri moved again, trying to work his hand in time with Viktor’s own and determined not to break the kiss.
Despite his own attempts, Yuuri still finished first, gasping and shuddering his release over Viktor’s fingers, letting the sensation wash through him. After a few blissed out seconds he realised that Viktor was still hard in his now motionless hand and he moved again. It didn’t take long for Viktor to finish too, bracing one hand on the mirror beside Yuuri’s ear, head bent over and panting as Yuuri brought him off.

He was still cradled in the bracket of Yuuri’s legs, his other hand clasping almost painfully around Yuuri’s hip. They breathed together, harsh pants gradually coming back under control and Yuuri found that he didn’t want to move. Didn’t want to leave.

But he had to.

“We need to go.” he whispered and Viktor’s head snapped up, his expression changing in an instant.

“We need to get back to the banquet.” Yuuri clarified, hoping Viktor would understand what he was trying to say. He wasn’t feeling particularly comprehensible at the moment. “We left too early. People really are going to start noticing we’re gone if we stay any longer.”

Viktor didn’t speak. Instead he just pulled away, giving Yuuri room to slide down from the countertop and stand again on the cool marble floor. Yuuri’s legs were a little shaky and he prayed that his face wasn’t too flushed and that no-one would notice the change. As quickly as he could he used the paper towels in the dispenser in the room to clean himself up and saw Viktor from the corner of his eye doing the same. Sneaking off during the banquet have sex with his rival in a bathroom was probably topped the list of stupidest and most irresponsible things he had ever done and Yuuri knew that if Celestino found out he wouldn’t live to see morning. There were far to many important people and press in attendance and if anyone got even a whiff of what was going on between the two of them it would be a disaster. It would be almost impossible to explain why two sworn enemies were sleeping together and the press would have a field day. It wasn’t a fallout that he wanted or was willing to deal with. What happened between him and Viktor had to stay where it was, confined to dark corners and locked rooms where no-one but them would ever know.

Once they were both reasonable presentable, if slightly worse for the wear, Yuuri turned to leave before being stopped by a light touch on his shoulder.

“Your, ah, your hair.” Viktor said, making a vague motion to Yuuri’s head. At his confused expression, Viktor raised a hand slowly and ran it gently through Yuuri’s hair, flattening the mess that Yuuri realised it must have turned into. The simple touch had Yuuri blushing furiously, which was ridiculous considering the much more intimate touches they had shared mere minutes earlier. But somehow the gesture felt much more personal than anything that had come before it and it affected Yuuri more than he would ever be able to admit, even to himself.

“You…uh…you should probably wait a few minutes before you follow me out.” he stammered, wanting to break the moment and the confusion that was rising within him because of it. “So that people don’t notice.”

Viktor’s hand dropped away from his head and something flashed in his eyes, an emotion there and gone before Yuuri had the chance to comprehend it. Suddenly, Yuuri felt ashamed, although he couldn’t work out why.

“Yeah, of course.” Viktor said, voice completely flat. “Of course no-one can know.”

Feeling suddenly uncomfortable, Yuuri turned to leave but was stopped by a soft call of his name that followed his retreating figure.
Hesitantly he turned back around to see Viktor still standing there, one hand outstretched.

“Give me your phone.” Viktor continued and Yuuri complied on instinct, the “Why” only slipping out past his lips once the device was already in Viktor’s hand. Viktor tapped something onto the screen, clicking it closed and handing it back to Yuuri a couple of seconds later.

“I’ve saved my number in there.” he told Yuuri, who jerked back a little in shock. “Just in case you…well in case you ever need me.” The final words sounded strangely hesitant and Yuuri bit back the automatic ‘why would I need you?’ that threatened to fall from his lips. The statement would be incredible rude, especially considering what had just passed between them and on that train of thought, that was also probably why Viktor had given Yuuri his number in the first place. Once could be written off as impulse, twice as a mistake but three times was a pattern and Viktor was probably expecting it to be one that was going to continue.

Yuuri couldn’t blame him. If he were Viktor he would assume the pattern was going to continue too. Yuuri was ashamed to admit that after today he had proved that he was pretty much a sure bet and Viktor probably wanted to take advantage of that. It was one hundred percent his own fault and yet, despite how much of a bad decision he knew it was and had been, Yuuri somehow couldn’t bring himself to regret it.

“Thanks.” he mumbled instead and turned again to leave, trying to hide his face and the embarrassment and shame he knew was written on their. Viktor didn’t stop him this time and he unlocked the door silently and slipped back into the empty corridor, hurrying over to the side doors of the banquet room they had left from earlier and sneaking back in, trying to look as casual as he was able. The door was near to the drinks table and he snagged another glass of champagne as he passed, hoping the glass would help him blend in more with the party that was still barely halfway done.

For a while he mingled as best he could, glancing round for Phichit and Celestino as he did so. A couple of minutes after he himself had re-entered he saw Viktor slip back into the room, the light flush on his face the only trace of evidence left behind of what had passed between them.

A throat cleared behind him and Yuuri jumped around, startled. He hadn’t realised he had been staring and he internally groaned when he saw Phichit looking at him, an unimpressed expression on the other boy’s face.

“Where were you Yuuri?” he asked and Yuuri panicked. He had been going to tell Phichit but this wasn’t the time and definitely not the situation he had imagined.

“I…uh…went to the bathroom.” he blurted out, saying the first thing that popped into his mind. Phichit raised an eyebrow, looking disbelieving and Yuuri hastened to continue.

“I have something to tell you Phichit. I’ve been meaning to tell you for a while, I promise. But…” he glanced around at the people milling around them. No-one seemed to be listening in to their conversation but you could never be sure, especially not in places like this. “I’ll explain it all as soon as we get back to the hotel room, I swear. I just can’t tell you here.”

“Yeah, I think you’d better explain to me Yuuri.” Phichit told him and there was worry and concern written into the lines in his face. His voice was quiet but laced with an undercurrent of steel. “Explain to me why I saw you and Viktor freaking Nikiforov sneaking off together and why it’s taken you this long to come back. Explain to me where you went because I know you didn’t just ‘go to the bathroom.’” Phichit used his hands to make the quotation marks in the air and Yuuri winced, knowing how bad it must be looking.
“Explain to me why you both came back looking the way you do.” Phichit continued, obviously not done yet. “I might be younger than you Yuuri but I’m not stupid. Please, just tell me what’s going on.”

“I’ll tell you everything Phichit, I swear I will.” he promised, hoping his friend could read the sincerity in his words. “But not here. In private, when we get back to the room. I don’t want people to overhear.”

Phichit sighed but nodded his understanding and Yuuri breathed a sigh of relief. He honestly had been meaning to tell Phichit everything and while this wasn’t the way he would have chosen for his friend to find out, the conversation had been a long time coming.

The rest of the banquet seemed to trudge by, agonisingly slowly. Yuuri wished he was just able to escape with Phichit back to their shared room but he had already made one impromptu disappearance and another one was sure to be noticed.

Together the two of them were forced to stick around for a couple more hours, making small talk and trying to ignore the elephant in the room. In comparison to earlier, Yuuri could feel Phichit’s eagerness to leave that rivalled his own. Another wave of guilt washed over him at the reason. Phichit wanted to know the truth, the truth that Yuuri had been hiding from him. There had never been secrets between them before and whatever his reasons, Yuuri knew he should have told his friend. He would have to make it up to Phichit somehow, whatever it took.

But first he had to explain.

As soon as it was socially acceptable they both excused themselves, citing a long day and fatigue as their reason for an early departure. Together they walked back to their shared room, the silence hanging heavy between them. When they stepped through the door Phichit went straight over to his bed, sitting down on the mattress and curling his legs under him in a familiar gesture of ease. Yuuri followed him, sitting down on the same bed like they did back in Detroit after a long day of training when all they wanted to do was relax and talk.

“Tell me.” Phichit asked, and after a few seconds of composing his thoughts, Yuuri did.

He told Phichit of how it had all started. Of how all the anger and frustration and determination had built and built until when he had finally achieved victory he felt like he was going to burst with it. He told Phichit of how he and Viktor had danced, of all the swirling emotions inside him and what it had led to, although he left out the majority of the details. Even saying the most basic facts of what had passed between them that night still had him blushing right up to his ears and he found he couldn’t quite look Phichit in the eye during that section of the story.

He told Phichit of how he had left the next morning, knowing it was only supposed to be a one-time thing. He told him of the agonising defeat the next year, of how he had craved control and acknowledgment and something he couldn’t quite name and how he had stumbled into Viktor again
and how everything from there had just happened, surpassing all his rational thought.

He told Phichit of what had happened at the World Championships, of the crash and Viktor’s reaction and the dinner given out of pity. About the way Viktor had made him laugh and demanded nothing. Of the way that they had met again, here, at the banquet and Yuuri had realised he didn’t want to stop, no matter how much he knew he should. Tactically, he avoided delving too deep into his feelings about Viktor. They were too complicated for even him to fully understand let alone verbalise and it was his actions that mattered after all, not his emotions.

As the story progressed Phichit’s face changed, from surprise to shock and finally to acceptance. There was no judgment there, just a firm fixed gaze that took in every word Yuuri said and processed it without comment.

Finally, Yuuri finished the story, feeling drained. It was the first time he had told someone what had happened out loud and it was exhausting.

“Are you angry with me?” he asked once all his other words were spent, praying the answer was no.

“Of course not Yuuri.” Phichit’s voice was quiet but there was no lie or insincerity in his tone. “I wish you had told me before now but I’m not angry.”

“I’m sorry Phichit.” Yuuri told him, the words utterly sincere. “I wanted to tell you before. I was going to. I just didn’t know how to explain it.”

Phichit smiled but there was dark concern lurking just behind his eyes.

“It doesn’t mean anything though.” Yuuri was quick to add, not sure if he had made that point clear enough in his explanation. “It doesn’t change anything between us. Between Viktor and I.”

“Now you’re just lying to yourself Yuuri.” Phichit told him bluntly and Yuuri startled in surprise. He had deliberately left out describing the confusing mess of feelings that now rose in him whenever Viktor was mention and he hadn’t really even been lying. Their encounters didn’t mean anything, not to Viktor at least. It was just a way to release emotion for them both, a casual thing with no strings attached. Nothing significant at all.

Seeing Yuuri’s startled expression Phichit continued, looking unusually serious.

“Yuuri, you still have a poster of the guy hanging on your wall. You’ve spent half your life obsessed with him, one way or another. Everything you’ve done has been built around Viktor, around beating Viktor, about proving yourself to Viktor. No matter what you tell yourself or how callous he may be about the whole thing, it can’t mean nothing to you. It can’t have changed nothing. It doesn’t work like that.”

Yuuri wished he could protest, wanted to insist that he still felt the same about Viktor as ever, still hated him and wanted to beat him with the same fervent determination that he always did but the words wouldn’t come.

Phichit was still looking serious but when he spoke it was in a placating tone.

“Look Yuuri, maybe you’re right. Maybe it is just a casual thing between the two of you. But you need to be careful.”

“I am.” Yuuri protested but Phichit cut him off.

“Listen to me Yuuri. Viktor broke your heart before and you’ve spent your whole life trying to beat
him to cover up the fact that you never quite managed to put it back together again. You’re obsessed with him and it’s helped you do great things but what you’re doing now is dangerous. This is just going to complicate things for you in ways you might not even realise yet and if Viktor is as much of an ass as you’ve always lead me to believe it won’t end well. It can’t.”

“I know.” Yuuri whispered, and he did. He knew what he was doing was stupid and reckless and that things were much simpler when he could just hate Viktor with nothing else getting in the way. But much as he regretted not telling Phichit earlier, he couldn’t regret what he had done.

“Can you ever forgive me for not telling you?” he asked, willing to accept whatever answer Phichit gave.

“Of course.” Phichit laughed, his face unexpectedly breaking out into a smile that was such a contrast to the seriousness of the moment before. “You’re allowed to have secrets Yuuri. As your friend I wish you had told me sooner but of course I forgive you.”

Yuuri breathed a sigh of relief and reached over to hug Phichit, infinitely glad of his friend. Phichit returned the hug, squeezing Yuuri tightly and Yuuri basked in the feeling for a moment. He hadn’t realised until then just how much he had needed it.

Together they got ready for bed, easily falling back into the familiar routine and both exhausted from the day’s events. In a few minutes they were both finished and settled under the covers of their respective beds, ready to sleep after a long day. Silently, Yuuri reached over and clicked off the light that was standing on the table between them, plunging the room into darkness. He lay down in his bed and could just make out the fuzzy figure of Phichit doing the same, both of them facing each other and separated by a few meters of space.

“I meant what I said before Yuuri.” Phichit said suddenly into the darkness, breaking the silence. Yuuri squinted, trying to make out the expression on his friend’s face but it was too dark and Phichit was just a blur in his vision.

“What you do with Viktor, that’s your choice. No-one can stop you.” Phichit continued. “But you have to promise me you’ll be careful.”

“I promise.” Yuuri replied, sincere.

“Good.” The word was breathed into the silence. “Just be careful Yuuri. If you’re not, if you let this go too far, one day Viktor is going to break your heart again.” Phichit moved, sitting up slightly in the bed and turning his head, eyes glinting slightly in the darkness, fixed on Yuuri. “Or you’re going to break his.”

Yuuri snorted at the absurdity of the statement, the sound bursting out of him without any conscious thought.

“Please Phichit, be serious.” he told the other boy, still disbelieved by the ridiculousness of what he had just heard. “Break his heart? Really?” The thought was absurd. “I’m just another dime a dozen skater to him that he’s screwed a couple of times. He doesn’t even remember our first meeting! I’m nothing special, definitely not to him. I mean, he’s Viktor Nikiforov and I’m… well… me.”

Yuuri was under no delusions about his own worth. He was a good skater who had earned his titles but he still hadn’t reached the legendary status that Viktor wore so well. And off the ice he was nothing at all. Plain and boring and ordinary, everything that Viktor wasn’t.

Viktor was popular and beloved by other skaters and fans alike. He had people begging for his
attention every minute of the day. He was beautiful and successful and could have anything and anyone he wanted. Yuuri might be able to finally challenge him on the ice and rile him up off it but it meant nothing, not when the gaps between who they were were still such gaping chasms, impossible to cross. Viktor had no reason to care about him, no reason to want him. The very idea was laughable.

Phichit was right when he said that Yuuri was obsessed. So much of his life he had built up around the idea of Viktor, first of idolising him and then the desire to tear him down. First he had longed to skate with Viktor one day and then, after Viktor had shown his true colours and crushed all of Yuuri’s adoration of him with a few short words, he had sworn that he was going to prove to Viktor that he was worth something after all, no matter what he believed. But no matter how much Yuuri had hated Viktor over the years, the sense of awe he felt when he watched Viktor skate never really went away, nor did the desire for Viktor to see him, to see his worth the way he never had in years past. And now there was this new thing between them and Yuuri didn’t quite know what he was feeling anymore.

But whatever it was, there was one thing he knew categorically, one thing that would never change.

“I’ll be careful, I promise.” he told Phichit. “But I swear, this is just a casual thing. It really does mean nothing.” Yuuri rolled over, turning his back on his friend and closing his eyes, hoping that sleep would come quickly. It had been a long and confusing day after all.

“And the last thing in the world that’s ever going to happen is for Viktor Nikiforov to fall in love with me.”

Three months later, at the World Championships yet again, Yuuri was determined to win. He could have won last year, he knew it, and it was only the crash and subsequent injury that had ruined his chances so thoroughly.

Strangely, he had been looking forward to the competition more than usual, not just for the chance to beat Viktor again but he was genuinely looking forward to skating and weirdly excited to see the other skater after three months apart. Skating against Viktor was a challenge and a thrill and the thought of seeing him sent a shiver of excitement up his spine.

Yuuri didn’t see much of the other skater before the competition but on the night before the short program his phone pinged, letting him know he had a message. Yuuri picked it up curiously and saw the familiar name flash up onto the screen. He had texted Viktor the night of the last banquet out of courtesy, allowing the other skater to add Yuuri’s own number into his phone so that he wasn’t at a disadvantage. Viktor seemed to have saved the number because his name flashed up on Yuuri’s screen, hovering above the little ‘good luck tomorrow’ that glowed below it.

‘You too’ Yuuri typed back, and hit send before he could even think it over.

Despite the wishes of good luck, in the short program Yuuri didn’t skate his absolute best, touching
down on his quad toe loop to the groans of the crowd. Despite his desire to redeem himself for the previous year, the memory of his last World Championships, the ghostly feeling of the crash and the pain and the humiliation that followed hit him during his routine and threw off his concentration long enough for the error. The mistake worried him but he tried to not let the feeling spiral out of control. There was plenty of chance to pull the results back in the free program and panicking would do nothing but worsen his performance.

After the final scores came in he was placed in third, below Viktor and Chris. While it wasn’t usual for him to place below Chris, it wasn’t unheard of either. The other skater was good and had taken the higher position in qualifying competitions for the Grand Prix Series above Yuuri on occasion. The losses hardly bothered Yuuri. Chris was a good skater who deserved the medals he earned and Yuuri had always been able to pull it back for the final. Coming below Chris for his short program was disappointing but not devastating.

After the scores had been announced and all the skaters retreated back into the reserved areas, Yuuri made his was over to congratulate the Swiss skater on his score. They didn’t know each other extremely well, Yuuri wasn’t very social with the other skaters apart from Phichit and Chris was Viktor’s friend after all, but they had exchanged friendly words and praise on more than one occasion and congratulating the other skater was just common courtesy.

Chris took the congratulations in his stride and returned the compliment.

“Good luck in the free skate tomorrow Chris.” Yuuri added after he was done and Chris nodded in acknowledgment.

“You too Yuuri. Although one day I will knock you and Viktor off that podium, I promise you that.” The words were more teasing than a threat and Yuuri found himself smiling again. Usually he found it hard to get on with the other competitors but talking about skating was easy at least.

“A few of the skaters are going out to drinks to celebrate the short programs being over.” Chris added, breaking his train of thought. “Are you planning on joining us?”

“Ah, no.” Yuuri replied, trying to figure out the best way to politely decline. It wasn’t that he didn’t like spending time with people but he knew that he would spend the evening feeling awkward in the company of skaters who all already knew each other as friends and would inevitably end up drinking more than he should to compensate. “I don’t really like to drink at competitions.”

Chris laughed but stopped when he saw the expression on Yuuri’s face.

“Oh, you’re serious.” he exclaimed, sounding far too surprised for Yuuri’s liking. “That must be a new rule for you, yes?”

Suddenly, Yuuri was hit with the memory of the disastrous Olympic party two years previously and he could feel mortification rising in his chest. As the bronze medallist, Chris had been at the party too, a fact that Yuuri had conveniently forgotten. He still had no idea what had happened that night but whatever it was, Chris had been there to witness it.

He laughed nervously, hoping desperately that the subject would change, and fast.

“Ah, yes. That was sort of an exception.” he tried, hoping his embarrassment wouldn’t show in his face.

“An impressive exception!” Chris exclaimed and Yuuri privately willed him to keep his voice down. Just when he thought it couldn’t get any worse, Chris opened his mouth again.
“I still have the pictures.”

Yuuri wanted to die right then and there. Whatever he did when drunk it was unlikely to be pretty and the fact that there was apparently photographic proof was something straight out of one of his nightmares.

“Do you want to see them?” Chris asked, seeming to take amusement in Yuuri’s distress. Yuuri shook his head, not trusting himself to speak. He wasn’t sure if he was quite capable of words yet or if all that would come out would be a long painful moan.

Chris shrugged in response and began to turn away but Yuuri stopped him, realising that the reality couldn’t be worse than the uncertainty. He couldn’t have done anything too bad after all, could he?

“What happened?” he asked, bracing himself for the answer.

“You don’t remember?” Chris asked, sounding surprised and Yuuri shook his head, just wanting the whole ordeal to be over with.

“You got wasted and started challenging the Russian team to a dance off. After that you just started taking your clothes off. And Yuuri, wherever did you learn to pole dance?”

Yuuri choked on air, praying to whatever god might be listening that he had misheard and that if he had not that some convenient freak accident would kill him before he ever had to face the reality of the words. Smiting sounded like a really good option at the moment.

“What?” he whispered, still praying Chris had made a mistake. The other man’s amusement seemed to increase tenfold and he looked to be holding back laughter.

“Don’t worry Yuuri, you were very good. Not as good as me but still.”

“Why was there even a pole to dance on.” Yuuri asked weakly, choosing to focus on that rather than deal with the reality of the revelation and the mortification that came with it. So much for no-one ever seeing that particular skillset.

Chris looked slightly shifty for a moment before answering.

“I have no idea.” he said casually although his eyes told Yuuri otherwise. “Regardless, it was very entertaining. Everyone was cheering. You only stopped when Viktor finally showed up late to the party.”

“What” Yuuri yelled startling the other skaters around him and causing his blush to deepen to an even darker shade of red. Of all the things that could have made the situation so much worse, that statement was on the top of the list.

“Yes.” Chris replied, still smirking at him. “He had to miss the official party because he had a meeting with his sponsor or something boring like that. But he showed up to the afterparty eventually. When you saw him you started yelling at him in Japanese. No-one had any idea what you were saying.” Thank god for small mercies. “You tried to get down from the pole at the same time but you tripped and fell right into his arms. I have pictures of that too if you’re interested.”

“Oh.” Yuuri said faintly, wondering if this was all some horrible bad dream that he would awake from, soon if possible. He had been naive to think that he would be able to escape that night coming back to haunt him and here it finally was with a vengeance, and so much worse than he could ever have imagined.
“You kept trying to yell at him even while he was holding you but you could barely stand up. You were still sort of clinging onto him and you wouldn’t let go and no-one could work out what you were trying to say. You were basically draped over him and eventually he took you back to your room. Well,” Chris added, looking sly. “Took is maybe the wrong word. He practically had to carry you.”

Yuuri could feel the horrified look spreading across his face and Chris seemed to see immediately the direction that his mind was turning.

“Not like that.” he clarified quickly, all trace of humour gone and looking faintly scandalised. “You could barely stand upright. Whatever you might think of Viktor he would never take advantage of someone like that. He came back down a few minutes later. He still looked a little shocked but he wouldn’t tell me what happened. Spoilsport.” The teasing tone was back and Yuuri wanted to melt into the ground and disappear forever. Hopefully he had just yelled more incomprehensible Japanese at Viktor and passed out but even that thought was horrifying enough.

“If it makes you feel any better Yuuri, I think you managed to seduce more than half the people in the room by the time you were finished. You’re surprisingly flexible.” Chris continued and Yuuri hid his face in his hands, feeling the heat radiating from his cheeks and praying for it all to be over soon.

This was…so much worse than he had ever imagined. What he had done to Viktor when they had been alone couldn’t be too awful considering the fact that Viktor slept with him less than a month later but there was nothing Yuuri could think of that was more embarrassing than pole dancing in front of a room full of people and then yelling at Viktor in front of said crowd. Thank god his drunken mind hadn’t had the ability to translate the words into English. Remembering the state he had been in that night and his reason for getting drunk, Yuuri could only imagine what he had been saying and it wasn’t a pleasant thought.

“Well, I’d better go.” Chris said casually, as though he hadn’t just brought Yuuri’s whole world crashing down around him. He waved to Yuuri as he walked away but Yuuri barely registered the action.

Suddenly terrified that some of the other skaters might have been listening in on their conversation he whipped his head around, scanning the room with frantic eyes. Thankfully none of the people nearby seemed to be paying them any heed and Yuuri almost fled the room when he caught site of a flash of silver hair far in the distance, out of earshot but close enough to be seen.

Viktor was standing watching him, although his eyes flickered briefly to Chris as he walked away. Yuuri flushed again, unable to get the scene that Chris had just described to him out of his mind. Through his embarrassment he found that he didn’t even want to look Viktor in the eye and he averted his gaze, praying that the other man would never bring the incident up or, even better, that he had forgotten about it completely.

By the time he looked back around, Viktor was already gone.
All throughout the night and into the next day, Yuuri forced himself to put the revelation out of his mind. It was horrendous and embarrassing to be sure but the more he worried and obsessed over it, the more his skating would deteriorate and he couldn’t afford that. Better to ignore it for now and freak out later when the medals had been awarded and he had time to think.

As soon as he had escaped the stadium after the short program he had run to Phichit and told him everything that Chris had said. As he had told the story Phichit had seemed to struggle between looking horrified and trying not to laugh. After Yuuri finished the tale he seemed not to be able to hold it in any longer and let out an undignified snort that had Yuuri glaring at his friend with an indignant expression on his face.

“It’s not funny Phichit!” he exclaimed as his friend tried to suppress his silent laughter.

“I’m sorry Yuuri.” Phichit replied and he did sound genuinely sorry. But Yuuri could still hear the mirth hidden behind the words. “But it is kind of funny! Even you have to admit that.”

“No.” Yuuri responded bluntly. He could see how from an outside perspective the incident might sound hilarious but his was still far too mortified to be able to see the humour in the situation. “This is literally the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to me Phichit!

“Look Yuuri,” Phichit tried again, looking more serious this time. “I know it seems bad now but it was years ago! People probably hardly even remember it, there are new scandals every week for the gossips to chew over. And if nothing has been made public by now you can pretty much count on the fact that it never will be. One day you’ll be able to laugh over this, I promise.”

Yuuri highly doubted that but he decided not to argue with his friend. Phichit was right, if nothing had been released by now the likelihood was that it never would be. Despite the fact that he still kind of wanted to die from the embarrassment, it could have been worse. Not much worse but still.

“Hey, don’t worry about it ok?” Phichit told him, giving him a small but genuine smile. “You’ve got some ass to kick and a competition to win tomorrow. Focus on that instead and you’ll be fine.”

During the early morning practice the next day Yuuri repeated Phichit’s advice to himself, forcing himself not to get lost in worry and instead focus on his routine. The other skaters flitted on and off the ice in their own practice session and Yuuri found that he was hyper aware of them, constantly alert to where each skater was in relation to him. He had no desire to repeat the mistakes of last year. Injuring himself, or worse, injuring someone else through carelessness was something he was determined never to do again.

As was usual for him, Yuuri found that skating was the best way to take his mind of his worries and so he skated for as long as he could, using the distraction to put Chris’ story from the day before out of his mind. Eventually the other skaters began to trickle off the ice one by one until Yuuri was left alone. He stayed for a few more minutes but he could see officials begin to lurk around the rink, preparing to kick him off so that they could start to prepare for the main event. Reluctantly, Yuuri left
before that could happen, wishing he had more time. His head was clearer from the practice but he still could have done with a few more hours of skating to calm his thoughts.

After leaving the rink he slipped back into the athlete’s changing rooms, discarding his sweaty practice clothes and sliding on a loose pair of trousers and a baggy t-shirt, covering it with his blue and black skating jacket. He would change again later into his official costumes but for now he was content to wear old clothes for comfort’s sake alone. There was still a lot to do before the competition could officially start.

Once his clothes had been changed Yuuri hoisted his bag onto his shoulder and left the room, ready to go and find Celestino and run over the last couple of things before the skating started. He still had a couple of hours before he would have to take to the ice but he could already feel the beginnings of the time pressure looming over him.

Deciding to try and be as quick as possible Yuuri took a shortcut through the twisting maze of corridors in the backstage area of the stadium, hurrying through dingy deserted corridors rather than trying to brave the crowds in the main hallways. He had almost reached the exit when he stopped, feet stilling as the sound of a familiar voice drifted through the air, coming from one of the rooms just ahead of him.

Recognising the heavy Swiss accent, Yuuri walked closer, wondering what the hell Chris was doing hanging around in a deserted storage room deep in the bowls of the stadium.

“…you.”

Yuuri caught the tail end of the word and stopped outside the door, wondering if he should enter. It seemed rude to just walk past and ignore his fellow skater but then again, Yuuri had no idea who Chris was talking to and if he was this far off the beaten path it was likely the conversation was private and that they didn’t want to be overheard.

“You’re a masochist in the worst way. And not the fun sexy kind either.” Chris’ voice floated through the crack where the door wasn’t quite pulled all the way closed. Yuuri couldn’t see into the room but he could hear the voices loud and clear.

“I know.” Another voice sighed and Yuuri started in shock at the Russian accent that curled around the words. Of course, he shouldn’t be too surprised that it was Viktor that Chris was talking to, they were friends after all, but it didn’t stop him from freezing in surprise, all thoughts of leaving flying out of his head.

The words passing between the two skaters were strange and Yuuri wondered at their meaning. There were plenty of rumours as it was about the two and Yuuri had always wondered if there was any truth to them. Half the skating world seemed to think that Viktor and Chris were jumping in and out of each other’s beds as frequently as they did everyone else’s. As friends who both held the reputation of playboys, Viktor as a charming heartbreaker and Chris as a sensual player, the rumours were very prominent. The other half seemed to believe that their respective reputations were entirely wrong and based on nothing but rumour and slander and that Viktor and Chris were in a secret loving relationship that they were hiding from the world in some kind of tragic romance.

There was no evidence either way that any of the rumours were true but still they endured. Yuuri knew from very personal experience that Viktor wasn’t having some sort of secret monogamous relationship with Chris but he wouldn’t be hugely surprised if the first rumour turned out to be true. From the sound of their conversation it certainly seemed likely.

“Viktor, you want something you know you’re never going to have.” Chris continued and Yuuri
frowned at the words, trying to puzzle them out. “You need to give it up now. You’re practically begging for scraps as it is and you’re still getting almost nothing in return.”

“I know.” Viktor snapped back and his voice was harsher than Yuuri had ever heard it before. He sounded almost angry but there was a crack in his voice that betrayed a very different emotion.

“I’m sorry Chris.” Viktor tried again, his voice calmer and sounding apologetic. “I just. I know what’s going on ok? I understand how this works. But I can’t change what I want. If this is all I’m ever going to get, even if I can’t have anything else, then I’ll take it. That’s better than nothing after all.”

“Is it?” Chris asked and Yuuri suddenly realised that he had unconsciously moved closer to the door so that his ear was almost pressed again the cold metal surface. He stepped back, horrified with himself. He was eavesdropping into a private conversation, he had no right to be here. It was an unforgivable breech of privacy and no matter how curious he was as to the topic of conversation there was no justification for him staying to hear more.

As silently as he could he stepped away from the door, hurrying off down the corridor on light feet, making sure the sound of his footsteps was silent and leaving no trace of behind him being there at all.

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Yuuri was still wondering about the conversation hours later as he prepared for his final skate, his guilt at eavesdropping warring with his curiosity. Phichit stood with him at the side of the rink as they waited for Yuuri to be introduced onto the ice. The man skating before him was still in the kiss and cry receiving his scores but Yuuri knew that he had minutes at best before it would be his turn to skate.

“Good luck Yuuri.” Phichit told him, dragging him into an unexpected hug as if sensing Yuuri’s unease. Yuuri hugged him back on instinct, gripping the fabric of Phichit’s shirt tightly, clutching into the embrace. As always, he could feel the nerves beginning to get to him and holding his friend close was one of the best ways to dull down the faintly ill feeling that always rose within him before he had to step onto the ice.

The best part about skating when Phichit there was knowing that there would always be at least one person in the stands rooting for him no matter what.

Over the loudspeaker the announcer called for Yuuri to get onto the ice and the previous skater exited the kiss and cry, looking satisfied with his score. Taking a few deep breaths to centre himself Yuuri slid off his skate guards and stepped out onto the rink. Phichit gave him a friendly wave of encouragement and Yuuri took a deep breath, trying to centre himself.

A hush fell over the stadium as Yuuri took up his starting position, facing the judges. At the Grand
Prix Final he had won the gold medal with the program he was about to perform which meant he had no excuse to fall short this time. He had done it then and he could do it again now.

Forgoing all his previous thoughts Yuuri allowed himself to sink back into his emotions, letting his rational mind fade away, taking his thoughts and worries with it and allowing feeling to take over. Hundreds of hours of practice had carved the motions into his soul and he let muscle memory guide his body, feeling the story his program was trying to tell flow through him.

The music started and Yuuri moved, losing himself into the melody and the slick slide of ice beneath his skates.

Yuuri won.

With the addition of his free skate score his combined total edged Viktor out of the top spot by less than a point, sliding him into first place by the skin of his teeth. The rest of the day passed in a blur of cheering and medals and Phichit’s shouted congratulations over the roars of the crowd. Yuuri rode high on his emotions throughout the whole thing, feeling tears begin to well up in the corners of his eyes when he stood on the top of the podium, feeling like his heart would burst with happiness.

After such a disastrous year last year, after in the darkest parts of himself feeling like maybe he could never come back from it, he had done it. The gold medal was warm against his chest and he touched it, still a little in awe. A gold in the World Championships was even more prestigious than in the Grand Prix Final and he had done it again, taken back the title he had lost and proved to the world that he deserved it.

Time flew by and it seemed like all too soon that he was back in the hotel, sitting on his bed and still feeling a little shell-shocked from the whirlwind of the day. The traditional banquet after the competition had been postponed until the following evening and so Yuuri found himself at a bit of a loss. Phichit had gone out to socialise with a couple of the other skaters and while Yuuri had been invited to join, he declined. After a competition like the one he just won he always felt emotionally drained and not up to socialising. And more than that, he didn’t feel entirely comfortable spending time laughing and drinking with the people he had just beaten to the title yet again. While beating Viktor always felt like a victory, he had never wanted to rub his status as a winner into the faces of the other skaters. Going out and celebrating his own win to their losses with them seemed callous and Yuuri didn’t want to ruin their night with his presence.

With nothing much to do Yuuri curled up on his bed, comfy clothes covered by the warmth of his skating jacket, feet bare. A night in to relax and unwind seemed like a good idea. Maybe he could watch a film or catch up on one of the TV series Phichit was always begging him to watch. And then tomorrow they would go out sightseeing in the city. They had already agreed on that and Yuuri was looking forward to it.

Suddenly in the silence of the room, a ping sounded out from the phone in Yuuri’s hand and Yuuri realised he had just been sent a message. Assuming it was Phichit trying to convince him to join him
For a long moment, Yuuri stared at the words, knowing their meaning but wondering if maybe he had misinterpreted them. After all, ever since the first time it had always been Yuuri initiating, not Viktor. This was a different, this was something new.

Yuuri wondered why Viktor was suddenly the one initiating contact rather than the other way around. While he wanted to believe something might have changed between them, it was more likely that Viktor was bored, having no banquet to attend that night and he figured Yuuri was the easiest entertainment available. After all, Yuuri had already proven multiple times that he was more than willing and Viktor had no reason to believe that that would have changed.

‘It hasn’t changed.’ Yuuri realised, noting how he was already thinking like he was planning on accepting the offer. He had started down a path he couldn’t stop, didn’t want to stop, and there was something intoxicating in Viktor being the one to ask, rather than Yuuri desperately chasing him after time and time again.

Unconsciously, Yuuri realised that he had already decided what he was going to do. The mistakes had already been made to the point that now he might as well continue to make them. Any complication it put in his rivalry with Viktor, any change in the depths of his own heart, that damage was already done. His choice now was continuing down the path he had set himself on and accepting the end that would eventually loom to meet him or stop here and never touch Viktor, never be touched by him, again. And deep within himself, Yuuri knew that wasn’t an option. Not really.

Suddenly nervous, Yuuri jumped up from the bed, running his fingers through his hair to try and slick it back into something resembling an attractive style and discarding his glasses, hoping it would be enough. Biting his lip almost hard enough to draw blood Yuuri gazed at himself in the mirror, wondering if he should change. He was wearing the comfiest and least attractive clothes he owned and he knew he looked a state. But on the other hand, if he dressed up Viktor might realise that to Yuuri, this was a lot more than it was to him.

Better to stay as he was, to play it casual. If Viktor had invited him up it was unlikely he was going to reject Yuuri based on his clothes. Possible, considering how well Viktor was always dressed and how good he always looked, but unlikely.

Forgoing all other attempts to improve his appearance Yuuri shoved on some shoes, grabbed his keycard and left the room, trying not think too hard about what he was about to do. Belatedly he wondered if Viktor expected him to bring anything but the thought was futile anyway. All of their other encounters had been unplanned and Yuuri had relied on Viktor to be prepared. This time Viktor might expect him to take the initiative but Yuuri had nothing to bring. Aside from Viktor, he had never been with anyone else. He had never had the desire to. Which meant that he was woefully underprepared for an illicit encounter in a hotel room with the one man who made him break all of his rules with such casual ease.

Pushing the thoughts out of his mind and trying to calm the frantic pounding of his heart, Yuuri pressed the call button for the lift, waiting a few seconds for the metal doors to slide open and
stepping inside. The familiar feeling of weightlessness overtook him as the box rose and a few seconds later the doors were sliding open again onto a hallway identical to his own, only distinguished by the numbers that were marking the doors along it.

114,116,118…

Yuuri counted as his slipped quietly down the corridor, eyes flickering from door to door, searching. 120,122…

Yuuri stopped. A dull bronze plate gazed back at him, 124 carved into its worn surface. After taking a deep breath, Yuuri ran a hand through his hair for the last time in a nervous gesture and knocked on the wooden surface in front of him, the sound ringing out unreasonably loudly in the quiet of the hallway.

Less than a second later the door swung open to reveal Viktor, hair tousled and standing barefoot in the doorway, just as Yuuri had been only minutes before. He was dressed similarly as well, in loose comfortable clothes and Yuuri felt a sudden flash of relief that he hadn’t decided to dress up.

Viktor looked surprised for a fraction of a moment, as though he hadn’t believed that Yuuri would actually accept his offer. The thought made Yuuri want to blush a little in shame, that all it took was a text from Viktor with a room number to have him coming running. It must look desperate but Viktor made no comment on it, simply stepping aside to let Yuuri enter.

Trying not to let his nervousness show on his face, Yuuri entered the room. He figured he should probably say something but his tongue felt heavy in his mouth and no words would come. What would he possibly say anyway? He knew that Viktor just invited him here because he was bored and Yuuri was his easiest option but Yuuri had come anyway and what did that say about him?

Viktor’s room was several degrees hotter than his own and Yuuri could feel the heat start to creep up on him. Sliding the zip down on his jacket he shrugged out of the heavy material and draped it over the side of one of the chairs in the room by the window. When he turned back around Viktor was still standing watching him, as silent as Yuuri himself.

Viktor looked strange in the half-light of the room. There was a restlessness to his demeanour, an agitation that hadn’t been present before and there was a strange look in his eyes, standing out sharply in a startling contrast.

“You came.” he finally said, breaking the long silence.

“Yes.” Yuuri replied, unsure of what else to say. As it turned out he didn’t have to because Viktor crossed the space between them and in few quick strides, barely giving Yuuri time to think before his lips were captured in a searing kiss that drove any other thought out of his mind in an instant.

Viktor hadn’t been this demanding since their very first time together. For their second encounter he had given control over to Yuuri entirely and their third was surprisingly gentle. But the current kiss was just as hot and frantic as their very first had been and Yuuri sank into the sensation, allowing Viktor to lead and relinquishing control far more easily than he ever would have thought possible.

Viktor kissed him deeply, passionately, and Yuuri could already begin to feel the need rising within him. Hands gripped him tightly, pinning him in place as though Viktor were trying to hold him down, to stop him from disappearing as though Yuuri were just a mirage that could fade away at any moment.

“Do you want this Yuuri?” Viktor asked, pulling away only enough to allow his lips to form the
words, face still pressed against his. “Tell me you do.”

It took several seconds for Yuuri’s brain to start functioning well enough for him to respond.

“Yes.” he stuttered, wondering why Viktor even had to ask. After all, he had come here when Viktor called. Of course this was what he wanted.

Viktor’s lips returned to his, hot and insistent and Yuuri let the feeling carry him away, let his rational mind sink back into oblivion and sensation to take over.

They undressed quickly, Viktor pulling off Yuuri’s clothes with quick sharp tugs and discarding his own soon after before backing Yuuri onto the bed and climbing on to kneel over him. The complete loss of control should have grated on Yuuri but for some reason it didn’t. He wasn’t here with Viktor because he was lost or confused or desperately seeking control or validation. He was here because he wanted to be and he could relinquish up the control of the situation without a second’s thought, allowing Viktor to take the lead because that seemed to be what Viktor wanted, what Viktor needed and after everything Yuuri was happy to give it to him.

In the back of his mind he vaguely remembered their second time together, when Yuuri had been such a mess of tangled thoughts and feelings and Viktor had allowed him to take everything he needed and more. Yuuri remembered how much he had loved being in control, but also how part of him had mourned for the feeling of Viktor kneeling over him, looking down at him, taking him apart with his hands and eyes and mouth. It was a feeling he had missed then and revelled in now that he had it back.

Viktor was still kneeling over him, arms bracketing his head and kissing Yuuri with the same urgency that had begun their encounter. Yuuri returned the kiss, allowing his hands to slid up Viktor’s shoulders and pull him closer. So consumed by the kiss, he barely registered one of Viktor’s hands moving from beside his head to slide over his chest and down his stomach, faint touches caressing over the skin before moving lower.

Yuuri gasped as Viktor’s hand slid down to grasp his cock, digging his heels into the mattress and throwing his head back against the sheets as Viktor worked his hand up and down Yuuri’s length, sending waves of feeling crashing through his body. It was too much too soon and Yuuri felt overwhelmed. Previously Viktor had taken his time, taking everything almost agonisingly slowly but this time was different.

Maybe it was Viktor that was desperate to take back control this time. After all, Yuuri had beaten him by less than a point in the competition that day. Yuuri could vividly remember the crushing sense of loss he himself had felt that time that Viktor had taken the gold from him by a single point and their scores were even closer this time. The fractional difference must have stung and Yuuri could understand, could sympathise with the feeling.

At the banquet after the Grand Prix Final that year Viktor hadn’t seemed upset at his loss. It seemed strange that he would react so differently to his loss here but then again, the Worlds were a much more prestigious competition and maybe his casual demeanour at the banquet had just been a façade to cover disappointment.

The contrast between the two still confused Yuuri and he wondered if that was the whole story, if it really was just his loss that had thrown Viktor into such a strange mood, demanding and desperate and pinning Yuuri down as though force alone could make him stay.

Pleasure began to build in Yuuri and he could feel his toes curl against the sheets, could feel his
breathing start to hitch. Trying to fight back the feeling he shook his head, trying to keep his grip on himself.

Regardless of his desire he still whined at the loss when Viktor abruptly pulled off him, ceasing all contact and moving away.

Slightly dazed, Yuuri rolled his head to watch as Viktor grabbed some things from the bedside draw and slid back over to Yuuri, pinning one of his hands down to the bed in a forceful grip and kissing him again deeply, pressing him back down into the mattress. Everything had happened so suddenly that Yuuri barely had time to think, just let Viktor take the lead without question.

Through the haze of his thoughts, Yuuri only distantly registering the sound of a bottle being opened. He was still hot and aching all over, body still mourning the loss of Viktor’s touch and so the feeling of slick fingers ghosting along the skin of his thighs made him jerk in eager response.

“Yes?” Viktor asked, voice choked and hoarse as though even that one word cost him a great deal of effort.

“Yes.” Yuuri panted in answer, praying Viktor wouldn’t keep him waiting. The other man didn’t disappoint and a second later Yuuri felt a hot finger circling his entrance, teasing him slightly before finally pushing past the ring of muscle and sliding home. Yuuri gasped at the sensation, a sound that turned into a series of hitched little moans and Viktor’s other hand returned to his cock, moving in time with the finger that was slowly working Yuuri open.

And oh how he had missed this. Having Viktor over him, surrounding him, inside him. Feeling possessed and owned and wanted in a way that he would never admit to himself that he craved in any moment but ones like this.

Viktor added another finger and Yuuri felt his hands clutch at the sheets surrounding him, trying to ground himself in the motion and not be overwhelmed by how good it all felt.

Viktor continued that way for a few more minutes, planting soft kisses across Yuuri’s neck and collarbone as he pushed him further and further towards the edge. After what felt like an eternity he added another finger and finally a fourth, filling Yuuri completely and making have to bite back the desire to beg for more.

His resolve almost broke when Viktor withdrew his hands, leaving Yuuri feeling bereft and empty. Before he could make any sound however he felt himself being flipped over, Viktor moving his pliant body easily so that he was pressed face down into the bed.

The shock at the sudden change in position barely registered through the haze in his head but Viktor’s voice did, low and rough in the quiet of the room.

“Oh?” he asked and Yuuri could only nod in response, wanting nothing more than for Viktor to return to touching him again. Faintly he heard the sound of a condom wrapper being torn open and he pushed himself up slightly, raising himself from lying prone to balancing on his knees, his elbows braced on the bed.

He could hardly believe that such a short time ago he was sitting alone in his own room, completely unaware of how drastically his night was about to change. The call from Viktor had been unexpected and the speed with which he had initiated their encounter even more so. Yuuri shouldn’t be surprised, it wasn’t like Viktor had asked him up for a chat but the urgency with which Viktor was touching him reminded him vividly of how he had once done the same, forgoing words to simply say what he wanted through touch alone.
Despite how quickly the encounter had progressed Yuuri found that he was already ready, already aching for it.

Gentle hands ran across his shoulders, sliding down his sides to grasp his hips and Yuuri rocked backwards into the touch. He didn’t have to wait long because the next instant he could feel something hot and large pressing at his entrance, much bigger than the fingers that had been teasing him earlier. Despite the size Viktor had done his job well and Yuuri’s body opened easily at the intrusion, allowing Viktor to slide in with one deep thrust.

The feeling was so overwhelming that Yuuri felt his body buckle, pressing his face into the mattress and panting, feeling sweat running down his forehead and bead across his shoulders. Viktor grip on his hips kept the lower part of his body elevated and the change in angle allowed Viktor to slide slightly deeper, eliciting a sharp gasp from both of them.

Everything was still for a few moments, the silence only broken by the harsh breathing from them both. Viktor rocked slightly, tiny movements that allowed Yuuri to adjust and drove him mad at the same time, not nearly enough. Desperately he rolled his hips back, trying to encourage Viktor to move and Viktor complied with the unspoken demand, pulling almost fully out before driving back in again, the force rocking Yuuri’s body and pushing his face further into the mattress.

Yuuri knew that if he wanted to he could flip them both over so that he was straddling Viktor instead of being pinned down. He could take back control and ride out the feeling until it was all over. But he didn’t want to. He wanted to let Viktor take control. He had nothing to prove, nothing fight for and all he wanted was the feeling of Viktor, of Viktor needing him for as long as the moment would last. If this was what Viktor needed then he was happy to let the other man take it from him, would be happy to let him do almost anything.

Viktor drove into him again, pace unrelenting and Yuuri could feel his hands scrabble at the sheets, trying to find purchase to ground himself with. Viktor’s hands moved from his hips to run gently up and down his sides and Yuuri focused on the feeling, concentrating on the soft touches to keep himself grounded.

The focus was lost however when Viktor reached around to grasp his cock again, strokes smooth but firm and Yuuri was lost. Everything was too much and yet perfect at the same time and he could barely think, could do nothing but ride out the sensation and give himself up fully.

Viktor’s breath was hot on the back of his neck but Yuuri still startled a little at the feeling of lips touching his skin, warm and gentle. Viktor kissed a trail down his spine, never ceasing his pace but somehow the little points of contact seemed to burn in Yuuri more fiercely than any before them.

“Out on the ice today,” Viktor breathed in between kisses. “You were stunning. The audience love you.”

Yuuri could barely register the words through the haze of pleasure but Viktor kept speaking, voice broken by panting and still mouthing a burning trail across his skin.

“You give yourself so freely to them. To everybody.” he heard, as if from far away. “But you came. When I asked, you came.”

“I don’t have anything else.” Viktor whispered. “But I have this.”

Yuuri couldn’t understand the words, couldn’t work out the meaning behind them but he didn’t have time to think because Viktor changed his angle slightly and sent another wave of pleasure rocking through him. There was too much, all at once, and the words were lost.
Despite the sensations that were rolling through Yuuri and the pleasure that was consuming him almost to breaking point, Viktor was the one who came first. He bit down onto Yuuri’s shoulder as he came, marking him and rocking a last few broken thrusts, coming to rest with half his weight supported by his own body and the other half resting across Yuuri’s back.

It took Viktor a few moments to regain himself but when he did he began to move the hand that was grasping Yuuri’s cock again. Gently this time, coaxing Yuuri to the edge without the frantic urgency that had driven him earlier. The light kisses returned, dancing across Yuuri’s neck this time and Yuuri allowed himself to let go, coming with a hitched gasp as Viktor’s hand worked him through it, only stilling when Yuuri was utterly spent.

Yuuri slumped back into the bed, feeling Viktor pull out of him completely and vaguely registering as the other man slid off the condom, tied it off and tossed it to when Yuuri assumed a bin was standing. He felt utterly wrung out, blissed out but exhausted in a way that was surprising considering he had allowed Viktor to do most of the work.

It was only when Viktor lay down onto the bed as well that Yuuri realised what he was doing. Sprawled out across the centre of Viktor’s bed, unwanted and uninvited now that they were finished. If Viktor was anywhere near as tired as he was he would want to sleep and to do that he would want Yuuri out of the bed as soon as possible.

Wishing he could drag the moment out for longer but knowing he couldn’t Yuuri sat up, making as if to leave. Before he could even sit up fully however, a hand on his arm stopped him.

Viktor was half sitting up on the bed too, twisted on his side to face Yuuri and with his touch light but insistent, anchoring Yuuri to the bed. There was a soft glow in his eyes, light reflected from the moonlight cast through the windows and his face was warm and open.

“Stay.” he breathed and Yuuri could feel his own breath still in his chest, the way his heart seemed to stop for a moment. “Please.”

Every time before he had left as soon as he could, knowing Viktor wouldn’t want him to stay, would want him gone as soon as possible. But he had never wanted to leave. And now, if Viktor was asking…

“All right.” he replied feeling like a weight had suddenly been lifted from his chest. “I’ll stay.”

Hesitantly, Yuuri lay back down, sliding across the bed to give Viktor more room. Viktor moved with him until they were both lying in the centre of the bed, with just a few centimetres between them. Viktor’s touch was still warm on his arm and Yuuri found that he had no desire to shake it off.

Feeling suddenly at ease he curled up slightly, still facing Viktor and resting with his head on one of the many pillows. Viktor relaxed too, drawing the rumpled covers up to cover them both and Yuuri involuntarily snuggled down into the warmth. It was quiet and nice and peaceful and he found his eyes already begin to droop, unwilling to even attempt to fight off sleep.

Viktor lay close, not touching but close enough that Yuuri could see his breath rise and fall in his chest. Yuuri wanted to reach out, to touch Viktor, to move closer. But he didn’t know the unspoken rules for situations like this, didn’t know if it would be seen as an intrusion, didn’t know what Viktor wanted.

Although their bodies weren’t touching, Viktor’s hand was still resting on his arm and the other man’s eyes were open, fixed on Yuuri’s face as they lay facing each other. In any other circumstances Yuuri would be embarrassed by the scrutiny but he was too tired and too content and
his worries could wait for another time.

Slowly he drifted off to sleep, with Viktor’s eyes still fixed on his face.

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When Yuuri’s eyes next fluttered open it was dark in the room, the moonlight obscured by thick curtains. From his internal body clock he could tell that it was still night-time, sleep was still clinging thickly to him and his awareness was only a fraction of what it would be when he was fully awake.

Sleepily, Yuuri wondered what it was that had woken him up. Still caught up in the eddies of sleep he didn’t move, lying still and keeping his breathing slow and steady.

On the edge of his awareness he suddenly registered what it was that had woken him. Fingers were ghosting up and down his spine, feather-light touches that danced across his skin in swirling pattern. At some point during the night he had rolled over so that his back was facing the man whose bed he shared and he had snuggled close despite his conscious worries, pressing them both together.

Viktor seemed to be awake. Although Yuuri couldn’t see him he could sense the other man, propped up slightly and tracing patterns across the skin of Yuuri’s back. Distantly Yuuri wondered why he was awake but the thought soon drifted away from him. Faint sound reached his ears and Yuuri realised that the noise was coming from Viktor. A low humming melody in time to the touches flitting across his skin.

The words Viktor was crooning were unfamiliar to Yuuri. Russian, his sleep addled mind filled in unhelpfully. The song was deep and melodic and Viktor’s voice matched it perfectly, hushed in the peace of the room. The fingers kept tracing their patterns across his skin and Yuuri recognised the familiar lines that were being traced into his back. They were the patterns of an ice skating program, Viktor’s fingers mimicking the movements of a skater gliding around a rink. Twirling and turning, leaving light trails wherever they went.

All throughout the movements he kept up the hushed singing and Yuuri wondered if he was practicing a new program. For next year maybe. Viktor seemed not to have noticed that Yuuri was awake. Yuuri’s eyes had never fully opened and he was still lying motionless, breathing deep and even. Part of him wondered if maybe he should let Viktor know that he was partly conscious at lease.

But Yuuri was too tired to think properly and sleep had never fully released him from its grip. Slowly, he allowed himself to sink back into dreams, lulled to sleep by the sound of Viktor’s voice and the gentle feeling of fingers dancing across his skin.
V-nikiforov

10,572 likes

V-nikiforov: **Beautiful view out of my hotel room window this morning #WorldChampionships**

View all 2972 comments

codyzone  Wow, so pretty!

Laura Love  That sunrise tho <3<3<3

XxBulletofRomexX  IS THAT FUCKING YUURI KATSUKI’S JACKET HANGING ON THE CHAIR BY THE WINDOW????

Hisstory maker  OMG NO WAY

Theecbc  …guys it’s literally just a black and blue jacket wtf. Is Viktor not allowed to own clothes now?

Kim-kam  you’ve got to admit though, those colour and that design look **suspiciously** like the jackets the Japanese skaters wear

Veetya  Not really?? The lighting is really bad so you can hardly see the colours and it just looks like a normal dark coloured jacket. Y’all are overreacting.

Vikturiovervictory  ahhh, if only it wasn’t so crumpled up and the picture was better we’d be able to see if it says JAPAN on the back T.T

CeeCee251  Even if it did that wouldn’t prove anything! There are several Japanese skaters in different divisions competing at the Worlds. Can everyone please stop prying into Viktor’s private life and stop spamming his Instagram with gross speculation


ViktuuriSquad_iwanttobelieve.gif

25K  wow, so much drama over a jacket! Everyone needs to learn to calm tf down and appreciate the pretty picture instead

NancyB21  *whispers* **It really does look like Katsuki’s jacket tho**

Chapter End Notes

Right, so this was very much a transitional chapter and I promise the next one will be far
more plot heavy. I don’t like having two sex scenes in one chapter but unfortunately for plot reasons it had to happen. While this isn’t exactly my favourite chapter ever it needed to be written to set up what is going to happen next. I promise, there will be a lot more going on in chapter 11 and it will break away from the kind of structure that a lot of the previous chapters have been like. Next chapter I will be stopping covering entire years in one chapter and start covering single events, with each chapter spanning a couple of days or weeks at most. This will mean that it will stop being so rushed and there will be a lot more development and interaction between Viktor and Yuuri. A LOT more interaction I promise!

Also, I know a lot of people really wanted Phichit to come and fix everything but remember, Phichit only has one side of the story! Everything Phichit has heard has been through Yuuri’s own words so in a way he is just as biased as Yuuri. He does have the ability to be much more objective which will come into play later in the fic but he can’t just up and solve everything at the moment.

Also, you finally found out what happened at the Olympics! (well, kinda anyway) That little bit of missing time that Chris mentioned will come up again in the companion fic when Viktor is telling his side to the story, as will the entire conversation between Viktor and Chris and the context. Plus what the hell is going on in Viktor’s head throughout the last scene (although I have dropped a lot of hints). But for now, you only know what Yuuri knows ;)

Also, the song that Viktor is singing at the end of the chapter is the famous Russian song ‘Dark Eyes’, a version of which can be found here.

On a completely different note there is MORE fanart for this fic which makes me so insanely happy, you have no idea!
Xuue has drawn an incredible comic of one of the scenes from chapter 9 which can be found here
And also this really awesome picture of the dance scene from chapter 8 here
Chinxe has drawn two amazing sets of pictures of scenes from chapter 8 here
And here
Nomadshipper drew some hot damn art of the sex scene from chapter 9 here
Ursora drew some amazing pictures inspired the fic here
Medusaconstellations drew some really adorable sketches from scenes in chapter 9 here
Imjustamango drew this really cute sketch from the post accident scene in chapter 9 here
vkings drew this beautiful sketch of the podium scene from chapter 8 here
Kashzie drew this wonderful picture of Yuuri based on the banquet scene from chapter 8
Also, if I have missed anything out please let me know! I try my best to see everything but the tumblr tagging system is awful and I constantly miss stuff. If you’ve ever created something you want me to see feel free to send me a message!

Thanks again for reading and I would love to hear all your thoughts!

Rey xx

Link to my tumblr

P.S I am currently in the process of answering all the comments from last chapter. If I haven't answered your yet I promise I'm getting there, it's just taking me a little longer than before!

Music Used:

Yuuri’s FS – Tango des los Exilados by Vanessa Mae
You Kiss Me (I'm Falling)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

At the beginning of Yuuri’s Grand Prix Series of the next skating season, everything that could have gone wrong, went wrong.

First on his list of events was the Rostelecom Cup which would then be closely followed by the NHK Trophy, the later assignments making him one of the last skaters who would actually qualify for the final if his scores in the preceding competitions were high enough. A couple of skaters including Viktor had already qualified, the Russian wowing the audience first in Skate America and the Cup of China and landing him in his current place at the top of the score table.

Yuuri disliked skating in the later events of the Grand Prix series. Although the extra practice time was beneficial, it was always nerve-wracking to watch other skaters shoot up the ranks before he even had a chance to compete. And on top of that, by skating in the last event of the series he had less time to prepare for the final, assuming he actually managed to qualify. Yuuri had been making it to the final for years now but the fear he felt each time that this would be the year that he failed, that he wouldn’t make it, never went away.

That meant that due to his placements, Yuuri found that the series was already off to a bad start and it only seemed to get worse from there. As it was his first competition of the season Yuuri planned to arrive in Russia several days before the Rostelecom Cup, hoping to get in some good practice time at the arena before he had to skate there for real.

In a stroke of bad luck however, the winter weather in Moscow had hit the city in full force and thick snow blanketed everything, swirling ominously through the air and streaking across the windows of the plane as it finally came in to land. The bad weather had delayed the flight considerably and for a while there had been debate over whether they should actually land the plane in Moscow at all. From what Yuuri could overhear, a lot of other planes had been grounded but due to their low fuel reserves they were forced to attempt the snowy landing in Sheremetyevo Airport as planned.

Yuuri was extremely grateful that the pilot and air traffic control had decided to let them land rather than diverting them to a different city. The delay due to the weather meant that he had been flying for nearly sixteen hours since he left Detroit and he was exhausted. They had landed late in Moscow, with the dark blanket of night already covering the city, and he wanted nothing more than to get straight to the hotel, collapse onto his bed and sleep until the competition began.

It was not to be however. With a luck that turned from bad to worse, Yuuri found that going straight to the hotel and sleeping was not going to be as easy as he thought. After finally getting off the plane he called ahead to confirm his arrival as he was late to his check in by several hours due to the plane’s delay. Celestino always booked the hotels far in advanced as most of the skaters tended to stay in the same place as the banquet was being held, in a hotel close to the arena. It made getting to and from the rink in foreign cities much easier and it was a routine that Yuuri was very familiar with.

But this time, something had gone wrong. After a few minutes of speaking to a harried sounding woman on the phone, Yuuri found out that the room he had been expecting was no longer available. Between perfuse apologies, the woman explained that there had been a mix up in the system and due to Yuuri’s late arrival the room had been marked as available as soon as his check in was missed. Due to the weather the previous occupant had decided to extend his stay for another few nights and the room was unavailable. Even worse, due to the snow and the fact that many planes were
grounded for the time being, the hotel was full, with no free rooms that she could offer to Yuuri.

Yuuri thanked the woman for her help and went to sit down on one of the cold metal benches lining the main hall of the airport, feeling the first trickles of panic start to creep up on him. Next he called Celestino, asking for advice. His coach hadn’t come with him to the competition as he was still with Phichit, coaching him through the qualifiers. Due to sharing a coach Yuuri and Phichit had mutually agreed that they would each get Celestino for one event in the Grand Prix series and so while Celestino had planned to join Yuuri for the NHK Trophy in a couple of weeks, for the Rostelecom Cup he was on his own. Celestino had offered to find him a stand in coach from the skate club while he was unavailable but Yuuri had turned him down.

Celestino sounded concerned on the phone and Yuuri could imagine that some of the panic he was feeling was bleeding into his voice and worrying his coach. Celestino advised him to find another room in a hotel close to the arena. Public transport was unreliable due to the heavy snow and he would have to stay close or risk being stranded in an unfamiliar city with no way to get to the rink if he stayed too far away.

Yuuri could see the logic of the statement but the reality turned out to be much harder. It seemed like the weather and the grounded flights had caused a backlog of people searching for hotel rooms and all the international hotels he called reported that they were fully booked and couldn’t offer him a room for the next day or two at least. After exhausting all the best options, Yuuri took a break, trying not to panic too much. If all the hotels used to catering to foreign guests were full he would have to start looking into more local and downmarket options. Yuuri was far from a snob and the prospect of staying in a cheap local place meant nothing to him. But the chances of anyone at a hotel not designed for tourists speaking English was much slimmer and Japanese even less so and the prospect of hunting for a place to stay was not a pleasant one.

Yuuri was tired and stressed and all he wanted was to sleep as the airport gradually emptied around him. It seemed like his options were now limited to looking for an international hotel much further away from the arena and praying that either the public transport was still running or the snow cleared in time for the competition or calling the local hotels and praying that someone there would speak good enough English for his tired mind to match and that there would be a room free for him to use.

He decided to take a break from searching to first pick up his luggage, hoping that the time would help him clear his mind and decided the best course of action to take. But again, it seemed like luck wasn’t on his side. When Yuuri went to collect his suitcases he found that only one of the two he had left Detroit with had been delivered to the airport. The irritated-looking receptionist put in a few calls and informed him grumpily that it seemed that only one of his cases had made it onto the correct plane. The airport would look for the other one to see where it had been sent instead but there was nothing she could do at the clear dismissal, the panic now a crushing pressure on his chest and building with every step.

By necessity he travelled to competitions with two suitcases due to the sheer amount of things he needed to bring in order to compete. On the advice of Celestino he always kept his skates in one case and his costumes in the other so that if one ever got lost he wouldn’t be completely stranded with nothing. Yuuri had followed the advice automatically, never really considering that it was something that would actually happen. But finally it had, and while the case he was holding contained his skates, well-loved and broken in and the most important thing for him to still have, the case with his costumes were lost and with no set date on when they would be found and returned to him.

Everything in the world seemed to be working against him at the moment and Yuuri found that he wanted to cry. He was twenty two, almost twenty three, but travelling always stressed him out and suddenly everything had gone wrong at once and he didn’t know what to do. He was alone in a
foreign country with no-where to stay and no ability to speak the language. He was exhausted and stressed and not thinking straight and to make matters that much worse his costumes were lost, the costumes that he desperately needed for his performance in just a few days.

Yuuri could feel his heart rate speeding up, his chest beginning to constrict and making it difficult to breathe. Tears pricked the corners of his eyes and he tried to fight them back, tried to focus on his breathing, to work through his problems logically the way he had been taught. There was a solution to everything and he would be able to figure it all out if he could only stop himself from panicking. But it all seemed too much and he couldn’t stop the tears from coming or the panic that just seemed to build and build inside him.

Suddenly, a shrill ringing came from the pocket of his jacket and Yuuri was startled out of his own thoughts by the noise, recognising it a few seconds later as the ringing of his own phone. Thinking that Celestino must be calling him again Yuuri hit the answer button without even glancing at the screen.

“Yuuri?” A voice on the other end of the line spoke and Yuuri nearly dropped the phone in surprise. The voice was deep and rich and laced with an accent that definitely didn’t belong to Celestino.

“Viktor?” Yuuri asked in shock, frantically wiping at his eyes and hoping that the tears on his face or the crack in his voice wasn’t noticeable down the phone. He had no idea why Viktor was calling him out of the blue. After their last encounter months ago they had parted ways more amicably than Yuuri had ever thought possible but Yuuri hadn’t tried to contact Viktor since then. He had been assuming that the next time they would meet would be during the Grand Prix Final and it was a shock to hear Viktor’s voice so unexpectedly over the phone.

“Yuuri, Celestino just called Yakov asking about hotels in Moscow. Do you not have anywhere to stay?”

Viktor sounded concerned and Yuuri blinked a little in shock, blurring out the story of his lost hotel room and failure to find another automatically. He still had no idea why Viktor had called him, or why he seemed to be so interested in Yuuri’s living arrangements. Maybe he was worried that Yuuri wouldn’t be able to skate in the qualifying round and would fail to make it to the final where they would be facing off for yet another year?

“I thought so.” Viktor replied to his rambling story, sounding thoughtful. “Half the city has ground to a halt because of the weather.”

Yuuri waited for a second, still utterly confused as to the point of the call. He was hoping that Viktor was going to clarify the reason but after a few moments of silence he broke and decided to simply ask. If all Viktor was doing was calling to confirm that Yuuri was having a really awful day he would rather finish the conversation then and there.

“Um…Viktor? Why did you call me?” he asked, hoping his voice sounded stronger than he felt. There was still a slight waver to his tone from his semi-breakdown a few minutes earlier and he prayed that Viktor hadn’t picked up on it.

“Oh.” Viktor sounded surprised as though he had forgotten that there was supposed to be a point to the conversation. “I’m staying in Moscow while Yakov coaches Georgi in the Rostelecom Cup so that he can ‘keep an eye on me.’” Viktor let out a brief laugh at the statement. “I have an apartment in the city for when I need to be here for official business. If you need somewhere to sleep tonight, you can come and stay with me.”

Yuuri mouth dropped open in shock, his hand clutching the phone so tightly that its imprint was
Viktor, Viktor Nikiforov, long-time rival and certified top skater in the world had just asked Yuuri to come and stay with him. True, Yuuri was tired and desperate and would pretty much take anything at the moment if it meant that he could sleep under a warm roof and deal with his problems in the morning but the offer still threw him. He couldn’t work out why Viktor would offer up his home for Yuuri to come and stay in, even if it was just for the night.

“Yuuri?” Viktor’s voice asked again and Yuuri realised that he had been silent for far too long, still gaping at the phone in his hands and unsure how to respond. “I live near the stadium so it would be easy for you to get there to train tomorrow morning. If you want to stay that is?”

“Um, yes?” Yuuri answered on instinct, the statement coming out more like a question. It was probably an awful idea and a terrible imposition to boot but he hadn’t slept for hours with the jetlag finally catching up to him and it was dark and cold outside and he was desperate. “I mean, thank you. Yes. I, uh. That would be great?”

He winced at how awkward his words sounded but Viktor didn’t seem to notice. Instead the other man just rattled off an address which Yuuri scrambled to write down, hoping he didn’t make any mistakes.

“Do you need any help getting here from the airport?” Viktor asked and Yuuri declined without even thinking about it. Despite not actually knowing how he was going to get from the airport to Viktor’s apartment he refused to put yet another burden on the other man. He still had no idea why Viktor was being so generous and Yuuri had no desire to push the limits of that generosity. He wasn’t helpless after all.

Finally with a plan in mind Yuuri ended the call with another quick thank you, grabbing his single suitcase and headed for the airport exit. Even though it was the dead of night there were still a few people milling about and Yuuri could see a couple of taxis hanging around the outside of the building, hoping to pick up the last few stragglers from the late-night flights.

Yuuri walked over to the first one, checking that it was free before sliding in first his case and then himself. Pulling out his phone he recited the address that Viktor had given him, the Russian words feeling awkward and heavy on his tongue. Thankfully the driver seemed to understand what he wanted and before long Yuuri was speeding through the Moscow night, watching the still-falling snow dance past the window of the car as they drove.

Finally, the car pulled up to the curb in front of a row of tall buildings, the stone arches and sweeping architecture marking them as the kind of place that catered only to a very specific type of person. Yuuri thanked the driver and slid out of the car, shivering in the cold night air. The snow was still falling and it clung to his hair and eyelashes and seeped all the warmth from his skin.

Hesitantly, Yuuri made his way up the steps to the front door of the place in front of him, noting the panel on the wall that listed the occupants of the apartments that made up the building with call buttons beside each. With a quick glance he searched for Viktor’s name but the unfamiliar Cyrillic script was indecipherable to his eyes. Viktor had told him that his apartment was on the top floor and so Yuuri pressed the top button, hoping that it was the right one.

Either he had guessed right or the occupant of the apartment had taken pity on him because a few seconds after he had pressed the button the door buzzed, signifying that it was now unlocked. Grateful to finally be out of the cold Yuuri hurried inside, shaking his head to try and get rid of the worst of the snow and rubbing his bare hands together to try and return some warmth to them.

After making himself as presentable as possible he grabbed his suitcase and started to haul it up the staircase, taking note of the apartment numbers on the doors he passed as he did so. After a few
minutes of climbing he finally reached the top floor where a single door stood, the number on the plate matching the number he had written down on his phone.

Suddenly, Yuuri had another flash of doubt. Was this a good idea? He and Viktor were rival skaters and even though Viktor seemed to have taken pity on him, staying in his apartment suddenly seemed ridiculous. But Yuuri was cold and tired and he was here now and there was no point turning back.

Hesitantly he reached up and knocked on the door, hating how loud the noise was in the echoing silence of the corridor. A few seconds later there was the sound of movement from inside and Yuuri stepped back a little as the door was pulled open, revelling Viktor standing haloed in the warm yellow light of the apartment.

He was dressed more casually then Yuuri was used to seeing him, the formal attire he wore for official events replaced with a soft grey jumper and loose black trousers. Absentmindedly Yuuri noted that Viktor’s feet were bare, although that was perfectly reasonable since it was late at night and Viktor was in his own home to boot.

“Yuuri.” he exclaimed, standing aside to create enough space for Yuuri to pass by. “Come in. You look freezing.”

Yuuri obeyed wordlessly. The awkwardness of what he was doing still thrummed in the back of his mind but the siren song of the warm apartment was calling to him and he pushed the thoughts away. Viktor followed him inside, shutting the door behind him and Yuuri took a few seconds to revel in the warmth and take in the room he had just walked into.

Viktor’s apartment was a modest size, not as extravagant as he had expected from the look of the outside of the building. The rooms were open plan, a kitchen and living space combined into one large room with tall windows that looked out onto the Moscow night set in one wall. A closed door to one side led to what was presumably a bedroom but apart from that, the rest of the apartment was in full view.

It was bare, mainly coloured in whites and greys that gave it a very unlived in appearance. Yuuri couldn’t see many personalised items lying around, no photographs or anything similar. There were a couple of books scattered across one of the tables beside the sofa, all the titles in Cyrillic except for one which looked to be in what Yuuri thought was French, but aside from that there was nothing in the apartment that would give insight into the occupant.

Viktor was still standing by the doorway, observing Yuuri look around the apartment with a watchful expression. Feeling like he had been caught doing something he shouldn’t, despite the innocent nature of his actions, Yuuri turned to face the other skater, not quite sure of what to say.

“Thank you.” he finally decided on, figuring it was the safest of all his options. “For letting me stay here I mean.”

“It’s no problem.” Viktor replied, smiling slightly. “I was staying in Moscow anyway and I live so close to the arena I just thought it would be easier for you to stay here rather than trying to find a hotel further out.”

“Yes.” Yuuri replied, then tried again, hoping to find something to say to avoid an awkward silence between the two of them. “But I thought you lived in St Petersburg?”

“I do.” Viktor looked surprised that Yuuri knew that little titbit of information but he didn’t comment on it. “I live in St Petersburg most of the year to train with Yakov. But I have a lot of official business in Moscow and it seemed easier to keep a second apartment here rather than booking a hotel
each time.”

“Oh.” In retrospect it did seem to make sense but still, the thought of keeping a second apartment seemed strange to Yuuri. As sparse as the place was, it was obviously well looked after and expensive, the minimalist décor and spacious room hinting at a price range that was probably far above anything that Yuuri would ever dream of.

In contrast, his own small apartment that he shared with Phichit seemed shabby in comparison. They had roomed together at the skating club for years and moved out into an apartment closer to the university when Yuuri had begun attending some years ago. It was old and a little creaky with pipes that knocked on cold nights but it was home and neither of them had ever had any desire to move. But in comparison to Viktor’s own place, the contrast was jarring. Yuuri’s own apartment was covered in posters and pictures courtesy of both him and Phichit, with the various dents and scratches that came with age and use worn into the surfaces and the rooms cramped and filled with the mismatched furniture that they had collected over the years.

Not only did Viktor’s flat seem much classier but Yuuri still couldn’t quite wrap his head around owning more than one property. He didn’t even own one, the rent spilt with Phichit every month. It wasn’t that Yuuri was poor, in fact he made quite a considerable amount of money through sponsorships alone. But skating was an expensive sport and any money that didn’t go into travel or costumes or one of the other numerous things he needed to compete he sent back home to Hasetsu. Tourism was drying up fast in his hometown and the onsen had fallen on hard times. Yuuri did everything he could to support his family financially and he rarely kept money for himself. The thought of Viktor, living here in his expensive apartment alone, was very strange.

Or maybe not quite alone.

Yuuri was startled out of his internal musings by a loud bark and suddenly the door to the bedroom burst open and a brown blur flew at him, knocking him over onto the floor and covering him with sloppy kisses.

“Makkachin!” Yuuri heard Viktor exclaim but he was too busy laughing, trying half-heartedly to push the dog off him while also burying his hands in the soft fur. It had been so many years since he had seen Vicchan and Makkachin looked so like him, although much bigger.

“I’m sorry about Makkachin.” he heard Viktor say as he hauled the dog off Yuuri, allowing him to sit up from where he had been lying sprawled on the floor. “I put him in the bedroom to keep him out of the way but he likes meeting new people and it seems he couldn’t resist.”

“It’s ok.” Yuuri said with a smile, getting to his knees and reaching over to rub Makkachin behind the ears. The dog panted in response and licked Yuuri’s hand again, drawing another laugh from him. Makkachin flopped to the floor and rolled over, exposing his belly and Yuuri rubbed that too, grinning at the way the poodle wagged his tail in response.

“Do you like dogs?” Viktor asked and Yuuri looked up to see the man smiling down at the two of them where they were sitting on the floor, his eyes sparking with laughter. Blushing a little Yuuri realised he must have looked very undignified but he was enjoying stroking Makkachin too much to really care.

“Yes.” he replied instead and Viktor smiled even wider. “I have a dog at home, back in Japan. He’s a poodle too but I haven’t been able to see him for years. He looks just like Makkachin, although a lot smaller.”

“What’s his name?” Viktor asked, kneeling down next to the two of them and giving Makkachin a
light scratch behind his ears.

“Vicchan.” Yuuri mumbled, caught slightly off guard and unable to find a good way to dodge the question. Internally he prayed that Viktor wasn’t familiar enough with Japanese naming customs to recognise where the name came from. Apparently he wasn’t because Viktor made no comment, just continued to rub Makkachin behind the ears, smiling at the two of them.

Despite enjoying the moment, Yuuri couldn’t help the yawn that forced its way out of him, breaking the peace of the room. As per usual he had been unable to sleep on the flight and his body clock was out of sync, screaming at him to go to sleep as he should have done hours ago. Viktor seemed to notice and stood up, offering Yuuri his hand and pulling him to his feet as well.

Glancing around the room, Yuuri noticed the bedroom with its door standing ajar where Makkachin had barged through, the single king sized bed sitting comfortably in the centre and a door leading off it, slightly open and offering a view into the bathroom beyond. There were no other rooms or beds in the flat. Why would there be? Viktor lived alone. Instead Yuuri turned to the couch, wondering if it would be rude to ask for a blanket to sleep with. He was already imposing enough as it was and he didn’t want to have to ask for more.

“I should probably get to bed.” he said, motioning awkwardly to the couch and hoping Viktor picked up on the genuine tiredness in his voice rather than thinking it was some kind of lame excuse to cut the conversation short.

“Oh. Of course.” Viktor picked up his suitcase. “Is this your only bag?”

Yuuri nodded. “I have another one with all my costumes but the airline lost it temporarily. They’re looking for it though so hopefully it’ll get here before the competition starts.”

“I’m sure it’ll be fine.” Viktor agreed and began carrying the suitcase towards the bedroom. Yuuri followed, perplexed. “There are new sheets on the bed since I’ve only been here a day and you can feel free to use the bathroom whenever you want.”

“The bed?” Yuuri asked, and then suddenly it all made sense. Why Viktor had offered to take him in out of the blue, why he seemed so at ease with Yuuri in his apartment, why he was currently placing Yuuri’s suitcase in the only bedroom like it belonged there.

The assumption wasn’t an unreasonable one but Yuuri still found himself shying away from it. It wasn’t that he never wanted to sleep with Viktor again but he was tired and he felt disgusting after so many hours of travelling. All he wanted to do was sleep and he really should have thought of this earlier, that Viktor would be expecting something in return for offering Yuuri his home.

“I…” he tried, trying to think of the most diplomatic way to refuse without getting himself chucked out of the apartment again. “I was thinking maybe I should sleep on the couch instead?”

“What?” Viktor asked, turning back to Yuuri. His eyes widened slightly and he looked back towards the bedroom as if suddenly realising what he had just said. “No! I didn’t mean…not if you…I wasn’t expecting…I won’t…” he trailed off, looking slightly helpless.

“It’s only that the couch is very uncomfortable. Trust me, I’ve slept on it enough times after a night of drinking to know.” Viktor continued, sounded sincere. “If you sleep there it’ll be bad for your back and you’ve got the competition coming up soon. I can sleep there instead and you can have the bed.”

“What, no!” Yuuri protested, feeling suddenly guilty at the unexpected turn the conversation had
taken. Viktor had allowed him into his home, had treated him with nothing but kindness. It would be rude in the extreme to return that by stealing Viktor’s bed for himself when he had given Viktor nothing in return. “I can sleep on the couch. I swear I don’t mind.”

“Trust me Yuuri, that’s a bad idea.” Viktor shot back, looking determined. “You have the bed. Please.”

Yuuri struggled for his next words, wanting to protest but also not wanting to argue with his host. There was no way he could take the bed and let Viktor sleep on the couch but Viktor seemed insistent about not letting him sleep there either. Of course, there was another solution. Yuuri had initially been hesitant when he thought he understood Viktor’s ulterior motive for asking him into his bed that night. But it seemed from the way that Viktor had reacted that he hadn’t been expecting that after all. Maybe he had seen how tired Yuuri looked and drawn his own conclusions. Regardless, Viktor had seemed fine with Yuuri’s implied refusal and he had never pushed before, had never done anything without asking Yuuri first. If Viktor wasn’t expecting anything then Yuuri could offer up another solution to the problem that would suit them both better.

“We could…share?” he asked, hearing the hesitation in his own voice. “If you want to that is. We could share the bed?”

The bed was by far big enough for the two of them and if Viktor refused to let Yuuri sleep on the couch then sharing seemed to be the next best option since Yuuri knew he couldn’t let Viktor do the same. He wasn’t sure if Viktor would accept the idea but surely it was the easiest option for them both? After all, they had shared a bed before, albeit in very different circumstances.

Viktor blinked a little in surprise at Yuuri’s suggestion but nodded his agreement, looking slightly cautious. “If you’re comfortable with that, then of course.” he said and Yuuri relaxed, glad that Viktor had agreed.

After the sleeping arrangements were sorted for the night Yuuri decided to go straight to bed, finding the growing tiredness harder and harder to fight off. Yawning, he showered and changed in the bathroom, brushing his teeth and feeling a sense of relief at finally scrubbing away the hours of travel from his skin and hair. After he was finished he slipped quietly back into the bedroom taking in the sight of the empty room and the large bed that dominated it.

Viktor was still in the main room of the apartment and Yuuri hesitated, not sure what the proper decorum for the situation was. He desperately wanted to go to sleep but he didn’t want to just assume he was welcome in the bed anytime and use it while Viktor was still out of the room.

But in the end, the exhaustion won out. On the nightstand at one side of the bed, Viktor’s phone was resting and so Yuuri moved to the opposite side, placing his glasses on the opposing nightstand. As soon as he had taken them off the room lost its sharp focus, turning soft and fuzzy around the edges and he slid under the covers quickly, keeping himself pressed as close to the edge of the mattress as he could without falling off. It felt uncomfortable, to be taking up Viktor’s space when he was giving nothing in return, and he was determined to be a little of an imposition as possible.

It was only after he was already lying down that he realised that he had left the main light on, the switch situated on the wall across the room. The brightness of the lights wasn’t exactly relaxing but Yuuri found that once he was lying down he had no desire to get back up again and turn them off. Instead he snuggled down deeper into the bed, noting the softness of the mattress and the silky warmth of the sheets. It felt wonderful and he felt another wave of gratitude wash through him that Viktor had allowed him to stay.

There was the sound of movement from the entrance of the room and Yuuri blinked his eyes open
sleepily, the vague outline of a figure standing in the doorway all he could see through his tired eyes.

“Do you want to sleep now?” Viktor asked in the quiet of the room and Yuuri nodded. He knew that he should probably let Viktor decide since it was his apartment, his room and his bed but lying down on a soft surface had raised his exhaustion tenfold and he could already feel sleep creeping up on him. It had been such a long day.

Viktor nodded and flicked the light switch on the wall beside him, plunging the room into blissful darkness. Moving across the room he pulled his shirt off over his head and Yuuri shut his eyes again quickly, not wanting to violate Viktor’s privacy. Despite seeing Viktor wearing much less, it felt wrong to watch now uninvited and the glimpse of the smooth pale skin of Viktor’s chest had brought up feelings in him that were not at all helpful in his need for sleep. There was the sound of drawers being opened and shut and when Yuuri reopened his eyes Viktor was fully dressed again, in soft, comfortable looking clothes that had the well-worn look of sleep attire.

There was a gentle dip in the bed and Viktor sat down on the opposite side, swinging his legs up from the floor and sliding under the covers. Trying to give Viktor as much space as he was able Yuuri shuffled further back, feeling the edge of his back hang slightly over the edge of the mattress as he did so. If Viktor slept in such a huge bed alone he was probably used to being able to spread out to his heart’s content and Yuuri didn’t want to hinder him by being in the way.

For a few minutes the room was silent, dark and still. Yuuri couldn’t see Viktor fully in the darkness but he could make out the vague outline of a figure lying across from him, separated by the huge swathe of space between them. Yuuri could feel the grips of sleep start to take hold but he fought it back for a second, wanting to make his gratitude to Viktor clear. Viktor had no reason to take him in for the night and Yuuri appreciated the unexpected kindness more than he was able to express.

“Thank you Viktor.” he said into the darkness, fighting back the tiredness one last time to make sure Viktor knew and understood what he was trying to say. They might have a lot of sour history between them but Viktor had put all that aside to help Yuuri out when he was in need and Yuuri was eternally grateful for that. “For letting me stay.”

“Of course Солнышко.” Viktor replied and Yuuri tensed briefly at the unfamiliar word. The last time Viktor had called him something in Russian it had been far from kind but that had been years ago and there seemed to be no malice in Viktor’s tone.

Yuuri wondered briefly what the word meant but he was too tired and he hadn’t been listening closely enough to catch more than the general form of the sound.

Deciding that it wasn’t something to think about that night, Yuuri finally let himself drift off to sleep. He would deal with everything in the morning.

When Yuuri awoke the next morning he was confused. Through the haze of sleep that still clung to him as he dragged himself back into wakefulness he registered the unfamiliar feeling of silky sheets
surrounding him and the strange warmth of the bed he was in. Blindly he reached out and his hands met with soft fur, fingers curling into it automatically.

“Vicchan?” he mumbled sleepily, blinking in the morning light and trying to get his eyes to focus. The dog in front of him barked in response and sat up to lick Yuuri’s face and Yuuri’s tired brain registered the size of the mound of fur, much bigger than he knew his own dog to be.

Fumbling for his glasses on the nightstand his jammed them crookedly onto his face, rubbing away the sleep that was gluing his eyes shut and allowing the room to come gradually back into focus.

Makkachin was lying on the bed beside him, tongue lolling out and suddenly the events of the night before came rushing back with full force. The airport, the panic over hotel rooms that suddenly seemed much less disastrous in the morning light, the impulsive decision to take Viktor up on his offer to stay the night.

Mind suddenly clear Yuuri sat up and looked around, taking in the room around him. During the night he had splayed out a little on the bed, taking up far more room than he had intended. Viktor on the other hand was still firmly isolated on his side of the bed, lying curled on his side and looking strangely small in the large expanse of space around him. Sometime during the night Makkachin had jumped up onto the bed between them and was lying down over the covers, looking content.

It felt strange to wake up next to Viktor, a feeling Yuuri had only ever experienced once before. The night after the last World Championships, the night that Viktor had asked him to stay. Yuuri had woken up lying close to Viktor that morning, not quite touching but lying close enough to feel the heat from the other man’s body and count each individual eyelash of his closed eyes. That day, after they had awoken, they had both been forced to part, their official duties as medallists calling them to go their separate ways but from that moment Yuuri couldn’t help but feel like something had changed between them, something intrinsic that he couldn’t quite put his finger on, elusive but there all the same.

Of course, waking up this time was as different as it was familiar. Both he and Viktor were fully clothed and their reason for sharing the bed was completely innocent for once. And Makkachin was present, a comforting warmth pressed close to Yuuri’s side. He and Viktor were further apart this time too, separated by the huge space in the centre of the bed that they had left between them, each rigidly confined to their own side.

Viktor looked very peaceful lying there, the warm rays of the morning sun illuminating his features with a gentle light. Yuuri tried to move as silently as he could, sliding out of the bed and hoping not to disturb the other man. But despite Yuuri’s efforts, his movements seemed to drag Viktor back into a semblance of wakefulness and he groaned sleepily, shielding his eyes from the sunlight that was pouring through the gap in the curtains and bathing the bed in an amber glow.

“What time is it?” Viktor mumbled sleepily, his eyes still closed with one arm flung across his face to block out the sunlight.

Yuuri stepped over to where he had left his phone the night before, clicking it open and eyes widening when he saw the numbers that flashed across the screen. He relayed the time to Viktor and the other man startled too, obviously not expecting the answer.

“It’s late.” He stated, sounding surprised. “I didn’t realise we had slept that long.”

“Do you have somewhere to be?” Yuuri asked, looking over at the other man. He was supposed to be at the arena where the Rostelecom Cup was being held, practicing his short program and free skate, but there was still a few days to go before the competition and after flying in the night before
he could allow himself a little leeway to get over the jetlag in the form of sleeping in late. He had no 
idea why Viktor hadn’t set an alarm however, considering he seemed to have plans for the day.

“I’m supposed to be practicing.” Viktor admitted, looking a little guiltily out the crack in the curtains 
where the sun was already high in the sky, its rays bouncing off the snow covering the ground with 
icy crystals. “Yakov has booked time in a local rink for all his skaters while we’re all here in 
Moscow and I’m supposed to be there to prepare for the Final.”

Of course, Viktor had already qualified for the final. It made sense that he was supposed to be 
practicing, refining his skates for the final showdown in less than a month’s time. During the 
competitive season there was hardly time to take time off and Yuuri should have guessed that that 
was where Viktor was supposed to be.

With Viktor the one of the two of them with a more pressing timetable, Yuuri let him take the shower 
first, throwing on his practice clothes while Viktor was occupied in the bathroom and vowing to 
shower in the athlete’s private locker rooms once he got to the arena. He wasn’t exactly in a rush but 
he did want to fit in as much practice time as he could before he had to skate for real and his 
unexpected lie-in that morning had cut into his practice time considerably.

Digging his skates out from the depths of his suitcase, Yuuri tossed them into his rucksack along 
with a change of clothes, a water bottle and his wallet. Finishing by shrugging on his skating jacket 
he hoisted the bag onto his shoulder and made his way out of the room, passing by the kitchen and 
stopping for a second to look a little mournfully at the fridge. He was hungry but he would have to 
wait until he got to the arena to eat. There was no way he could justify stealing any of Viktor’s food 
for himself, he had already taken too much as it was.

Just as he was about to leave, Yuuri heard the sound of an opening door and turned to see Viktor 
standing in the bedroom doorway, hair still wet from the shower with a few glistening beads of water 
clinging to his neck and wearing loose practice clothes just like Yuuri himself.

“Are you going to the stadium to practice?” Viktor asked, taking in Yuuri’s own attire and the sports 
bag slung across his shoulder.

“Yes.” Yuuri responded and Viktor nodded in understanding.

“Do you need any help finding your way?” he asked and Yuuri shook his head, hoping it were true.

“You said you lived close by right?” he asked, remembering the conversation from the night before.

“I do.” Viktor replied and Yuuri felt relieved. Staying close to the stadium made his life much easier 
after all and it was one of the reasons he had agreed to stay with Viktor in the first place. “You can 
walk there from here. The rink where I’m training with Yakov is nearby too.”

“Ok.” Yuuri said, not sure what else to say. The situation he found himself in was a bizarre one, 
staying at Viktor’s house with some kind of strange unspoken ceasefire between them. He still 
wasn’t quite sure how to act, what Viktor was expecting of him and he was sure that it showed.

“I’ll see you tonight?” Viktor said and there was a slight question in his tone that Yuuri responded to 
with a nod before turning and leaving the apartment, hoping the fresh air of the outside would help 
clear his head a little and let him think more clearly.

Once he had made his way down the stairs and out the front door the chill of the winter air hit him at 
once, making him shiver involuntarily. It wasn’t his first time in Moscow during the winter, he had 
skated in the Rostelecom Cup before but he could never get over just how cold it could be, far colder
than it ever was in Detroit. All around him the snow gleamed, little fractions of light dancing off the individual flakes that were settled across the whole street, covering the ground, the trees and even the cars that were parked by the road. Yuuri was suddenly very grateful that he had decided to pack thick boots as his feet sank deep into the snow with every step.

Hunching down deeper into his jacket to try and ward off the cold Yuuri began the walk to the stadium, using his phone to guide him. The little device beeped at him, telling him which way to turn and soon he rounded a corner to see the dome of the arena rising above him, shimmering in the snow and sunlight in all its glory.

Relieved to finally have a chance to escape the cold Yuuri hurried inside, using his ISU credentials to gain access to the more private parts of the building. There were a couple of other skaters milling around and Yuuri nodded a quick greeting to them, getting ready as quickly as he could before pulling on his skates and walking out onto the ice.

Part of the reason he had been so keen to arrive early for the Cup was that he had wanted as much practice time in the unfamiliar stadium as he could before he had to skate for real. Yuuri had found that his free skate was going well but he was still struggling a lot with his short program. Celestino had picked the theme this year, insisting that Yuuri needed to try something new to avoid becoming predictable to the crowds. He had pointed out that a lot of skaters used their charm and sexuality in routines to try and seduce the audience and the judges but Yuuri had never even attempted something like that. He had always been comfortable skating routines that rang true with him emotionally and the kind of skating Celestino was suggesting was about as far out of his comfort zone as he could go.

Regardless, Celestino had insisted, telling Yuuri that he needed to show the world a different side to him, something they had never seen before. He might have won the gold last year but predictability was the most sure-fire way to go into a slump that few skaters could ever recover from and Yuuri had agreed reluctantly. He trusted Celestino as a coach, trusted his judgement, and if Celestino thought that trying to seduce the audience was what he needed to do to win then he was willing to try.

But no matter how willing he was, he was struggling. He always performed his best when he was skating from his heart and Yuuri couldn’t seem to find what he needed to make the routine work. The song he was skating to was entrancing, an instrumental piece full of stings and passion but Yuuri wasn’t able to match it on the ice, wasn’t able to make the routine his own. He couldn’t feel the story in the music no matter how hard he tried.

After a long day of practicing he was just about ready to give up. Part of him wished he had never let Celestino convince him that trying something completely new was a good idea and part of him wanted to rise to the challenge, wanted to prove that he could do it. Other skaters relied on sex appeal in their themes regularly, Chris being one whole came instantly to mind and Viktor as another, Viktor who was so good at seducing the audiences with nothing more than a heated look and a sly smile. But that wasn’t who Yuuri was and after failing to improve after practicing for the whole day he wondered if he would ever be able to be.

Eventually, Yuuri gave up, sliding off the ice and wiping away the sweat that was clinging to his forehead with the towel he had left at the side of the rink. Slipping on his skate guards he walked back to the changing rooms, exchanging a few quick goodbyes with the skaters who were still practicing on the rink. The numbers had ebbed and flowed during the day but as the evening drew in they were dwindling as most people escaped back to their various hotels to relax after a tiring day.

Yuuri changed as quickly as he could, pulling on fresh clothes and tossing his sweaty practice ones
into his bag along with his skates. His mind was still caught up with his routine and it was only after the worry that he would disappoint Celestino by being unable to perform it well had slunk into his mind that Yuuri realised he had failed to call his coach to update him on what was happening.

Feeling suddenly guilty, Yuuri flipped through his phone until he found his coach’s number and hit call as he walked out the stadium, shivering a little as the cold night air hit him again full force. His breath misted in front of his face as he walked and he could feel the way the cold dug deep into his bones, forcing its way into his lungs.

Celestino picked up after the first couple of rings and Yuuri quickly updated him on what had happened, explaining that he had found somewhere to stay and was already practicing in the arena for the competition. Celestino sounded relieved at the news and Yuuri tactically avoided mentioning just where it was that he was staying. Celestino didn’t need to know after all and Yuuri wasn’t sure he would be able to explain exactly how that particular situation had come about. Better to just not mention it and save his coach the worry.

After reassuring his coach again that yes, he was fine and that there was no need for him to send for any extra help, Yuuri hung up the phone, satisfied that he had quelled Celestino’s worries and that he wouldn’t be getting too many concerned calls from his coach checking up on him. The conversation had lasted for a while and Yuuri found that he was already almost back at Viktor’s apartment, having walked there on automatic.

During the day while he was out skating Viktor had texted him the code for the door, just in case Yuuri got back before him. The show of trust startled Yuuri but he was grateful all the same. He had left the stadium earlier than he would have liked due to the frustration at his inability to skate his short program the way he knew he needed to and he realised that it was unlikely that Viktor had arrived back from his own training session yet.

Punching in the code on the panel by the door Yuuri heard the click as it unlocked and stepped inside gratefully, allowing the door to swing shut behind him and cut off the chill from the outside air. As quickly as he could he walked up the staircase to the top floor and pushed at the apartment door, unsure as to whether he would be able to enter without any keys. His worries turned out to be for naught however as the door swung easily open. Viktor must have left it unlocked when he had left that morning.

Yuuri barely made it two steps into the apartment before he was accosted by an excitable ball of fur. Makkachin had come bounding out of the bedroom at the sound of the door opening and he jumped around Yuuri enthusiastically, putting his large paws on Yuuri’s chest and wagging his tail eagerly at his new friend.

Yuuri smiled down at him and ran his hands through Makkachin’s soft fur. He hadn’t realised just how much he had missed having a dog around until he had met Makkachin. It had been so many years since he had left Hasetsu that Vicchan was more a fond memory than anything else but seeing Makkachin had reminded him just how much he loved and missed his own dog. Mari regularly send him photos and updates of his pet but it wasn’t the same.

Makkachin dropped back down to the floor after a couple of seconds of petting and wandered over to the side of the door, looking at Yuuri expectantly. Yuuri followed the dog’s retreating figure with his eyes and noticed the pegs screwed into the wall that Makkachin was currently standing under, one of Viktor’s coats hanging up on one and a dog lead and collar strung up on the other. Makkachin was looking at Yuuri pleadingly, standing underneath the lead and Yuuri could already feel his heart beginning to melt.

“I’m sorry,” he told Makkachin, trying not to sound too guilty as he did so. “I can’t take you for a
walk. Viktor’s not back yet and I’m sure he wouldn’t want someone like me walking his dog.”

Makkachin whined and put his paws up on the wall, reaching up for the collar and lead and looking forlorn and Yuuri’s heart broke a little.

“I can’t.” he insisted but Makkachin continued to look at him pleadingly and Yuuri could already feel his resolve beginning to crumble. Sighing he unhooked the collar from the wall and Makkachin barked in excitement, jumping up around his legs and licking Yuuri’s hands in happiness. Yuuri knew he was an idiot for falling for the puppydog eyes trick that Vicchan had used to use on him so many times before but he couldn’t help himself.

“We’re only going for a quick walk before Viktor gets back.” he told the dog sternly as he fixed the collar around Makkachin’s neck and clipped the lead on. “Ok?”

Makkachin just barked and wagged his tail at Yuuri enthusiastically and Yuuri sighed, wondering when he had become such a pushover for adorable dogs who begged for walks. Although thinking back to his time with Vicchan he realised he had probably always been like that.

Since he was unfamiliar with the city, Yuuri let Makkachin lead the way, taking careful note of the route so that he would be able to find his way back later but allowing the dog to guide him this way and that as Makkachin wandered down the various streets. Although the snow had stopped falling the ground was still coated in it and Yuuri took the time to appreciate how beautiful the city looked while covered in a blanket of white. It was unusual for him to spend any time in the cities he visited for competitions doing anything other than skating and travelling between the rink and his hotel. It was a rare occurrence that he ever got the chance to simply explore a new place and he found that he was enjoying himself far more than he thought he would.

Yuuri was so caught up in his thoughts that he barely registered the sky beginning to darken or the way the sun sank slowly down towards the horizon. It was only when he registered that the glow of the streetlamps were now the main source of light that he realised that he had been out far longer than he had intended.

Feeling horribly guilty Yuuri practically ran back to the apartment, Makkachin bounding along in his wake. As he ran Yuuri prayed that Viktor hadn’t come home yet but that hope was crushed when he saw the light shining out of the windows from Viktor apartment as he approached from the street.

With a sense of dread he climbed the stairs, wondering how he was going to explain it all to Viktor. He knew he should have waited until Viktor got back to ask permission to take Makkachin on a walk but Viktor had no reason to say yes and he had wanted to so desperately. It was likely that Viktor would have refused, he had no reason to trust Yuuri with his beloved pet, and Yuuri had betrayed his hospitality by doing what he had done.

As they approached the door of the apartment Yuuri found that he was worrying his bottom lip with his teeth to the point that he had drawn blood and he could taste the iron tang on his tongue. Hesitantly he pushed the door open, waiting for the barrage of shouting that was sure to follow. But it didn’t come.

“Oh, you’re back.” Viktor stated from where he was lying on the couch, feet propped up on the cushions, his phone in his hands and the tables containing the books resting beside him. “Did you have a good walk.”

Makkachin bounded happily up to his owner and jumped up onto the couch to join Viktor, who laughed and gave the dog a few good rubs behind his ears. Yuuri just stared, not sure how to respond. He had prepared for Viktor to be angry with him for taking Makkachin out without even
waiting for him to return and asking for permission but Viktor didn’t even seem to care, like letting one of his rivals who he’d let into his house out of pity walk his dog whenever they pleased was just something he did every day.

“I’m so sorry.” he blurted out, wondering if perhaps the yelling and reprimands were going to come later. “I know I should have waited for you to come back but Makkachin really wanted to go for a walk and I promise I won’t do it again.”

This time, it was Viktor’s turn to look surprised, as though the thought that Yuuri had done something wrong had never even occurred to him.

“Don’t worry about it Yuuri.” he reassured the other man, still giving Makkachin absentminded scratches behind his ear while the dog snuggled close to his chest. “I’m glad you took him for a walk. I got held up at the rink today and Makkachin hates being cooped up inside for too long. When I came in I saw that the lead and collar were gone and I assumed that’s what you were doing. As long as you kept him on the lead it’s fine. Makkachin sometimes likes to run out in front of traffic if he’s not on the lead on the streets.”

“Oh. Uh, yeah.” Yuuri replied, still not quite over the fact that Viktor was absolutely ok with Yuuri casually talking his dog out for walks as though it was a common occurrence. Back in Hasetsu he had rarely kept Vicchan on a lead, the town was quiet and the likelihood of him running into any traffic was low. But Moscow was much busier and he had been careful to keep Makkachin close.

Makkachin gave Viktor’s hand a parting lick and jumped off the sofa, bounding back over to Yuuri and circling his legs, butting his head playfully against his thigh.

“He really likes you.” Viktor commented, smiling at the two of them and Yuuri couldn’t help but smile back. He adored Makkachin already, even after knowing him for less than a day. It was impossible not to love him and he was relieved that apparently Viktor didn’t mind his unwanted guest spending so much time with his dog. From the articles he had read when he was younger, Yuuri knew how much Viktor adored Makkachin and he was touched by the unexpected show of trust.

Across the room Viktor stretched, groaning a little as his back cracked from sitting down for too long. He stretched and Yuuri noticed the way the shirt he was wearing rode up a little, exposing a thin sliver of pale skin beneath the fabric.

“What do you want to eat?” Viktor asked him and Yuuri startled again, not sure how to answer the question. He had assumed that he would have to brave the Moscow streets to find his own food, Viktor had offered him a place to sleep last night after all, not a free pass to treat his apartment like a home and Yuuri wasn’t expecting the offer.

At the surprised look on his face, Viktor continued, expression unchanging as though there was nothing strange about what he had just said.

“There’s not much here to eat. I don’t really cook myself. But we can order something in if you’re hungry.”

“I’ll have whatever you’re having.” Yuuri stammered, still thrown by the question. Viktor just shrugged in response and picked up his phone again, flicking through it quickly and dialling a number, the synthesised ringing filling the air between them. After a few seconds a voice answered on the other end, the Russian words coming out garbled and tinny from the speakers. Viktor replied back in the same language and Yuuri listened closely, admiring the way the words sounded coming from Viktor’s mouth. Despite being able to speak no Russian he could still admire the sound of the
language and the way it rolled off Viktor’s tongue effortlessly. After spending so much time communicating in English he had almost forgotten that it wasn’t Viktor’s native language, just as it wasn’t his own.

After a few minutes Viktor finished the conversation and tapped his phone screen, ending the call.

“There’s a local place just a few streets from here that does good food.” he told Yuuri, who was still hovering awkwardly by the door, not sure what the polite thing to do would be. Viktor was stretched out across the only couch but he lowered his legs when he noticed Yuuri looking, making space. Yuuri blushed, hoping Viktor hadn’t though he was being rude and demanding but went to perch on the edge of the couch anyway, trying not to invade Viktor’s space too much. Viktor moved out of the way, being very careful not to touch Yuuri.

“I’ve ordered a couple of things so hopefully there’ll be something that you like.”

“Thank you.” Yuuri tried, wincing at how hesitant the words came out. While he was grateful that Viktor was being so generous he still couldn’t work out the reason why. If he had been worried about Yuuri not being able to compete and therefore face him in the final if he couldn’t find a place to stay he could easily have just offered Yuuri the bare minimum, a roof over his head and a couch to sleep on. But here he was, ordering them both dinner and letting Yuuri sleep in his own bed and Yuuri had no idea what to do with the information, had no idea what to do with the new side of Viktor that he kept seeing more of every time they were together.

Thankfully, the food arrived fairly quickly, Viktor getting up to answer the door and accepting the pile of boxes from the delivery man standing outside. Yuuri wanted to jump up and insist that he pay for his fair share of the food but no money was exchanged between the two. Viktor must have already paid over the phone instead. Feeling a little useless Yuuri instead walked to the kitchen, rummaging in the draws to pull out the plates and cutlery that he needed and setting them down on the table.

Viktor brought the stack of boxes over to the table and set them down, opening the lids and allowing the smell of freshly cooked food to fill the room. The food smelled delicious, unfamiliar and new but delicious all the same. Viktor obviously had a good taste in meals.

Sitting down at the table opposite him, Viktor spooned some of the food from one of the cartons onto his plate and tucked in. Taking that as a cue that it was acceptable for him to eat too Yuuri did the same. It was only after smelling the food that he realised just how hungry he actually was. Despite his late start he had trained hard and his body was craving the calories he had burned over the course of the day. From the way Viktor was eating it looked like he was feeling the same.

“Do you like it?” Viktor asked, pausing in his eating to question Yuuri and Yuuri nodded. The food tasted different to most things that he had eaten before but it was still excellent and he found that he was enjoying it a lot.

After that they fell back into silence again and Yuuri chewed thoughtfully, watching Viktor eat across from him. He wanted to start another conversation, to be a good guest but he didn’t really know where to start. His only frame of reference was the dinner they had shared over a year ago, the one that he himself had ended early. Viktor was usually the one to initiate the conversation and Yuuri wasn’t sure how to talk to him normally, wasn’t sure how to act around someone like Viktor, who’s history was woven so darkly into his own.

“How was your training today?” he finally settled on, not able to think of anything else to ask about. When he had to talk to other skaters who weren’t Phichit he always found that skating and training were two safe topics of conversation, guaranteed to get the other talking without falling into the
awkward silences that happened when both parties had run out of things to say. Skating was easy to talk about for skaters, it was what they based their lives around after all.

“It was good.” Viktor replied, swallowing his mouthful and looking rueful. “Yakov yelled at me for a while for showing up late but I make a habit of not listening to him anyway and he’s practically given up by now. He’s the best coach I’ve ever had but I’ve never really been one for following the rules. I’ve always wanted to skate but I have to skate the way that I want. Listening to Yakov doesn’t always fit in with that.”

Yuuri nodded along with the story, although he could hardly relate. It seemed that his and Viktor’s approaches to skating were very different after all.

“And what about you Yuuri?” Viktor asked and Yuuri blinked at him, surprised by the question and not quite sure what Viktor was asking. “I’ve been training with Yakov for years, just like you’ve been training with Celestino. But what about before that? What made you want to skate?”

Even though Yuuri couldn’t figure out how quite Viktor had managed to jump onto that topic of conversation, the other man was looking genuinely curious and Yuuri could hardly refused to answer such a simple question.

Unfortunately the answer wasn’t exactly something he could mention to the man sitting in front of him. Yuuri had been skating before he saw Viktor of course but it was seeing the other man perform all those years ago that had really cemented his love for the sport, had driven him to turn what used to be a hobby and an escape from the outside world into a fully-fledged career. There was no good way to put the fact that Yuuri had started skating competitively because he wanted to be like Viktor, wanted to skate like Viktor, wanted to skate on the same ice as Viktor someday. And then later, when Viktor had broken his heart with a few casual words and a dismissal, that the desire to beat Viktor, to pay him back in kind and prove his worth had driven him through so many years, had driven him to where he was today, a gold medallist looking to secure his second consecutive win in the Grand Prix final against the man that he had built so much of his life around.

There was no way he could say any of that out loud, not to Viktor, not now. Instead he settled on the safer option, delving back further into his past to what had pushed him to step out onto the ice in the first place.

“When I was younger I used to do ballet.” he started and he saw Viktor sit up a little straighter, looking at him in interest. “I enjoyed it and my ballet teacher was a figure skating fan. She recommended that I try skating out and well…” he shrugged a little. “Here I am.”

“Why not just stick with ballet?” Viktor asked, looking genuinely interested. “Why move on to ice skating.”

Yuuri paused for a moment, twirling his fork between his fingers and trying to think of what to say.

“I guess I just enjoyed skating more.” he finally settled on, hoping Viktor wouldn’t push any further. “I made friends with one of the girls there and she encouraged me to keep going. I found myself spending more and more time at the rink and I don’t know. I guess I just fell in love with the ice.”

‘And you.’ The voice in his head whispered before Yuuri had a chance to stop it.

‘I saw you and it changed everything.’

Viktor was smiling at him but the look in his eyes was far away.

“I know the feeling.” he replied and there was something to his tone, something a little melancholy, something that Yuuri couldn’t quite put his finger on. For a second, Yuuri wondered what Viktor
was thinking about but before he could ask the moment was gone, the faraway look disappearing from Viktor’s eyes in an instant and the full force of his gaze returned to look firmly back at Yuuri.

Yuuri looked away, turning back to his food. Somehow he found that he had trouble looking Viktor in the eye. The intensity in his gaze was hard to match and Yuuri felt strangely vulnerable when Viktor looked at him that way. Despite the strange shift in their dynamic that had started all those months ago at the World Championships and was continuing even now, Yuuri still found that he didn’t want to be vulnerable in front of Viktor, didn’t want to let his guard down too much. The defensive instinct was too ingrained in him over too many years for him to let it go now.

Thankfully, Viktor didn’t seem to feel the need to ask any more questions and they passed the rest of the meal in a comfortable silence, broken only by the clink of cutlery against plates and the occasional whine from Makkachin as he circled the table, begging for scraps. Eventually Viktor seemed to take pity on the dog and after he finished his own meal he left the table to dig some dog food out of one of the cupboards for his pet. While Viktor was busy Yuuri loaded the remaining dishes into the dishwasher and shoved the empty boxes into the bin, wanting to feel useful.

After that task was finished he retreated into the bedroom, the aftereffects of the day finally catching up with him. Regardless of how long he had slept the night before it usually took Yuuri a few days to get over his jet lag and he found that he was already tired, despite it still being early evening. Viktor was still preoccupied in the kitchen and Yuuri hoped that he wouldn’t mind too much if he retreated to bed early. It had been a long day after all.

It was only after Yuuri was already lying in bed, the light from the next room the only thing illuminating the bedroom with a soft golden glow that Yuuri realised what he had forgotten. In the rush of the day, in the strange confusion of the events that evening, he had completely forgotten to call around the hotels again and find if there was any new place available for him to stay. The snow had stopped which meant hopefully the planes would be flying again and some rooms would have become available. He had intended to do it as soon as he could but for some reason the thought had slipped his mind.

Sighing, Yuuri rolled over in the bed, resolving to do it tomorrow. It was late after all and Viktor hadn’t seemed to mind him still being around. He hadn’t explicitly asked Yuuri to leave at least. Surely staying just one more night couldn’t hurt.

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queenusagi

Guess who got last minute tickets to the Rostelecom Cup this year!!! I can’t believe I’m actually going to get to see Yuuri Katsuki in person I think I might die :o

#Katsuki Yuuri #Rostelecom Cup #Figure Skating

57 notes
Quick snapshot I caught of Katsuki Yuuri getting on the plane in Detroit

#Katsuki Yuuri #Figure Skating #I can’t believe I actually saw him

1,348 notes

epiphany-in-gold-light

I literally don’t even care about the Rostelecom Cup I only care that Katsuki makes it into the final so that I can see him and Nikiforov near each other again

#Katsuki Yuuri #Viktor Nikiforov #Viktuuri #Figure Skating #I know literally all the interaction they ever have is standing on the podium next to each other but this ship is my life

103 notes

bxtchy-bxtch

I am so sick of so called ‘Viktuuri’ shippers derailing literally every conversation about skating to talk about their trash ship. There is literally no evidence for it, they barely interact aside from the occasional glances/glares, it’s pretty well established that they don’t like each other because everyone has known it for years and the literal only thing you people try and use as solid evidence is that one Instagram picture from months ago that kind of maybe almost possibly looks like a jacket that one of the Japanese skaters wears in Viktor’s room but could literally be anything because the picture was so vague. That is literally it. No-one but you crazy shippers believe that it could even possibly be Katsuki’s jacket. You all need to stop and give it up now and stop cramming the tags with stupid fantasies.

#Figure Skating #Viktuuri

Viktor_Nikiforov.gif

diexne

Best moments of Viktor Nikiforov by season

#Viktor Nikiforov #Figure Skating #Living Legend
I was wondering, since you post so much meta about the Nikiforov/Katsuki rivalry, what are your thoughts regarding the different theories about how it all really started?

This is a good question anon but the answer is that I don’t really know. I mean, no-one knows exactly what started the whole thing off and Nikiforov and Katsuki themselves have never said and are both notoriously slippery when it comes to dodging questions about each other. I mean, even Katsuki – who has never made his dislike of Nikiforov subtle – has been nothing but coldly polite about the other skater in interviews and no-one has ever managed to get out of him why he seems to hate Nikiforov so much.

I know that one of the popular theories in the past was that Katsuki has always been jealous of Nikiforov and he’s just bitter but that just doesn’t ring true to me. Aside from Nikiforov, Katsuki is always polite and friendly to the other skaters and he seems not to mind too much when he occasionally doesn’t win gold in the qualifying competitions/4C, it’s only coming second to Nikiforov in the finals that he seems to hate. So I don’t think petty jealousy is right at all.

Another one of the really popular theories is that they have some sort of secret history between the two of them that turned sour. To me this seems to be more likely at least, although all those stories about them being childhood friends who fell out seem a bit unrealistic since they both live in separate counties and have their whole lives. The theory that they were secret lovers who broke up is probably even less likely seeing as Katsuki seemed to have a significant amount of animosity towards Nikiforov during his Senior debut when he was only fifteen. But I think that some kind of dark past, whatever that may be, is one of the more likely theories.

The other main theory that tends to get a lot of attention is the idea that Nikiforov is arrogant and too attached to his titles and medals, thinking he’s the best of the best and invincible and Katsuki set out to prove him wrong and knock him down a peg or two. But again, this seems very out of character to me. I mean, yes Nikiforov is a phenomenal skater who has won more golds than I can count but he’s never come off as arrogant or rude in interviews or anything like that. It just doesn’t seem to fit.

Then of course there’s the idea that maybe they are both just faking a rivalry to gain media attention and fame. But I’m writing that one off straight away because not only does it seem wildly unlike either of them but anyone who watches some of the old video clips of how Katsuki used to glare at Nikiforov can see that he is absolutely not acting. He just straight up hated the guy.

I know there’s a lot of divided opinions in the fandom about how it all really started. Nikiforov fans love to blame Katsuki and Katsuki fans love to blame Nikiforov. But honestly the truth is that we don’t know and I’m not sure if we’ll ever know.

I personally like to believe in the ‘dark past’ theory and a lot of people (I’m looking at you fanfiction writers, you know who you are!) seem to agree with me. But in reality I think all we’re ever going to know is speculation unless something really dramatic happens to change that!

Ask pardonthelitany a question

#Katsuki Yuuri #Viktor Nikiforov #Figure Skating #replies

348 notes
When Yuuri woke the next morning, it was to the strangely familiar feeling of lying in Viktor’s bed with Makkachin sleeping soundly next to him. Viktor himself must have joined him in the bed sometime the night before, although Yuuri had no recollection of him doing so. Like the previous morning Viktor was lying on the other side of the bed, more than an arm’s length away. For a second Yuuri had the sudden urge to reach out and touch him but Viktor was peacefully sleeping and Yuuri didn’t want to disturb him. As quietly as he could he slipped out of the bed, hoping that this time he would be successful in not waking Viktor up.

Silently, Yuuri got ready for another day of training, tiptoeing around the apartment as he did so. It was much earlier than when he had woken up the day before which was a good sign that his body clock was resetting to match the time zone he was in and Yuuri knew he needed the extra training time the early start would give him. He needed to do well in the competition if he wanted to have a chance at advancing to the final and to do that he would need to get past his troubles with his short program. And to do that he would have to practice. A lot.

Before he left Yuuri stuck his head into the fridge, wondering if Viktor had anything in there he could borrow to eat for breakfast and replace later in the day. However, the fridge was almost completely bare, a few bottles of alcohol and half a pack of butter the only things present on the otherwise barren shelves. It seemed like Viktor really hadn’t been lying when he said that there wasn’t much to eat in the apartment.

Giving up on the idea of food and promising to himself to buy something at the arena like he had the day before, Yuuri left the apartment. Snow was still lying thick on the ground but it had begun to melt a little and the roads were clearing, the ice and snow that had blocked them finally beginning to be swept away.

Despite that fact, it was still freezing outside and Yuuri found that he was shivering as he made his way to the stadium, his nose turning and unattractive red colour in response to the frigid temperatures. Going from the cold of the outside to the cold of the ice rink wasn’t exactly something Yuuri wanted to do but he forced himself to anyway, zipping up his jacket as far as it would go and pulling on the skating gloves he always wore when it was a particularly cold day.

There were more skaters out on the rink that day than the day before. With only two days to go until the start of the short programs most skaters had finally arrived in Moscow and were taking every opportunity they could to practice. Georgi, the Russian skater, was the only noticeable absence but Yuuri assumed he was practicing at the same rink as Viktor, Yakov obviously taking advantage of being in their home territory to give the Russian skaters more private practice time out of the way of the other skaters and the public eye. Every other skater who was participating in the competition seemed to have arrived and Yuuri spotted familiar faces throughout the day, exchanging polite words and greetings with the ones he knew from previous competitions.

There were a few new faces as there were every year as Junior skaters finally took the leap and moved up to the Senior division. Yuuri picked out a young American skater from the crowd that he had seen briefly competing at the Junior Grand Prix the year before and there was an unfamiliar man with sandy blond hair wearing the jacket of the Czech Republic that Yuuri vaguely remembered seeing listed to skate against him at the Cup. It was always nice to see new skaters working their way up the ranks and Yuuri remembered vividly how terrified he had been during his own Senior debut so many years ago. He smiled encouragingly at the two where they were talking at the side of the
rink as he skated past but he didn’t try and speak to them. He wouldn’t really know what to say and he didn’t want to come off as awkward or patronising to the younger skaters.

Despite getting up earlier to gain the extra practice time, Yuuri still left the rink at the end of the day feeling unsatisfied with the progress he had made. For months now he had been working on the routine and it had carried him well enough through the Nationals but it still felt as clunky and unnatural as the day Celestino had first shown him it. It just wasn’t him. Yuuri had no idea how to seduce the crowds, had no idea how to make the audience want him. In comparison to some of the other skaters he was very plain and ordinary and he couldn’t imagine being able to skate with the same appeal that they achieved so effortlessly.

Feeling disheartened he made his way back to Viktor’s apartment slowly, the worry that he would never be able to perfect the routine weighing him down as the day of the short program drew ever nearer. When he stepped back through the door Makkachin was there to greet him and Yuuri knelt down on the floor to stroke him, the familiar, comforting action helping to soothe him. Makkachin seemed content to be petted for a while and so Yuuri let himself indulge, trying to push the thoughts about the day out of his mind. After all, he still had time to work on the routine, it wasn’t over yet.

Makkachin seemed to pick up on his low mood and he whined softly, giving Yuuri’s hand a few comforting licks. Yuuri smiled down at the dog, wishing he had Vicchan here with him too.

After a few more minutes of moping he finally pulled himself up off the floor. There was no use lying around doing nothing, he might as well try and get something productive done for the rest of the day to take his mind off his steadily mounting fears about his short program.

Absently Yuuri’s eyes wandered about the room until they finally alighted on the fridge. At the sight of the object and the memory of how bare it had looked that morning, Yuuri was suddenly struck by an idea.

He disliked the feeling of owing Viktor, of taking advantage of his unexpected hospitality and giving nothing back in return. The empty fridge and the vague recollection of a conversation from years past had sparked a thought in his mind and suddenly Yuuri was determined. If nothing else it would take his mind off his disastrous short program and a distraction was exactly what he needed right now.

Remembering what Viktor had said the day before about not minding if Yuuri took Makkachin out for a walk with him, Yuuri decided to bring the dog along. Clipping the lead and collar onto an excited Makkachin who seemed to sense that they were going on an adventure, Yuuri allowed the dog to lead him down the stairs and out into the cool evening air.

Feeling a little lost in the sprawling arcs of the city, Yuuri used his phone to search for what he was looking for and let the directions on the screen guide him. When he reached the building he reluctantly tied Makkachin’s lead to a post beside the entrance, giving the dog a mournful pat on the head and lamenting the fact that he wouldn’t be allowed to bring him inside.

After leaving Makkachin looking sadly after him he slipped though the automatic doors, losing himself temporarily in the crowds. The trip had been one undertaken on an impulse and Yuuri was very grateful he had his phone on him to help guide his journey. Reading and understanding Russian was still something that he had no skill in whatsoever and it was only through the help of the internet that Yuuri was able to decipher and find what he was looking for.

The task took him longer than he would have liked and by the time he finally left the building, a newly full carrier bag in hand, Makkachin was looking at him with the soulful eyes of a dog that had thought it abandoned, even if he hadn’t really left for that long. Yuuri gave him a few loving ear rubs in consolidation and untied Makkachin’s lead from the post, allowing the dog to lead the way back
When they finally arrived back at the apartment Yuuri upended the carrier bag onto the kitchen
countertop, taking in his purchases with a critical eye. The labels on the food were all unfamiliar,
written in the foreign script that he still couldn’t understand, and the recipe he had found online even
more so but Yuuri thought that he had done a pretty good job. It might not be up to the standard he
would like but he had done the best he could with what he had.

Despite Viktor’s claims that he hardly ever cooked, when Yuuri looked in the various drawers and
cupboards of the kitchen he found a variety of cooking utensils, although they all looked pristine and
almost untouched. Quickly he got to work, falling back into the old familiar routine he knew so well.
Cooking had been something he had been able to do for years. The skill had been a necessity back in
Japan when he was expected to help out around the onsen and after he had moved to Detroit he had
kept up the habit, knowing that his mother would never forgive him if he let her hard-taught skills
slide.

Yuuri knew he wasn’t the greatest cook in the world and working with an unfamiliar recipe was
nerve-wracking but as the time went on he relaxed into the task, enjoying the peace it brought him.
Skating and dancing had always been his refuges from the world and his own mind but cooking was
an acceptable substitute on occasions like this, when it was skating itself that was causing him so
much worry.

After what seemed like forever, Yuuri was finally satisfied with what he had made. According to the
recipe he had found online all the was left to do was let the food simmer and so he covered the pot
and left it cooking gently on the stove, moving to the kitchen table to slump back in one of the chairs,
the exhaustion of the day finally hitting him.

Makkachin, who had been watching the proceedings in the kitchen with interest, came padding over
and rested his head on Yuuri’s lap, his tongue lolling out as Yuuri patted his head softly. Suddenly,
Yuuri was hit with another wave of homesickness for his own pet. Vicchan had been his best friend
as a child and the fact that he hadn’t seen his companion in years except in photographs and the
occasional video call hit him hard. Vicchan wasn’t extremely old for a poodle but he was getting on
in years and Yuuri worried about him constantly.

Viktor’s casual remark about keeping Makkachin on his lead around the busy roads had stuck in
Yuuri’s head and he found himself worrying. When he had still been living in Japan he had rarely
ever put Vicchan on a lead, preferring to let the dog run along beside him instead. Vicchan was very
well-behaved and since Hasetsu was a quiet town with very little in the way of traffic Yuuri had
never worried before. But the words wouldn’t stop creeping back to him and suddenly he was
nervous.

Deciding that he might as well put his fears to rest he dug his phone out of his pocket and tapped on
his sister’s name, figuring that she would be the most likely person to answer. It would be the middle
of the day back in Hasetsu and she would probably be helping out around the onsen, doing chores or
seeing to the guests. Yuuri phoned his family on a fairly regular basis, he had called just before he
had left Detroit for Moscow and their words of encouragement still stayed with him. They wouldn’t
be expecting another call for a while and Mari was the most likely one to agree to a quick
conversation and not an hours long chat. Yuuri didn’t want to bother anyone, he just wanted a quick
confirmation to soothe his irrational fears that had cropped up after seeing Makkachin and Mari was
the person most likely to indulge him without making a big deal out of it.

“Yuuri?” His sister’s voice asked from the phone after the first couple of rings. “I wasn’t expecting
you to call so soon. Is something wrong?”
“No.” Yuuri started, not sure how to phrase his question without it sounding bizarre. “No nothing’s, wrong I promise. I was just wondering…” he trailed off, hesitant. “Is Vicchan ok?”

“Of course he is.” Mari replied, sounding surprised. “Why wouldn’t he be?”

“I don’t know. I’ve just been thinking about him a lot lately and I just. I don’t know. I had a bad feeling.”

“Yuuri, are you sure you’re ok?” Mari asked and Yuuri sat up at the worry in her tone. Making his sister concerned about him hadn’t been his intention at all. He was fine, in fact he was doing surprisingly well and it was only his exposure to Makkachin that had brought up the thoughts of Vicchan so prominently in his mind.

“Yeah Mari, I’m fine. I’m doing well I swear. I just got worried about him that’s all.” he replied, hoping his sincerity was audible. “It’s just been so long since I saw him. So long since I came home. I must be getting a little paranoid that’s all.”

“Well, if you’re sure.” his sister answered, still sounding a little dubious. “But you know you can call any time if you need to talk right? And if you ever get some time off from that crazy schedule of yours mum and dad would love to have you come back and visit for a while.”

“I’ll try.” Yuuri promised, hoping that someday soon he would be able to make good on it. It had been so long since he had last been back to Hasetsu that his hometown was nothing more than a distant memory. No matter how frequently he kept in contact with his family and his old friends, there were some things that just couldn’t be replaced and it had been so many years.

“And, could you maybe keep Vicchan on his leash when you take him for walks from now on?” he added on quickly, hoping Mari would just accept the out of the blue request. There was no reason to suddenly get paranoid now after years of nothing but Yuuri still couldn’t get rid of the niggling sense of foreboding and it was better safe than sorry. “Just in case?”

“Sure.” Mari replied, sounding slightly bemused but sincere all the same. “And good luck with your competition Yuuri. Minako and the Nishigori family are all coming round to watch it live the day after tomorrow. The triplets have made a banner and everything.”

“Thank you Mari.” Yuuri couldn’t help the small smile that crept onto his face at that. Knowing his family and friends back home were all watching - the weight of their expectations - could sometimes be crushing but their support meant more to him than he could ever say. Yuuri knew that some of them, especially his parents, still didn’t understand his love of the sport or his drive to succeed but they supported him all the same, sacrificed their time with their child to let him move halfway across the world to chase a wild dream that he had forced into a reality and he would never be able to express just how much that meant to him.

From across the room there was the faint click of a door closing and Makkachin barked happily, removing his head from Yuuri’s lap and bounding over to where Viktor had just shut the door, cutting off the draft of cold air from the outside. His cheeks were flushed red from the chill and he was still dressed in his skating clothes, obviously just home from practice.

“I need to go.” Yuuri told Mari and they said their goodbyes quickly before he ended the call, turning back to Viktor who had just finished hanging his coat up on one of the pegs by the door.

“Who were you talking to?” Viktor asked curiously and Yuuri realised that Viktor would have had no idea as to the content of his conversation, Yuuri’s native language as unfamiliar to him and his was to Yuuri.
“My sister.” Yuuri replied, deciding not to elaborate any further. Viktor probably wouldn’t be interested in details about his personal life and the question was probably one just asked out of politeness.

Viktor didn’t press for any more information, just finished hanging up his coat and wandered further into the room towards the kitchen space where Yuuri was sitting. When he got a few steps away he stopped, suddenly noticing the fragrant scent of cooking that had filled the air and the large pot still bubbling away quietly on the stove. He turned to look at Yuuri in surprise and Yuuri rushed to explain, hoping his actions hadn’t come off as too presumptuous.

“I made some food.” he started, although that fact was already glaringly obvious. “Since you paid for dinner last night and you’re letting me stay here and I thought I might as well make you something in return to say thank you and…” he trailed off, realising he had started rambling and feeling colour creep into his cheeks. It sounded stupid now that he said it out loud.

But Viktor didn’t laugh at him. Instead he was staring at Yuuri dumfounded, as though Yuuri had just stated something utterly shocking rather than simply telling Viktor that he had cooked them a meal.

“You don’t have to eat it.” Yuuri added, still feeling embarrassed. It had been a stupid idea. Viktor let him stay here out of pity and after all he had only offered one night and the best thing Yuuri could have done to thank him was clear out as quickly as possible rather than trying to make such a pointless gesture of gratitude.

“What, no!” Viktor seemed to shake himself out of his state of shock and inhaled deeply, letting the aroma of the food fill his nose and sighing in contentment. “It smells wonderful Yuuri. Thank you.”

Yuuri looked for any sign of falseness or mocking in Viktor’s face but there was none to be found. He seemed completely genuine and Yuuri relaxed. Maybe it hadn’t been such a bad idea after all.

“What did you make?” Viktor asked, walking further into the kitchen and peering down at the pot that was still simmering on the stove. “It smells very familiar.”

“Borscht.” Yuuri replied, hoping he hadn’t butchered the dish too much. It was completely foreign to him and he had been relying entirely on the recipe he had found on the internet and luck to guide him through it. “You told me once that you used to eat it when you got back to Russia after competing because it reminded you of home but that you couldn’t cook it yourself. I didn’t know what other food you liked to eat and I thought since you had qualified for the final and all you might like some.”

It had been a conversation of years past, the two of them talking over dinner with Yuuri’s head still throbbing from his injury, discussing food and laughing in a way that they never had before. The memory still clung to Yuuri vividly, even through all the time that had passed since then. Yuuri might have cut the evening brutally short of his own accord but it had been the first time the two of them had talked amicably, not at all like the rivals they were, with none of the barbs between them that usually kept them miles apart.

“You remember that?” Viktor asked, looking amazed.

“Yes.” Yuuri replied, because it’s not like he could have forgotten. “It probably won’t taste right since I’ve never made it before and I don’t speak Russian so I wasn’t sure if I was buying the right ingredients so you don’t have to eat it if you don’t want to.”

“I’m sure it will taste fine.” Viktor said, smiling at Yuuri and Yuuri felt the last dregs of tension drain out of him. “When will it be ready do you think?”
Glancing down at his phone Yuuri quickly took note of the time, counting back the minutes in his head.

“About now probably.” he answered, hoping he had worked out the timings right. “Are you hungry?”

“Starving. I always am after a day of training.”

Yuuri laughed a little at that, knowing the feeling. The intense amount of physical strain a day of training put on his body always made his food cravings unbearable by the end of the day and he had been hoping Viktor wanted to eat sooner rather than later.

Quickly they grabbed the necessary bowls and cutlery from the kitchen cupboards and Yuuri brought the pot over to the table, setting it down in the centre. Viktor ladled the liquid into the two bowls and passed one over to Yuuri before using his spoon to scoop up a mouthful of his own. Yuuri watched him warily, waiting for his reaction.

“вкусно!” Viktor exclaimed after he had swallowed the first mouthful, his eyes lighting up. “Yuuri, this is delicious.”

Yuuri smiled back at him, relieved and took a mouthful of his own food. The taste was strange, very different to anything he was used to, but not unpleasant. It would never compare to the food from home that he loved so well but it was no hardship to eat it.

The presence of the meal broke the some of the tension that had existed between them before and Yuuri found that the evening passed surprisingly quickly. Strangely, it didn’t feel as unnatural as he had thought it would to sit again with Viktor over a meal, talking about menial details of their day and comparing opinions about the other skaters competing in the Rostelecom Cup in the next few days. Viktor had been competing for much longer than Yuuri and he knew a lot of the older skaters better, including his rink-mate Georgi who would be competing against Yuuri soon, some of his stories making Yuuri laugh harder than he had in years. In return Yuuri shared a few of his own stories about his times training with Phichit, although he couldn’t offer much more than that. Despite how many years he had been competing he had never really connected with another skater in the same way, had never been able to figure out how best to interact with them. Winning was exhilarating but it was also lonely.

After the meal was over they cleared up together in a comfortable silence and Yuuri marvelled how strange it was, that someone like Viktor and someone like him could fall into such an easy routine. Could temporarily put aside the past for a little pocket of time to co-inhabit the tiny world of the apartment together.

When that task was done Viktor moved over to the single couch, flopping down at one end while Yuuri hovered awkwardly. There was only one couch in the apartment which Viktor was occupying and even though there was plenty space to sit at the other end he didn’t want to get in the way.

“Do you have anything you want to do this evening?” Viktor asked and Yuuri shook his head.

“Don’t let me interrupt your routine.” he replied. This was Viktor’s home after all, he must have a standard day, things he did regularly after training to relax. Yuuri really shouldn’t still be here and he didn’t want to disrupt Viktor’s life too much with his extended presence. “What do you normally do?”

Viktor shrugged, looking away. “Nothing much. Training during the day. Then I usually just come back here and relax. Read, watch TV. Sometimes I go out drinking.”
It sounded peaceful, but also a little lonely. Feeling awkward hovering around Viktor’s shoulder Yuuri instead opted to brave the other end of the couch, perching on it delicately and trying not to take up too much space. Viktor shuffled across to the far side, giving Yuuri plenty of room.

“Please just do whatever you normally would then.” Yuuri added, not wanting Viktor to think he was being demanding as well as overstaying his welcome. Another day had come and gone and he still hadn’t looked for another place to stay even though he knew he would be able to find one by now. For some reason it just kept slipping his mind and he found that he could ignore it more and more easily as time went on. Even though he knew it was rude to still be here despite Viktor’s offer being for a single night, Viktor hadn’t actively protested yet and Yuuri hoped that he would continue not to.

Viktor looked at him for a second, assessing his sincerity but after a few moments he turned away, reaching over and grabbed the TV remote, flicking it on and filling the apartment with the sound of chattering Russian.

“Do you want to watch something in English?” he asked Yuuri but Yuuri shook his head, not wanting to disrupt Viktor’s evening routine any further. He rarely had time to watch anything on TV anyway and he didn’t mind. Instead he pulled out his phone, browsing through a couple of news articles absentmindedly before switching to social media.

It was a rare occasion that he ever posted anything, although Phichit did frequently and Yuuri had become something of an easter egg in his pictures, always somewhere in the fore or background. Phichit had once stated that most of Yuuri’s fans stalked his various accounts obsessively to catch a glimpse of Yuuri since he never posted his own photos although Yuuri didn’t really believe him.

Viktor was another skater who tended to be very active on social media and it seemed that he had uploaded a couple of pictures in the last few days, mostly photos from his training rink with a variety of other Russian skaters, with Georgi, a red-headed female skater Yuuri recognised from the Woman’s Singles and a scowling blond teenager as the most noticeable. Thankfully he didn’t seem to have posted anything that even suggested who was currently sharing his house. It wasn’t something Yuuri ever wanted publicised or something that he could explain away easily to the press if they found out and he had been very careful to make sure no-one followed him on his travels to and from the rink. It seemed like Viktor was just as willing to keep it as secret as him.

After a while of scrolling through his various accounts Yuuri found himself growing bored. His focus gradually began to drift over to the television, where some kind of Russian soap opera seemed to be playing if the dramatic speeches and heartfelt declarations of love were anything to go by.

Viktor was watching absentmindedly, looking as tired by the day as Yuuri felt. His feet were bare and stretched out in front of him and from the sight Yuuri could tell Viktor hadn’t been lying about having a hard day of training. The skin of his feet was covered in the tell-tale bruising and redness that came from long hours of skating, the strain of practice leaving it’s mark vividly. Stretching his own legs out a little to relieve the cramps he regarded his own feet, the patterns of bruising and raw skin a strange match to Viktor’s own after his own long day.

Once settled in a more comfortable position Yuuri turned his mind back to the screen, although he couldn’t understand a word of what was being said. After a few minutes he began to get the gist of the storyline but the language barrier was still a problem.

From across the other end of the couch Viktor seemed to notice that Yuuri had begun to pay more attention to the screen and he began translating quietly, speaking a couple of seconds behind the actors on the screen as he relayed their words into English. It wasn’t loud enough to disrupt the flow of the programme but it was clear enough for Yuuri to finally understand exactly what was being
said. He looked over at Viktor worriedly, hoping that it wasn’t a bother to the other man but Viktor seemed not to mind and continued to translate, matching the actors on the screen.

They continued on that way for a little while, both watching the screen with Viktor’s voice a low buzz in the background. It wasn’t a particularly thrilling or inspired show, similar to some of the bad American dramas that Phichit had sometimes made Yuuri sit through back in Detroit, but the peace of the moment was nice, the opportunity to relax after a tiring day and let himself be distracted by something mundane rather than worrying about what the future would bring or contemplating just how strange of a situation it really was.

After a while of watching Yuuri turned his attention back to Viktor regarding him carefully, watching the way the light from the screen threw strange patterns across his face. Viktor was still sitting far away, as far away as it was possible to get without leaving the couch completely. Ever since Yuuri had arrived he had been doing the same thing, sleeping out of arm’s reach pressed to the edge of the bed, keeping his distance from Yuuri carefully and Yuuri couldn’t understand it.

Regardless of what he had thought the first night he had arrived, Viktor didn’t seem to be interested in making a move on him. Their first stilted conversation about sleeping arrangements had revealed that actually sleeping with Yuuri wasn’t Viktor’s intention. That night Yuuri had been grateful, wanting nothing more than to sleep after an exhausting day of travelling. But now he was long recovered from his jet lag and yet still Viktor had shown no interest in him. Instead he had carefully kept space between them and it was beginning to frustrate Yuuri.

Maybe Viktor had grown bored with him. Yuuri knew that he was hardly anything special in the looks department and his lack of experience probably meant that Viktor could find better company elsewhere. But Yuuri had thought, after Viktor had asked him to stay the night at the last World Championships, that maybe this was their new routine now, that maybe he could have Viktor for more than just a handful of times in his life.

But that had been months ago and Viktor had had plenty of time to find someone better. If he wanted Yuuri then surely he would have said something, done something by now to let Yuuri know instead of keeping such careful, respectful space between them.

For a few minutes Yuuri debated, wondering if maybe he should try and make the first move. Wondering if he should reach for Viktor, crawl across the couch and climb into his lap and pray that Viktor hadn’t decided he didn’t want Yuuri in that way anymore. But he was a guest in Viktor’s house and already he was well past his due date to leave. Doing anything that Viktor would potentially dislike was a bad idea because then Viktor might finally decide to ask Yuuri to find somewhere else to stay and Yuuri didn’t want that. For reasons he couldn’t explain he had come to look forward to coming back here at the end of the day. To the apartment and Makkachin. To Viktor. If Viktor didn’t want him then he wasn’t going to risk losing that for desire.

He would just have to wait, to see if Viktor was going to come to him instead. If he did then Yuuri would follow gladly. And if he didn’t then Yuuri would just have to be content with what he had. It was more than he ever expected after all.
The next morning, Yuuri was panicking.

This time, it wasn’t nerves for the competition that had him on edge, it was something much worse. Over the past couple of days he had been checking in with the airport, making sure his lost bag was going to arrive on time for his short program the next day. It seemed the bag had been left in Detroit and the airline had promised that they would fly it out as soon as they could. With that promise in mind Yuuri had essentially ignored the problem but it all came roaring back with a vengeance when he woke up on the morning before the short program to a message on his phone notifying him that there had been a problem locating his bag and that it would be another two days before it could be transferred to Moscow.

The new knowledge lay like a lead weight in Yuuri’s gut. While the bag would arrive in time for the free skate his short program costume was still half a world away and he had nothing to replace it with. Apart from the loose practice clothes he always wore in the lead up to the competition, he had nothing suitable to skate in and there was no way he would be able to impress the judges without anything to catch their eye. He would look ridiculous compared to the other skaters without a costume and Yuuri didn’t know what to do.

He was so distracted all morning that even Viktor noticed. The other skater had told him that, due to the Cup starting the next day, Yakov was focusing purely on the skaters competing and Viktor had been given the day off. After noticing Yuuri’s inability to focus he suggested that Yuuri take the day off too and Yuuri agreed without a moment’s thought. He was too nervous, too upset and he would get nothing productive done if he went to train that day. If anything he would fail his routine due to his lack of focus and that would only throw him more.

Without training to occupy him Yuuri was at a bit of a loss but after a morning filled with fretting, Viktor suggested that he take Makkachin on a walk to calm his nerves. Gratefully, Yuuri agreed, knowing that having a clear goal in mind would help take his mind off his worries. He was a little surprised when Viktor made as if to join him on the walk but he pushed the thought down before he could vocalise it. Makkachin was Viktor’s dog after all, of course Viktor would want to come with them, to keep an eye on his pet.

Since he had no familiarity with the city Yuuri allowed Makkachin to lead the way again and Viktor seemed content to follow them both, making casual comments about things they saw as they passed. Yuuri had always thought that Moscow was a beautiful city but it seemed even more so that day, with the snow almost completely melted and leaving the hustle and bustle of city life in its wake. Moscow was a very different place to Hasetsu or Detroit but Yuuri found that he liked it all the same. It might be different to what he was used to but that didn’t detract from the beauty and Viktor’s running commentary was a welcome distraction.

After a few hours Viktor began to take more of a leading roll, steering Yuuri towards some of the more scenic areas of the city and showing him a good stall where they both stopped for food. On their wanderings Yuuri would often stop to admire a particular statue or building and Viktor seemed willing to indulge him, Makkachin sniffing around happily by their feet.

Once, Yuuri was caught off guard to hear the electronic sound of a phone camera clicking next to him as he was admiring a particularly interesting monument. The area around them was filled with tourists and for a moment Yuuri thought that it was one of them who had taken the photo. But when he turned round he saw Viktor with his phone out, the camera pointed at Yuuri.

“I thought you might like some tourist photos.” Viktor explained, shrugging casually. “You were admiring the city but you hadn’t taken any pictures.”
Startled, Yuuri realised he was right. It was a rare occasion that Yuuri ever took a photo of himself but he was in a foreign city and sightseeing for want of a better word. It would make sense to take photos as reminders of his visit and it was thoughtful of Viktor to think of it for him.

“Anyway.” Viktor continued, still looking at where Yuuri was standing surrounded by the city, with Makkachin panting happily beside his legs. “It’s important to take photos of things you want to remember.”

After hours of wandering the city, Makkachin eventually began to tire and Yuuri suggested that they head back to the apartment. Spending a day ignoring his worries had been nice but the reality of his situation was slowly creeping back in and he knew that he would have to deal with it eventually.

However, once they arrived back at the door of the apartment he was stopped short by what was waiting there. A large stack of boxes was piled neatly by the door, all bearing the same logo and wrapped securely. Yuuri had no idea what Viktor had ordered that filled up the entire hallway like that but then again, it wasn’t like Viktor had any reason to tell him anything.

At Yuuri’s surprise, Viktor reached out to touch one of the boxes, checking the label and hastening to explain.

“When you told me your costumes had been lost I wasn’t sure if they would be returned to you in time.” he told Yuuri, looking slightly guilty. “I had some of my old things shipped over from St Petersburg in case they didn’t so you still had something to wear at the competition tomorrow.”

Yuuri stopped short at the words, a sudden feeling of warmth creeping into his chest and climbing up his throat, cutting off his words. It was an incredibly thoughtful gesture and not one he ever could have expected or anticipated. Viktor had no reason or need to help Yuuri out. Yuuri had never asked and yet he had done it anyway, for seemingly no other reason than to be kind. Yuuri would be surprised, if he wasn’t already overcome with gratitude.

“Thank you.” he choked out, hearing the slight crack in his voice. “Viktor, thank you so much.”

“Your suitcase hasn’t arrive then yet?” Viktor asked and Yuuri shook his head in response. “Then you’d better help me get these inside so that you can chose something to wear.”
After they had hauled the boxes inside the apartment Viktor left Yuuri alone, leaving to sort out food for that night and letting Yuuri search through the numerous boxes himself. Viktor might have said that he had only had some of his old costumes shipped over but when Yuuri began delving into the boxes it looked like he had had everything sent right from his very first competitive season.

Yuuri recognised all of them. Most of the costumes he had seen in person, had skated on the same ice as Viktor when he had been wearing them. Some he remembered more vividly than others. One red shirt in particular he had to stuff back into the mess of boxes with a blush, knowing that he would never be able to wear it on the ice without certain vivid memories resurfacing from the depths of his mind. Other costumes were less familiar, from Viktor’s early days in the senior division when Yuuri had been staunchly determined to not pay attention to him, not to care about him ever again.

Each costume was beautiful, unique and perfectly tailored to the image Viktor had been trying to portray. Yuuri’s previous costumes were hardly boring but they seemed dull in comparison. Viktor’s taste in clothes was far more extravagant than his and Viktor tended to favour the colours that Yuuri avoided, bright, eye-catching things that made him pale in comparison.

Yuuri could hardly imagine wearing any of them for real, despite the fact that he knew he would have to for the short programs the next day. And more than that, although he and Viktor were both fit and lean with athlete’s figures, Viktor’s shoulders were broader than Yuuri’s and he had several inches on him in height. Anything from his more recent years would look ridiculous on Yuuri, ill-fitting and laughable.

Instead Yuuri delved back deeper, finally finding a box full of fabric that pulled at some of his most distant memories. Costumes from Viktor’s junior days, when Yuuri had still worshiped him like an idol and loved him beyond anything else. Viktor in his youth had been smaller, more slender and feminine and his figure was a much closer match to how Yuuri looked now. For a few minutes Yuuri dug through the clothes, briefly considering a white mesh costume adorned with sequins that he remembered seeing many years ago but discarding it quickly as too garish. He needed something simpler, something more to his style.

Moving the white garment out of the way Yuuri’s fingers stilled as they touched smooth black fabric, still in perfect condition even after so many years of being shut away. The texture was rich and soft under his fingers and he pulled the costume free of the box, laying it out in front of him so that he could look at it fully.

Of all of the costumes that Viktor had worn over the years, this was the one that he remembered best. This costume, made of black fabric and mesh with a scattering of crystals up on side and a flash of red in a single section that flared out like one half of a skirt.

It was the costume that had stared down at Yuuri almost every night of his life, for so many years, almost as long as he could remember. The costume Viktor had worn on the poster that had adorned the walls of Yuuri’s room, as a motivation, as a reminder. The costume that he had watched Viktor skate in when he was just a child and he had thought Viktor Nikiforov was the most amazing person in the world. Viktor’s costume when he had broken Yuuri’s heart all those years ago and sent them both hurtling down the path that had ended here, now. The costume Yuuri had been picturing himself wearing one night long ago in a deserted Russian ice rink when he had been skating a half forgotten routine, buried deep in his distant memory, the only thing he could think of that had brought him peace.

There were so many memories associated with that one innocuous item, almost too many, and Yuuri almost felt overwhelmed by them. But he knew that out of everything he had seen that day that there really was no choice. This was the costume he would have to wear. Viktor had been woven into the
very fabric of his life for so long now and it felt right somehow, a strange sort of symmetry, as though the world was having one final laugh at the two of them.

Yuuri didn’t bother looking at any of the other costumes. He had already made his decision.

That night, when Viktor was lying fast asleep an arm’s length away from him, Yuuri studied the other man, traced the lines of the pale face with his eyes the way he wanted to with his fingers and thought back on what new revelations the last few days had brought.

There had been a Viktor Nikiforov in Yuuri’s head for years, whispering poison into his ears. Memories burned into his mind that replayed in his head on loop no matter how long it had been, memories that never faded, never lost their sting. For so long, Yuuri had known exactly what kind of a person Viktor was. Had known him and hated him and wanted to beat him with a fervour that had driven him though years, through hardships, through everything.

But the Viktor that lived in Yuuri’s head, the spiteful, callous creature that had crushed a child’s dreams so casually, suddenly seemed so different to the man lying in front of Yuuri now, face relaxed and peaceful and bathed in pale moonlight. The man who had offered Yuuri a place to stay without a second thought just because he had heard that Yuuri might be in need. The man who had gone to so much trouble to make sure Yuuri had a costume to skate in even though he had no obligation or reason to. The man who smiled and laughed and made Yuuri smile and laugh and feel things that he had never felt before.

Viktor was beautiful, lying there before him, but more than that Viktor was kind. Not kind with any expectation of reward or compensation but kind for the sake of being kind.

Viktor had broken Yuuri’s heart when Yuuri was just a child but Viktor had been a child as well. They had both been children and just as Yuuri was so far from the boy that he had once been, maybe Viktor had changed too. Life had moulded them both throughout the years and neither of them would ever be the same again.

Maybe the Viktor that had existed in Yuuri’s head for so many years wasn’t the real Viktor anymore.

Despite all his preparation and all his practice, at the short program the next day Yuuri still felt vastly
underprepared. He had his skates and now finally he had a costume but throughout all the practices in the days beforehand, he still hadn’t figure out exactly how he was going to actually skate the routine.

Celestino had told him to seduce the audience, to play up his sexuality in his skating but Yuuri had no idea how to do that. Had no idea how to seduce a crowd, let alone the judges who would decide whether his performance warranted a place in the final or if he would be sent home empty handed.

Viktor had already qualified for the final. Yuuri would never be able to face him if he failed now, before they had even faced off against each other on the ice for another season. After this competition was over he would have to leave Russia and Viktor and if he didn’t qualify for the final it could be months before they saw each other again.

They had parted ways that morning at Viktor’s apartment out of necessity. Yuuri had headed straight over to the arena for the early morning practice and Viktor had gone to meet Yakov and the other Russian skaters. Technically Viktor shouldn’t have been allowed to come and watch the competition at all as he wasn’t an official competitor but there was no-one on earth who would deny Viktor Nikiforov access to a skating rink.

All throughout the other skater’s performances, Yuuri ran over his routine in his mind, going over the jumps and the step sequence again and again until he could visualise it perfectly. But something was missing. The routine felt mechanical, devoid of all the emotion that characterised Yuuri’s skating and that had brought him so far. In the back of his mind Yuuri could feel the doubt growing, the nagging fear that this would be the year it all fell apart, that this would be the year that he failed for good.

If Yuuri wanted to win, first he would have to work out what seduction meant to him.

Although Yuuri had never admitted it, he had precious little experience when it came to anything even remotely similar. The only person he had ever slept with, ever done anything remotely sexual with, was Viktor.

Viktor, who hadn’t touched him ever since he came to Russia. Viktor, who had shown no interest in touching him, of being even close to him besides the forced proximity they shared by the necessity of co-inhabiting the same small space together. Viktor who had been keeping his distance.

It had been a long time since their last night, their last real night together. When against all Yuuri’s expectations, against everything that he had come to believe as the truth, Viktor had asked him to stay. Had allowed Yuuri to drag the moments they were together out for just a little while longer, allowed him to hold the memory of that night close and the hazy dream of light touches on his skin and a voice singing into the night.

The time they spent together was never meant to last. Yuuri had always know it even if he had begun to try and drag the moments out for as long as he could, hold onto them even as they began to trickle away. But he had hoped that he would be able to have Viktor in the way he had grown accustomed to for a little while longer at least. And after spending so much time around him in the last few days he was desperate for more, desperate to have Viktor again, have Viktor close, in the way he now always seemed to crave.

Yuuri had had it before. Somehow, against all odd and against all reason, he had been able to capture Viktor fully, all his need, all his desire, all his passion. Had captured it and held it for a moment, for a night. And then he had done it again, and again and he had kept coming back for more, over and over, and Viktor had let him, had wanted him. In those few moments, those few nights, for just a second, he had been the centre of Viktor’s world.
Yuuri didn’t know how to seduce and audience. He didn’t know how to seduce the judges. But suddenly he found that he did know what seduction meant to him.

Other people could have Viktor, could know him in the way that Yuuri did because Viktor was Viktor and he was too large, he burned too brightly for Yuuri to ever be able to hold on to forever. But Yuuri knew that he had the ability to capture Viktor’s attention, however briefly. To capture Viktor’s attention and hold it for as long as he could. He could make sure the man’s eyes were fixed on him and only him.

He had seduced Viktor before and he could do it again. Could make Viktor want him again. That was what Yuuri knew, what he understood. He would skate his routine to seduce Viktor, for Viktor, so that he could try and have Viktor again in the way that he had lost.

For the last few minutes Yuuri had alone before his skate he planned it, pictured it in his mind, brought forth the emotions and desires that he needed to make the routine what it needed to be. And when he stepped out onto the ice the picture was still clear in his mind and for the first time since he had begun skating the routine so many months ago he felt ready.

Yuuri glided out into the centre of the rink and as he did so he glanced around the stadium, eyes flickering across the faces of the crowd. For a minute he couldn’t see what he was looking for and he worried that Viktor wasn’t there, that he wasn’t watching. But a flash of silver caught his eye as he turned to take up his starting position and there Viktor was, standing at the side of the rink next to Yakov and Georgi, watching Yuuri out on the ice.

‘Skate like you’re trying to seduce the audience.’ Celestino had told him but Yuuri knew better. ‘Skate like you’re trying to seduce Viktor. Make him want you. Make it so that he can’t take his eyes off you. Seduce him with your skating so that you can have him again.’

Music rang around the arena, the sound of strings filling the air and Yuuri started his routine, letting the notes flow through him. There was a slight hesitation, a slight pause in the sound and Yuuri used it to turn to where he knew Viktor was standing, to catch his eye from across the rink and hold the gaze.

“Watch me.” he tried to say, tried to convey with his eyes and body alone. “Watch me and don’t look away.”

From so far across the rink, Yuuri couldn’t see if Viktor had seen him but he hoped. The music continued and Yuuri let it carry him away, let the provocative tone guide his movements and the memories fill him as he skated. Memories of Viktor’s eyes on him, of hands roaming across skin and kisses that took his breath away. Memories of stolen moments in the night, when nothing besides the two of them mattered and Yuuri had Viktor’s attention fixed on him and only him. When their bodies were pressed close and Yuuri could bask in the heat and the pleasure and the feeling of having Viktor again.

Yuuri let the memories rule his movements, let them flow through his body and into the story he was weaving. He was the seducer, he had enthralled Viktor before and he could do it again. Could allow himself to become temptation with every turn of his body, every twist of his skates because he was skating for one person and one person alone and he needed them to watch, to watch and never want to stop.

Maybe Viktor didn’t want him anymore. Maybe he had decided that what had existed between them was over, that it was time to stop. But if he didn’t, if he wanted Yuuri again and had been holding back for some other reason then Yuuri wasn’t willing to let it end. Viktor knew the language of skating just as well as Yuuri did and he would be able to read the message in the routine as clearly as
if Yuuri shouted it from the rooftops.

“You’ve had this before and you can have it again.” Yuuri tried to say. So much between him and Viktor was complicated but this was simple, the one constant that existed between them that he knew and understood in a way that he didn’t anything else.

“You only have to want me. You only have to ask.”

During the long hours of practice leading up to the competition Yuuri had struggled with the routine, had been unable to skate it with the passion required, unable to create a story to enthral the judges and the audience. But this time felt different, this time felt wonderful. This time he could skate the routine as though it were part of him and he almost never wanted it to end, never wanted to lose the feeling of being powerful and enrapturing and knowing that out there, somewhere, Viktor was watching.

But no matter how much he wished otherwise the routine had to end and all too soon the final crescendo of the music rang out across the stadium bringing with it the final spin, Yuuri ending the routine with his arms wrapped around himself, panting for breath as the exhaustion finally hit him.

The crowd exploded into cheers all around him, roaring their approval and tossing down tokens of their appreciation onto the ice but Yuuri had eyes for only one man. Without his glasses he couldn’t see Viktor’s face, couldn’t see the expression that would give away what he must have felt inside. But Yuuri could see Viktor’s outline, the way his body was turned to face Yuuri, looking out onto the ice.

Viktor had watched him. Viktor had seen. And most importantly, Viktor hadn’t looked away.

meshkol  @ meshkol · 10m
Yuuri Katsuki was HOT DAMN out on the ice today #RostelecomCup

jahloveangel  @ jahloveangel · 9m
Idk why Yuuri Katsuki changed his costume for his SP performance in the Rostelecom Cup but I am NOT complaining! #RostelecomCup #lookinggood

Erik  @ erikashinigamichan · 8m
Yuuri Katsuki could step on me in his ice skates and I’d probably thank him for it #RostelecomCup #damnboy #thatshortprogramthough
Redmau @ redmau · 8m

I am still not over Katsuki’s short program and I don’t think I ever will be #RostelecomCup

Vkings @ vkings · 7m

Katsuki Yuuri’s new short program costume today looked very familiar. I wonder where we’ve all seen it before… o.O instagram.com/p/Man6FoALPHN/ #RostelecomCup #youthoughtwewouldntnotice #butwedid

Crimson @ crimsonrebel · 6m

@vkings OMG NO WAY

Viktuuri @ history-maker-viktuuri · 6m

@vkings I KNEW I RECOGNISED THAT COSTUME FROM SOMEWHERE BEFORE!!!!

Sulfuric Animus @ sulfuric-animus · 5m

I can’t believe Katsuki Yuuri just skated his SP in one of Viktor Nikiforov’s old costumes I am dying what does this mean?????? #RostelecomCup #viktuuri

Wanderer @ thatwandercat · 5m

All right everyone calm down, there is an actual explanation for Katsuki’s costume change and it’s way more boring than you all think. nbcSports.to/8iaPRI #RostelecomCup

Supreme Kohai @ supreme-kohai · 4m

That moment when all the shippers freak out over something stupid and ignore the actual rational explanation for it #RostelecomCup #Nicetryguys

Noir @ leblacknoir · 3m

Just to clarify for everyone who is wondering about the whole Katsuki/Nikiforov costume thing the official story is that Katsuki’s luggage got lost… 1/3

Noir @ leblacknoir · 2m
…on the trip to Russia and he was forced to temporarily borrow a spare costume from Nikiforov who was in Moscow at the time with his coach and rinkmates…2/3

Noir @ leblacknoir · 2m

…so really it’s nowhere near as interesting as everyone is making it out to be. And yes, there is actual evidence to back this story up…ttp://ipt.it/8jKp8Bzaq 3/3

Reese @reese996 · 1m

I know there is an actual explanation for Katsuki’s costume change and that it is all completely innocent but now I can’t help but wonder… #RostelecomCup

It took a long time for Yuuri to make it back to the apartment that night.

There was a lot to do after the short programs were over, reporters to talk to, photographs to be taken, the mess of official statements he had to make in preparation for the free skate the following day. After he had left the ice Yuuri had been swamped by a mass of people and he hadn’t even gotten the chance to see Viktor, let alone talk to him. The other man had disappeared after Yuuri had finished his routine with Yakov and hadn’t reappeared since which Yuuri knew was for the best. Speaking to Viktor in public would reveal more than he ever wanted to to the viciously critical eyes of the press and the world and Viktor knew it too. Better they kept their distance where people could see to maintain the illusion.

No-one knew that he was staying with Viktor and Yuuri intended to keep it that way. The world had no idea what existed between them outside the casual speculative gossip that existed around all the skaters and for both their sakes it was better if it stayed that way.

Many of the reporters who interviewed him after his performance were curious about his costume change. Most had noticed that he was wearing something very different to what he had performed his routine in during the national championships and the more eagle-eyed among them recognised where the costume had come from. Despite it being years ago that Viktor had worn the very same thing, he had done it while breaking a junior world record and that wasn’t a moment many fans of the sport readily forgot.

All Yuuri could do was answer the questions truthfully. That there had been a problem with lost baggage and Viktor, who had been staying in Moscow at the time with his coach, had stepped in at the last minute to provide Yuuri with a temporary alternative until his own costumes could be retrieved. It wasn’t a lie and a quick check with the airport would verify his story to even the most gossip-mongering reporter.
Yuuri had picked up a message on his phone soon after the short programs were over from the airport notifying him that his lost luggage was en route and would be available to be collected the next morning, just in time for the free skate. He confirmed with the reporters that yes, he would be wearing his original costume for the free skate the next day, that no, he wouldn’t be keeping Viktor’s costume for the rest of the season as it had simply been a temporary replacement and no, there was no significance to the choice other than it was one of the few available things that fitted him adequately.

The majority of the reporters seemed to accept the answers readily and Yuuri escaped them mainly unscathed. But even then it was hours before he was finally able to make it back to the apartment, made even harder by the fact that he had to be sure no-one saw where he was going as he made his way back.

Yuuri punched the code into the door and walked up the stairs slowly to the front door. As usual it was left unlocked which he was grateful for. After staying so far over his welcome there was a possibility that Viktor would ask him to finally leave at any time. The offer to stay had been for a night after all rather than almost a week but it seemed that Viktor was allowing him to indulge for a little while longer.

When Yuuri walked through the door the first thing that greeted him was a flying ball of fur that he caught with a laugh. It seemed that Makkachin had been waiting for him and the dog licked his face enthusiastically in greeting. Yuuri crouched down to ruffle his ears fondly and Makkachin barked in excitement, wagging his tail happily.

“You came in first today.” A voice spoke from above him and Yuuri looked up to see Viktor standing a couple of feet away, watching the two of them intently.

“Yes?” he replied, unsure whether Viktor was asking him a question or not. Surely the other man had seen the score table at the end of the day? Unless he had left early of course.

“Your skating was…” Viktor trailed off, taking a half step towards Yuuri before halting again and Yuuri waited, still not sure what Viktor was trying to say. After seeing Viktor watching him he had been sure that he had gotten his message across, that Viktor would understand what he wanted. But Viktor was still standing with a few feet of space separating them and he didn’t make another move to come closer.

Viktor was watching him intently, his gaze searching and there was a spark of something in his eyes, a look that seemed so familiar and yet new at the same time. One of Viktor’s hands was clenched at his side, the tendons in the knuckles standing out white against his skin but he still didn’t move. He just stood there, as if waiting for something, the end of his sentence still hanging in the air between them.

Maybe Yuuri had been right all along. There was no way Viktor could have missed the intent of his routine but there was still the distinct possibility that Viktor had decided not to take Yuuri up on the offer, to end the strange thing between them that was still so ill-defined and yet precious to Yuuri all the same. Maybe Viktor had decided that it was finally time to stop.

Viktor had made no move on Yuuri since he had arrived and he still wasn’t now, when Yuuri had made his intent so clear. If Viktor wanted it to be over then Yuuri would have to accept, would have to let him go. But until Viktor told him, until he said the words out loud, then Yuuri could still hope that he was wrong, that Viktor was holding back for some other reason, some reason he himself didn’t understand but that made sense to Viktor all the same.

Yuuri stood up slowly, Makkachin’s warm weight still pressed against his leg for support. He had a
choice and he would have to make it now or never. If he did nothing, if he let the moment pass he would protect himself but he would lose the chance to ever have Viktor again. If he made the first move, made what he wanted so explicitly clear that no-one could mistake it then he would risk Viktor rejecting his advances, with all the pain and humiliation that came with it. But Viktor was still watching him and Yuuri was sure that if Viktor didn’t want him he would have said by now and if Yuuri did nothing he would have already lost. A least if he tried, no matter what happened, he would know for sure.

Hesitantly, Yuuri crossed the final few feet of space that was separating them. As soon as he moved Viktor stepped forward as well, meeting him in the middle in a couple of strides. As soon as they were standing close enough Yuuri reached out, giving Viktor the chance to back away as he reached up a hand to cup Viktor’s cheek, to bring their faces closer together.

“Yuuri.” Viktor breathed and Yuuri stretched up, closing the last few centimetres between them and pressing his lips gently to Viktor’s, holding the contact for just a few seconds before pulling back to see how Viktor would react.

Viktor let out a breath, his eyes fluttering closed as he sighed in what sounded almost like relief. And then suddenly his hands were in Yuuri’s hair and Yuuri felt himself being dragged back into the kiss, Viktor’s lips hot against his and his fingers tightening, holding him close. Yuuri melted into the kiss, feeling the joy flood through him. For a moment he had wondered if Viktor was going to refuse, that the careful physical distance between them the past few days had been a lack of interest but from the way Viktor was kissing him he had been very wrong about that.

Viktor kissed hard and fast, like he couldn’t get enough of the feeling. Like he had been holding back and was finally allowing himself to let go which was a ridiculous thought because Yuuri had always been willing and surely Viktor knew that?

Yuuri kissed back, digging his fingers into Viktor’s shoulders and letting his eyes fall closed, letting the sensations carry him away. This was what he had been missing, what he had been craving for so long, what he couldn’t live without. Spending so much time with Viktor, so close and yet still so incomplete had been agony. Being near Viktor, being with Viktor the way he had these past few days had been more than Yuuri had ever expected but it still wasn’t enough. Wasn’t enough to simply be a guest in his house, to be close but not close enough. He needed this too, needed to feel Viktor, needed to know that Viktor wanted him, no matter how brief an amount of time that feeling would last.

Deepening the kiss, Viktor drew them even closer together, the weight of him pressing Yuuri backwards until he felt his back hit the wall behind him. Viktor kept kissing him and Yuuri found he had to stretch up a little to reach. Their heights weren’t dramatically different but Viktor still stood slightly taller than him and in their current positions Yuuri found that he was having to raise himself up to meet Viktor’s desperate kisses, the heels of his feet leaving the floor slightly and leaving him balancing on his toes.

Viktor’s hands moved from his hair, running down the sides of his neck and across his shoulders, still not breaking the kiss. He was pressing Yuuri back into the wall almost painfully and Yuuri reached a hand to the back of Viktor’s neck, trying to pull him down so that their heights were at a more equal level.

Instead of bending down Viktor grabbed the backs of Yuuri’s thighs and lifted him, Yuuri jumping up and wrapping his legs around Viktor’s waist on instinct to keep himself from overbalancing. In their new position their faces were level, giving both of them better access, and Yuuri found that Viktor was supporting almost his entire weight, pressing him back into the wall with Yuuri’s legs still
wrapped tight around Viktor’s waist, keeping them together.

Yuuri had had no idea Viktor was able to do that but he was far from complaining. He had been wanting this for so long and now that it was finally here he couldn’t seem to get enough. He wanted Viktor to keep kissing him, to keep touching him, for the moment never to end.

Viktor didn’t seem to be feeling the strain from supporting Yuuri’s weight, his years of athletic training making it seem almost easy. But the pace of his kissing was changing, more frantic, more demanding. From the way he was acting it was almost like Yuuri was the one who had kept him waiting rather than the other way around.

Yuuri would have been quite happy to let Viktor continue, would let the other man fuck him up against the wall if that was what Viktor wanted. But he also knew that if he let that happen then this would all be over too soon and he couldn’t let that happen, didn’t want to let that happen.

“Viktor.” he gasped instead, pulling away from the kiss for just enough time to get words out. “Bedroom.”

Viktor pulled back slightly, allowing Yuuri to unwind his legs and drop back lightly to the floor, still pressed close together. Grabbing hold of Viktor’s hand, Yuuri pulled him towards the room, Viktor following willingly. When they were inside Viktor broke their contact temporarily, turning around to swing the door shut and click the lock into place.

“Makkachin.” he elaborated at Yuuri’s look of confusion and Yuuri almost laughed because while he hadn’t thought of it himself it was true that no matter how much he had grown to love Viktor’s dog he did not want to have Makkchin present in the room while he and Viktor…

Viktor’s hands found his face again and brought him back into another kiss, more gentle this time but just as deep and true. Slowly Viktor backed Yuuri towards the bed, pulling him down so that they were both sitting on the edge of the mattress, still kissing. The angle was slightly awkward and Yuuri kicked off his shoes and climbed fully onto the bed, Viktor following suit a second later.

Moving so that he was sitting close to Viktor, kneeling on the bed with one of his legs on either side of Viktor’s thighs Yuuri reinitiated the kiss revelling in the feeling of Viktor, of their bodies being pressed close together. Pulling Yuuri with him Viktor lent backwards, moving from a sitting position to lying fully down so that he was stretched out on the bed with Yuuri still kneeling over him, never breaking the kiss.

The change in position gave Yuuri even better access and he took full advantage of it, moving his hands from where they had been resting against Viktor’s neck to slid down his chest, unbuttoning Viktor’s shirt swiftly as he did so.

Every time this happened, every time Yuuri touched Viktor and let Viktor touch him in return, Yuuri was always aware that it could be the last time. Now more than ever. Every time it happened he desired even more for it to keep happening, for it to never end. But at any moment, Viktor could choose to end it, could decide that it was finally over and Yuuri had always known that there was no way for him to hold onto Viktor forever. That was why he measured their time together in moments because it was easier that way.

But being with Viktor, spending so much time with him had only made the feeling worse, would only make it harder when eventually Viktor walked away. Yuuri had seen a new side to Viktor in the time they had spent together, had seen a part of him that was sweet and caring and Yuuri didn’t want him to leave. Yuuri had slotted into Viktor’s life so easily here but he knew that when he left he would be gone just as easily, with no trace left behind that he had ever been there at all. Viktor
would keep on living his life with Makkachin and his skating and his little apartment hidden from the rest of the world and Yuuri would never have this again. He wanted to leave something that would stay, a memory that wouldn’t fade from Viktor’s mind the way their first meeting had, lost to the masses.

When they had met, Yuuri had been one fan of many, seen and so easily forgotten while the memory for Yuuri had been burned into his mind forever. And now, Viktor had so much choice, so many people who could and would happily take Yuuri’s place in an instant and Yuuri didn’t want them to. He wanted Viktor to remember him, wanted to make him feel good and keep part of Yuuri with him even after everything else was gone.

Yuuri kissed his way down the exposed skin of Viktor’s chest as he finished with the last few buttons, lower and lower until his face was level with the deep V of Viktor’s hips, breath ghosting over the skin there.

For a fraction of a second Yuuri hesitated, not sure if he should continue. Viktor was his first, his only, and everything Yuuri had learned he had learned from him. During every other encounter he had either let Viktor take the lead or had used their previous times as guidance. But they had never done this before and even though he knew the theory, the reality was something very different. He didn’t know if he could make it good for Viktor or if he would be a disappointment.

Trying not to think too hard Yuuri reached down, releasing the button on Viktor’s trousers and sliding the zipper open. Before he went any further he glanced up, wanting to make sure Viktor would allow him to do this, to make sure that Viktor wanted it.

Viktor had moved slightly from his previous position, propping himself up on his elbows, shirt still hanging loosely around his shoulder, face flushed and open.

“Youuri.” he started, his voice cracking and Yuuri hesitated, wanting to make sure.

“You don’t have to.” Viktor told him, but Yuuri could see the lust in his eyes, the way his pupils were blown wide at the sight of Yuuri kneeling before him.

“I want to.” Yuuri replied and he could see the way Viktor swallowed at the words, his lips parting slightly and a small hitch in his breathing. “Can I?”

“Yes.” There was no hesitation in Viktor’s words. “Anything.”

Yuuri quickly finished unfastening Viktor’s trousers and Viktor lifted his hips, allowing Yuuri to pull them off along with his boxers and discard them on the floor beside the bed. That task complete he moved back to kneel between Viktor’s legs, letting his breath ghost over Viktor’s cock. He wished he had some idea of what to do first, some prior knowledge of what Viktor was expecting but he had nothing. He would just have to do what felt right.

Hesitantly he pressed a kiss to the tip and heard Viktor gasp in response. Encouraged he went further, licking up the underside of Viktor’s cock and sucking the head into his mouth, the unfamiliar salty taste feeling strange on his tongue. From somewhere above him Viktor swore loudly in Russian in response and Yuuri dipped his head further down, drawing Viktor in deeper and pulling back, swirling his tongue over the head of Viktor’s cock again and trying to avoid catching his teeth on skin.

It seemed that his inexperience wasn’t working against him if the noises Viktor made was anything to go by and Yuuri kept going, taking Viktor deeper and deep each time until he was forced to stop when the head of Viktor’s cock hit the back of his throat, making him choke a little. Instead of trying
to take Viktor in fully and choking again Yuuri wrapped his hand around the base of Viktor’s cock, stroking the skin and trying to time to movements to the pace of his mouth.

Viktor whined in response and Yuuri felt the vibrations through the bed as his arms gave out, moving from sitting half propped up to lying back fully, breath hitching in his chest as Yuuri pushed him closer and closer to the edge.

Encouraged by the response Yuuri kept going, pulling back a little to vary his movements, licking and sucking at Viktor’s cock, pulling back almost fully to tease the head with his tongue before sinking back down as far as he could go, keeping up the pace his of hand and hearing Viktor moan in response.

After a few minutes Yuuri pulled off fully for a second, trying to catch his breath. His jaw was aching and he could feel saliva sliding from the corners of his mouth but he could live off the noises that Viktor was making, could bask in the feeling for hours and he didn’t want to stop.

“Yuuri.” Viktor’s voice made him pause and he glanced up to see the other man staring back at him, eyes wide, his irises thin slits of blue surrounding dark circles of black. Viktor looked absolutely wrecked, his hair a mess, face flushed and breath heaving in his chest. He was so so beautiful and Yuuri never wanted to look away.

“Yuuri. If you want this…to last…you’ll have to…stop.” Viktor spoke in pants and Yuuri could see the tension in his figure, the way he was strung tight and the slight quiver in his muscles as he held himself back. “You’re…I can’t…”

He trailed off and Yuuri almost went back to his task, wanting to keep making Viktor feel good, to keep him looking like he did, sounding like he did, to keep going until Viktor fell apart under him. But the reality of Viktor’s words stopped him and he hesitated, not wanting it to be over, not now, not yet.

Instead he crawled back up the bed until he was kneeling over Viktor again and Viktor rose up to meet him, hand lacing through Yuuri’s hair and guiding his head down so that their lips met again.

Yuuri’s eyes fell closed during the kiss but they fluttered back open again at the sound of Viktor’s voice, the other man pulling back a little and cupping Yuuri’s face in his hands, holding him gently in place.

“God, Yuuri.” Viktor whispered, hands warm on Yuuri’s cheek and eyes fixed on his face. “You don’t know what you do to me.”

That wasn’t true, Yuuri knew exactly what he did to Viktor. He could challenge him on the ice and could rile him up off of it. Could hold Viktor’s attention when they were together like this, could make Viktor fall apart if he allowed himself to be lost in return. He had been doing it for years, stealing Viktor for moments, having him for the fractions of time that he could.

Instead of answering Yuuri kissed Viktor again, pressing all his want and desire into Viktor’s skin. Viktor’s hands roamed over his neck and shoulders until they came to rest on the small of his back. Pushing up slightly against Yuuri’s mouth Viktor sat up again, so that their faces were level. He shrugged his unbuttoned shirt off his shoulders and tossed it carelessly aside before pulling at Yuuri’s own shirt. Yuuri obliged eagerly, raising his arms so that Viktor could pull the fabric over his head and discard it to join his own on the floor.

He was still kneeling with his legs on either side of Viktor’s thighs and now he was almost sitting in Viktor’s lap. He squirmed a little at the closeness, wanting more, wanting to ask but not knowing
“What do you want Yuuri?” Viktor asked him, as if he could read Yuuri’s mind and knew exactly what Yuuri had been thinking.

“I want you.” Yuuri replied without even thinking about the words because they came so naturally, so easily. “I want you inside me.” he added and Viktor let out a choked little sound at the statement.

“I want to feel you.” Yuuri’s brain supplied although he didn’t say the words out loud. “I want you to feel me. I want you to feel me so that you remember me forever.”

For a few seconds Viktor just stared at him, eyes burning into Yuuri, no longer ice but fire and Yuuri glanced away, feeling the blush creep up his skin.”

“Do you have…” he started to ask, hoping that Viktor would understand what he meant without him having to finish the words.

“Yes.” Viktor looked a little dazed as he stuttered out the word but he moved all the same, sliding out from under Yuuri and rolling quickly across the bed to the bedside drawer to grab some of the items inside. The wrapped condom he tossed to the side, close enough to reach but out of the way for the moment. The small bottle of lube he brought back over to Yuuri who was still kneeling in the centre of the bed, waiting for him.

“Do you want to?” Viktor motioned to the bottle. “Or do you want me?”

“You.” Yuuri told him and Viktor didn’t protest, just drew him back into a kiss, his hands straying down to the button of Yuuri’s trousers and sliding it open, helping Yuuri wriggle out of the offending item and discarding it along with his underwear.

Viktor pulled Yuuri closer so that he was kneeling opposite Viktor on the bed, almost chest to chest. Viktor dropped back down from his kneeling position, stretching his legs out between Yuuri’s knees and drawing Yuuri closer so that his legs were bracketing Viktor’s hips. With one hand Viktor stroked Yuuri’s cheek, drawing his face down into another kiss and with the other he flipped the lid of the little bottle, squirting a generous amount of the liquid onto his fingers.

With a gentle hand he reached around behind Yuuri, one of his fingers circling Yuuri’s entrance for a few seconds before pushing slowly inside. Yuuri felt his toes curl at the sensation, could feel the little gasp that escaped his lips. Viktor swallowed the sound eagerly, his thumb rubbing a soothing trail across Yuuri’s cheek.

“If you need me to stop, let me know.” he told Yuuri and Yuuri bit back a laugh because Viktor stopping was the last thing he wanted, the last thing he would ever want.

Viktor moved agonisingly slowly, working Yuuri open gently until he was gasping and panting for more. Finally Viktor added another finger and Yuuri dug his fingers into the muscle of Viktor’s shoulder, feeling his nails bite into the soft skin. Viktor didn’t seem to mind, in fact he just kissed Yuuri harder and after a couple of seconds added another finger. It felt wonderful but it wasn’t enough, not even when Viktor added a fourth finger, Yuuri moaning at the sensation. He wanted more and he couldn’t wait any longer.

Out on the ice he was confident, confident in a way he rarely was anywhere else but he summoned back a little of that feeling now, pulled back on the persona he had worn that day when he was trying to seduce Viktor, when he was trying to make Viktor watch him and only him.

Reaching over with one hand he grabbed the condom where it had been discarded on the bed and
ripped the foil open with his teeth, his other hand still occupied with holding onto Viktor. Viktor’s fingers stilled their movements and Yuuri almost whined at the loss. As quickly as he could he slid the condom out of the wrapper, pinching the tip and, with a nod of consent from the other man rolling it down onto Viktor’s length, hoping that he had done it right.

Viktor’s breath hitched a little at the feeling of Yuuri’s hand brushing his skin and Yuuri used his distraction to push him backwards until Viktor was lying flat on the bed again with Yuuri hovering over him. Viktor’s fingers had slid out of him completely at the change in position and instead his hands had moved to Yuuri’s hips, clasping them lightly.

“Can I?” Yuuri asked, not quite able to form full sentences and Viktor choked out a “yes” in response, fingers tightening and digging into Yuuri skin.

Yuuri could feel Viktor cock below him and he lined himself up with the hard heat, sinking down slowly and letting out a little sigh of pleasure as it filled him completely. His eyes fluttered shut as he did so and once he was fully seated he had to pause for a few moments, to adjust to the new and overwhelming sensation. After a few seconds he opened his eyes again and saw Viktor gazing up at him, eyes alight.

The shine of the moonlight was falling through the uncovered window and the glow illuminated Viktor where he lay, turning his skin alabaster pale and making his hair shimmer silver, like the most precious of metals. It was a view Yuuri would remember, a view he would treasure. Soon he would have to leave, leave Russia, leave Viktor. Locked away in this apartment they had been caught up in their own little world, where nothing and no-one else mattered but there was a world outside that demanded to be let in, a call of duty that Yuuri would have to follow when it came for him. The last few days with Viktor had been a beautiful fantasy, a brief glimpse into a world that he would never have but he could leave part of himself behind, could leave Viktor with a memory of him here, in this apartment, in this bed, together, even when Yuuri was gone.

Yuuri knew he couldn’t have Viktor forever. Someone like Yuuri would never be able to hold onto someone like Viktor. Viktor who was beautiful and successful and could have the whole world if only he asked. Yuuri could never compete with that, could never hold Viktor down. But he didn’t need to, didn’t expect to, he never had. He had Viktor here. He had Viktor now. That fact, this moment, that was what mattered.

Yuuri moved, raising himself up and sliding back down, changing the angle slightly so that he sank even deeper and Viktor let out a choked little moan at the sensation, beads of sweat starting to form across his forehead and sticking his hair to his face. Without thinking Yuuri ran his hand through the silver locks, pushing them back from Viktor’s face and stilling in his movements to stare down at the other man.

“Youuri please.” Viktor choked out and the words made a selfish little part of Yuuri crow in delight, that he could have Viktor Nikiforov begging for him, that Viktor had him in a way that no-one else ever did.

Wanting nothing more than to oblige to Viktor’s request Yuuri moved again, bracing his hands on Viktor’s shoulder and pressing the other man back into the mattress, rolling his hips and setting a pace that quickly had them both gasping and panting. Yuuri want to reach down and touch himself, to satisfy the need that was building within him but he knew that if he did it would be over far too soon and he never wanted it to end.

In the end he didn’t have to because Viktor did it for him, grasping Yuuri’s cock in a shaking grip and working it in time to Yuuri’s rocking movements, using his free hand to drag Yuuri down into a biting kiss, raising himself to meet him halfway. The sensation was too good and too much and
Yuuri broke the kiss, burying his face into Viktor’s shoulder and allowing it to carry him away, sinking back down onto Viktor one last time as the pleasure rolled through him, leaving him gasping and breathless.

Viktor pushed himself up so that Yuuri was fully sitting in his lap, resting bonelessly on his shoulder, still breathing in harsh pants as he came down from the high.

Viktor’s face was pressed into his hair and Yuuri felt gentle hands slide around his face, lifting it from Viktor’s shoulder until they were facing each other again. Viktor pressed their foreheads together, so close that their breaths were mingling and kept moving, dragging Yuuri’s pleasure out until he felt wrung out and spent and Viktor was coming with a bitten off moan, capturing Yuuri’s mouth in a final burning kiss.

For a few minutes Yuuri stayed like that, pressed close and holding onto Viktor, not wanting to break the moment. But in the end his thighs began to burn from the strain of holding one position for too long and he swung himself off Viktor reluctantly, still staying close. Viktor pressed a final kiss to his shoulder and moved away, sliding off the condom and tying it off, slipping out of the bed and walking the few short steps to the bin in the corner of the room to toss it away.

As he did so Yuuri watched him, admiring the striking figure that Viktor made, naked and perfect, the muscles in his back rippling and flexing as he moved. After his task was done Viktor turned back around and suddenly Yuuri felt self-conscious, aware of his own body lying completely exposed and how Viktor was gazing at him as though he were drinking the sight in, committing it to memory.

Instead of turning away Yuuri chose to hide himself beneath the covers of the bed instead and Viktor joined him a few seconds later. In all their nights previously they had both kept their distance, sticking carefully to the separate ends of the bed but this time Viktor moved in close, tugging Yuuri gently until he was half lying on Viktor again, his head pressed into the smooth skin of Viktor’s shoulder.

Viktor’s chest rose and fell beneath his ear and Yuuri could hear the faint thud of Viktor’s heartbeat in the silence, the rhythmic noise slow and content. The sound was peaceful and he almost let it lull him into sleep before a sudden thought stopped him and he startled, half sitting up and causing Viktor to move with him, looking at Yuuri in concern.

“What’s wrong?” Viktor asked and Yuuri looked around quickly, eyes finally landing on the pile of discarded clothes that were scattered across the floor.

“My phone.” he clarified, wishing he didn’t have to move but knowing he had to. “I need to set an alarm for tomorrow morning. It’s the free skate.”

Much as he wished that he could drag the moment out for longer, could lie in bed with Viktor for hours, he knew that he couldn’t. There was a real world waiting just outside the door and Yuuri had to face it.

“Do you have to?” Viktor asked and Yuuri snorted a laugh at how petulant the other man sounded. In Viktor’s defence, being woken up by Yuuri’s phone alarm at whatever ungodly hour he would have to set it to in order to pick up his suitcase from the airport before the early practice didn’t sound like a particularly appealing idea but Yuuri couldn’t afford to sleep in, not for anything. He still had a competition to win after all and if he wanted to make it into the final, if he wanted to see Viktor again, he couldn’t risk that.

“Yes.” he replied, sliding out of the bed and grabbing his phone out of the pocket of his trousers, unlocking it quickly and flicking on the alarm for the next morning. Task complete he slid back into
the bed, snuggling back down into the warmth of the covers and Viktor’s skin.

“If I miss the free skate I’ll be disqualified and I’m not going to let that happen. I’m still going to get to the final and beat you.” Almost to his own surprise Yuuri found that the words came out playful, not a threat but a challenge, a light-hearted teasing in a way he never had before. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily.”

“Ah Yuuri.” Viktor replied and his voice was soft and strangely, there was a hint of melancholy in his tone that seemed out of place to Yuuri’s ears. “I would never want to.”

The next day Yuuri found himself standing at the top of the podium once again, a bouquet of flowers in his arms and a gold medal strung around his neck. A gold in the Rostelecom Cup, while not a guarantee of a place in the final, was a significant step towards the final goal and he was proud of himself and filled with a happiness that made his chest fit to burst.

Out in the crowds Viktor was watching, standing with Yakov and watching the podium where Georgi was also standing, holding up his bronze medal for the cameras. Officially Viktor was there to support his rink-mate but Yuuri had been watching him every moment since he climbed the podium and Viktor’s eyes had never once flickered to the other Russian skater, had never once strayed from Yuuri.

Yuuri wondered what Viktor was thinking, watching him ascend the podium again, one step closer to the final and the rink where they would skate against each other for the title. Soon Yuuri would have to leave Russia to carry on to the rest of the Grand Prix series to secure his place in the last event and Viktor would go back to St Petersburg to perfect his final skates.

They had met here in a strange sort of no-man’s land, not as competitors for once but as something entirely different. But the next time they would see each other it would be across a skating rink, rivals once again, both vying for the same gold medal. Skating was in both of their blood and neither of them would ever give up the ice, nor the sound of the cheering crowd and the cold metal around their necks. It wasn’t who they were, it never would be.

They would always be as they were, always opposed, always competing. Always chasing the gold.

But for the moment Yuuri stood on the podium with Viktor watching him and he couldn’t help the smile that broke out across his face, the smile that was directed at one man and one man alone.

And the best part was that Viktor smiled back.
They are making progress! Obviously not everything is solved (I mean, Yuri P hasn’t shown up yet, you know there’s still shit to go down!) but they are making progress. But Yuuri damn, you need to finally tell Viktor about how you first met, it’s time man, he needs to know!

Also, if anyone was wondering about that little extract about Yuuri calling Mari about Vicchan, that was my excuse as to why Vicchan isn’t going to die in this fic. It's my headcanon that he was hit by a car and so here because Yuuri asked Mari to keep Vicchan on a lead, he never dies.

Also, there have been some people who have been commenting on previous chapters saying stuff like ‘I don’t know if you’ll ever read this’ or ‘sorry for bothering you with a comment.’ My friends, my dudes, I LIVE for comments! You are never going to bother me with a comment. I have tried to answer all the comments on chapter 10 and I think I’ve gotten all of them. If I have missed your comment out I promise that it isn’t deliberate.

As a side note on where Yuuri is in this chapter, in ep4, during the ending scene he states, ‘I don’t know how long Viktor will stick around… so please god, give me Viktor’s time, if only just for now.’ That’s quite an accurate representation of where he is at the moment in the fic. He doesn’t think he can have Viktor forever so he is making himself content with the time that he has.

Also there has been more fanart of this fic drawn since last chapter and I just need to say I am so incredibly grateful to the artists because having fanart drawn of my fic is the best thing ever and it makes me so incredibly emotional!

Vikings drew a beautiful picture of the final scene of chapter ten
[link]
Theneverendingpurplesky drew an absolutely hilarious parody based on the Hark! A Vagrant comics
[link]
Mega-truong drew an amazing picture of the end of chapter 10
[link]
Linni-t drew a wonderful picture of Viktor in his FS costume from chapter 6
[link]
Leblacknoir drew an awesome series of pictures of little Yuuri based on chapter 1
[link]
Tosquinha drew a comic based on the podium scene of chapter 8 that had me in tears of laughter
[link]
Meganpaigeart drew a stunning picture of the end events of chapter 10
[link]
Xuue drew an gorgeous picture of the encounter in the hallway from chapter 9
[link]
Bakurama drew me an excellent picture of what they hope may be future events in the fic ;)
[link]
Emvisc drew an adorable picture of Viktor from the podium scene in chapter 8
[link]
And finally ursora drew a brilliant picture of Viktor and Yuuri
Rreese996 has also made a fanmix for this fic that can be found here.

Finally, this fic is currently being translated into Spanish! It can be found on Ao3 here. FF.net here. And Wattpad here.

Link to my tumblr

See you soon!

Rey xx

p.s for anyone who follows me on tumblr and is involved in the usernames lottery, thank you so much for your contribution and I hope you get lucky!

Translations:
Солнышко – a Russian term of endearment, a diminutive and affectionate form of the word for sun.
Вкусно – delicious

Songs Used:
Yuuri’s SP – Eros from the YOI soundtrack
When Yuuri arrived in Sochi for the Grand Prix final, it was with an overwhelming sense of relief.

Not only was he tried from travelling but he found that he had missed Russia in the few weeks that had been away. After he had left Moscow he had travelled back to Detroit briefly before flying out to Japan for the NHK Trophy. During the competition he had done well, it was always nice to be skating back on home soil and the fervent support of the crowds in his home country was always a confidence boost, but there had been something lacking in his short program performance. He couldn’t quite bring it back to what it had been at the Rostelecom Cup although he scores were still easily good enough to boost him into the final.

During his arrival in Sochi it was snowing which made Yuuri smile a little. The frozen white flakes falling in swirls around him reminded him of Moscow, of what had driven him to take Viktor’s offer of shelter out of desperation and what had come after. It had been strange once he’d left, rolling over in his bed and reaching out only to find no-one there. The absence was keenly felt even though Yuuri knew it was irrational. He had only been there for a week after all, not nearly enough time for actions to become habits. But somehow it felt familiar, being with Viktor and Makkachin in their little apartment together, cut off from the rest of the world.

A lot had happened in the few weeks since he had last been in Russia however, making the time apart seem even greater, the most significant of which had been his twenty-third birthday. The date had fallen only slightly after the NHK Trophy and while usually Yuuri would have flown out straight after the competition was over to resume his training in Detroit for the final, this year he had stayed a little while longer. His family had all come to watch him perform along with Minako, Yuko, Takeshi and the triplets and they had all stayed to celebrate with him.

Yuuri had left Japan for Detroit nearly eight years ago and he had tried so hard not to look back. There was nothing that could make him regret his decision to move to further his career and all that it had brought him but even after so long, he still missed his family desperately. His parents and Mari had been out to visit him a few times but there was the onsen to run and Yuuri’s schedule to work around and the times he had seen his family in person since he had left at fifteen could be counted on one hand. The same went for his friends, they had visited him too but they had their own lives and their own responsibilities and it kept them apart just as surely as the ocean between them. Yuuri still called religiously once a week as he had done every week since he had left home for the first and last time but it just wasn’t the same.

Competing in Japan made it much easier for them all to come and see him and Yuuri had been ecstatic when Mari had told him they were all coming to watch during the NHK Trophy. Due to the looming competition he didn’t have much of a chance to spend time with them before his short program but he had seen them in the crowds, seen the waving banner bearing his name in childish script courtesy of the triplets, could imagine he could hear their cheers above the general roaring of the masses. Afterwards he had been greeted with enthusiastic hugs and praise and cheers, especially from the triplets, whom he had been able to sneak backstage for a quick sneak peek at the skaters-only area where some of the other competitors were still milling around.

Keeping to her word, Yuko had raised her children just as she had promised, with a love of figure skating in their hearts that Yuuri recognised vividly from his own memories. It was their first international competition to watch in person as they had been too young before and Yuuri had been
too far away. All three had been in awe of everything, practically vibrating with excitement and Yuuri had been determined to make their experience as memorable as possible, even if he did get a few bewildered looks from the other skaters when they saw him herding three gawping children surreptitiously past.

After the competition was over they all stayed in the city for a little while longer as Yuuri’s birthday dawned. Somehow it didn’t feel any different, being officially another year older. He had never made a big deal out of his birthday before but it was nice to spend the time with his family, to celebrate with them the way he had missed for so many years.

The best part about his family coming to visit however was Vicchan. Seeing his beloved companion again after so long apart was overwhelming and Yuuri spent as much time with him as possible, spoiling him rotten. Being around Makkachin had reminded him just how much he missed having a dog around and seeing Vicchan again was wonderful. He was still just as loyal and affectionate as he had always been and Yuuri was sure that he and Makkachin would get on brilliantly. Leaving Vicchan when he left for Detroit had been one of the hardest things in Yuuri’s life. They used to be inseparable and it seemed like time hadn’t worn down any of that feeling when they were reunited again.

Shortly after he finished the competition Viktor had texted him, congratulating him on his medal. Yuuri had sent a polite thank you back and then, on impulse, followed it with a picture of Vicchan and a caption. After all, he had mentioned Vicchan to Viktor and it seemed only fair that after getting to spend so much time with Makkachin that Yuuri reciprocated. After a few seconds Viktor had replied with a message that consisted mainly of heart eyes and dog emojis and Yuuri nearly laughed out loud at the endearingly immature response. But he appreciated it all the same. The message was followed shortly by a picture of Makkachin looking adorably mournful with the sentence ‘Makkachin misses you’ accompanying it and Yuuri felt his chest warm at the picture, and the thought behind it.

That had been their only real contact since he had left Moscow however and therein lay part of the reason, the main part if he was being honest with himself, that Yuuri was relieved to return back to Russia. It was hardly a long time since he had last been here, had last seen Viktor. Barely a few weeks. But for some reason those few weeks had seemed to stretch on into eternity.

It was ridiculous and irrational. Yuuri was used to going months without seeing Viktor, they barely met more than twice a year. But somehow it suddenly didn’t seem like enough anymore. After spending so long in Viktor’s presence the absence became far more pronounced than it had ever been before and even after a few weeks Yuuri found that he was looking forward to the Grand Prix Final much more than was usual. He was looking forward to skating, yes. But he was also looking forward to seeing Viktor again.

Once they arrived he and Celestino went straight to the hotel, heading off to different floors as Celestino had decided to get his own room for a change. A few minutes later Yuuri received a text from his coach telling him that Celestino needed to go out and make some arrangements and he wouldn’t be back until late. Yuuri sent a message of acknowledgment, confirming that he would see his coach tomorrow and then sat down on his bed, a little at a loss. It was early evening so far too late to go to the rink to practice but also too early to sleep if he wanted to reset his body clock onto Russian time.

For a while he flicked absentmindedly through his phone, not really paying attention but a buzz and a ping from the device quickly caught his attention and he clicked on the message alert as soon as he read the name of the sender, recognising it immediately.
Viktor Nikiforov

I heard your plane had landed. Are you at the hotel yet?

‘Yes’, Yuuri typed out quickly, hitting send as soon as the message was complete. After a few seconds his phone pinged again.

Viktor Nikiforov

A few of the skaters are meeting up for dinner and drinks tonight before the short tomorrow. Will you come?

For a few long minutes, Yuuri hesitated. Usually he would decline any invitation to social events with other skaters, even when Phichit begged. The thought of spending time awkwardly trying to socialise with skaters who he knew must resent him for his continued place on the podium make him want to retreat into bed and hide. He had never been a particularly social butterfly and while he could make pleasant small talk with the others during the competition this was different. It had always seemed callous to attend the skater’s celebrations after the competitions were over, as though he were celebrating his victory over them and in even in pre-event meet-ups like this he still felt uncomfortable. He always felt like he was just being invited for politeness sake, that none of the other skaters would really want him there.

But this was Viktor asking. Viktor who had won more medals than even Yuuri, who was figure skating’s living legend. If he was there then surely there could be no harm in Yuuri joining too, the other skaters couldn’t resent him if they also wanted Viktor with them. It couldn’t be awkward if Viktor was there.

And more than that, it was Viktor who had asked him. Viktor who he hadn’t seen in weeks, Viktor who he couldn’t get out of his mind. Usually he didn’t see the other skater until the short programs started but he was impatient and there was no reason to turn down a perfectly good invitation if Viktor had asked him to come. Hopefully the other man being there would take the eyes off Yuuri and with that thought in mind Yuuri sent back a quick confirmation text. Viktor replied with a smiling emoji a few seconds later and then under that, a time and an address which turned out to be a restaurant a few minutes’ walk from the hotel when Yuuri checked it on his phone.

In the half an hour he had before the meal began Yuuri quickly showered and changed his clothes, slicking his hair back and discarding his glasses. Privately he mourned for the loss of his vision for the evening but he knew that he looked much better without them, looked more like the confident persona he put on on the ice rather than who he really was, anxious and with the nerves already churning in his gut.

As soon as he was ready he left his hotel room, noting the time and realising he would be slightly late. Hurriedly he walked out of the hotel and down the street to the restaurant, shivering a little in the cold. Once he got to the tall building he could immediately spot the table of skaters, seated in a private corner of the room and talking animatedly together. For a brief second Yuuri hesitated but eventually the cold drove him inside and he slipped into the warmth of the building gratefully.
A gust of frigid air accompanied his entrance and a few of the patrons near the door shivered. From across the room Viktor looked up at the draft and his face lit up when his gaze locked onto Yuuri.

“Yuuri!” he called enthusiastically over the general hubbub of the restaurant and waved, signalling for Yuuri to come closer. With a feeling of trepidation Yuuri did so, having serious second thoughts about his decision to come. The other skaters had all turned around at Viktor’s call and were looking at him with varying degrees of surprise. Although maybe that wasn’t so strange after all, Yuuri was notoriously elusive from almost all social events, they must all be wondering why he was there this time, when he never had been before.

Yuuri recognised all of them, four of the five male skaters he would be facing the next day in the final including Viktor. There was only one significant absence, a young Canadian skater who Yuuri vaguely remembered seeing competing in the series, although never against him. Briefly he wondered at the missing skater but quickly dismissed the thought. As far as the rumours he had heard went, the Canadian was rather brash and loud and it was entirely possible he was missing on purpose.

All the skaters at the table were still looking at Yuuri with polite expressions of surprise, the only exception being Christophe, who was instead gazing at Yuuri intently, face impassive. The gaze was piercing and it made Yuuri uncomfortable. He had no idea what the older skater was looking for and so he took his seat quickly, slipping into the empty chair next to Viktor and trying not to let his discomfort show. He and Chris had never been close but the other skater had grown on Yuuri over the years and they were on at least friendly terms. But despite that Yuuri couldn’t puzzle out the look that Chris was giving him, nor read any of the man’s thoughts in the gaze.

As if recognising the thoughts running through Yuuri’s mind Chris broke the eye contact, face morphing from assessing into the light-hearted, cocky expression he wore so well.

“How was your flight?” he greeted. “We were just about to order. Are you familiar with eating Russian?”

Chris raised his eyebrows and Yuuri shook his head. Aside from his short foray into Russian cuisine when he had been staying with Viktor he wasn’t particularly accustomed to the food and from what he could see the menus were all written in Cyrillic which was unreadable to his eyes.

“Oh well, I guess Viktor can just order for you.” Chris added with a shrug. “I’m sure he’ll give you something that you like.”

On the assumption that none of the others at the table spoke a word of Russian, Yuuri guessed that Viktor was probably doing the same for everyone and so he agreed without hesitation. Better to let Viktor chose something than risking it by picking a random item off the menu. They had lived together for a week after all, he probably had a good handle on the kind of thing Yuuri liked to eat by now.

At Chris’ statement Viktor shot a quick glare at his friend, so brief that Yuuri almost missed it, before smiling at Yuuri and waving a waiter over.

The two exchanged rapid fire Russian, the words flitting between them too fast for Yuuri to be able to catch more than just the general shape of the sounds and it wasn’t long before the waiter was leaving again, order taken.

Finally, Viktor turned back to the table, twisting a little in his chair so that he was facing Yuuri head on.

“How was your flight?” he asked brightly and Yuuri shrugged a little, making a non-committal
sound. He loved visiting new countries but he was not a fan of the actual travel.

Around them the other skaters began to pick up their threads of conversation that had been dropped on Yuuri’s arrival. Most of the words spoken were in English but Chris said something in flowing French, his gaze directed at Viktor and Viktor replied in the same language, turning his attention temporarily away from Yuuri. Unable to follow the conversation, Yuuri instead turned to the skater sitting next to him, an Italian called Michele who Yuuri had competed against a handful of times. He was younger that Yuuri but only by a few years.

“I heard both you and your sister are here at the final this year. Congratulations.” Yuuri tried, grasping for the first topic of conversation he could think of. The Crispino siblings were a relatively well known duo and it had been well publicised that they would be attending the Grand Prix Final together.

“You must be very proud.” he added when there was no response from the other skater, internally wincing and wondering if he had said something wrong. This was why he didn’t come to events like this, he just didn’t know how to talk to his competitors.

“Yes. I’m very proud of my sister.” Michele finally replied, looking suspiciously at Yuuri, although Yuuri was clueless as to why. Thankfully Viktor chose that moment to finish his brief exchange with Chris and turned back to Yuuri with a smile.

“I saw your performance at the NHK Trophy.” he started and Chris turned his head slightly to listen in too. “The crowd there was quite something.”

“Uh, yes.” Yuuri blushed a little. The crowd in his home country had been very enthusiastic, almost overly so, and there had been some rather interesting banners and posters displayed among the crowd during his short program. The thought of Viktor seeing them made him want to slide under the table in embarrassment but a part of him was secretly please that Viktor had watched him, even when he wasn’t physically present. Yuuri watched all of Viktor’s performances when they were apart of course but it was nice to know Viktor seemed to do the same.

“It was nice being back home for a while.” he added.

“Do you ever miss it?” Viktor asked, looking at him curiously. “Japan, I mean.”

“Yes, sometimes.” Yuuri shrugged a little. It had been a long time since he had last lived in Japan and even though it was still home for him he was used to his life in Detroit, with Phichit and Celestino and the skating club. He had always assumed that one day he would return back to his country permanently but he hadn’t given it any serious thought, just the vague notion that someday he would go home. “But I’ll never regret giving it up for skating.”

It was funny, how Viktor had inadvertently caused the situation he was questioning Yuuri about now. Yuuri had been so unsure about the move to Detroit, so scared to leave behind everything he knew for a distant shot at the gold. And then Viktor had come barging back into his life with his hurtful words and given Yuuri the push he needed to make the move, to take a leap of faith to better chase his goal. It had been a good decision, he had improved so much under the tutelage of Celestino and he wouldn’t have given up meeting Phichit for the world. But it had been a decision that Viktor had unknowingly influenced. It was strange, just how much Viktor had changed his life.

After that, the conversation flowed freely, increasing in animation and volume as more alcohol was consumed. Most of the skaters refrained from drinking too excessively due to the looming performance the next day but they all finished the meals with light flushes to their faces. In contrast Yuuri staunchly refused every drink that was offered his way, remembering all too vividly the
mortification of Chris’ stories of the Olympics and the drunken antics that he still couldn’t remember. Better to stay away from it altogether.

It was nice, to be able to talk so freely to the other skaters. Usually Yuuri would have found it awkward and daunting and while there were certainly still moments, he gradually found himself relaxing into the conversation and starting to genuinely enjoy the evening. And Viktor was always there to act as a buffer, to pick up the conversation when Yuuri didn’t know how and to divert attention away from him when he needed a moment to himself and Yuuri was grateful to him for that.

Even though he spent time talking to the other skaters, Yuuri found that the majority of his attention was focused on Viktor. They spoke lightly throughout the evening, casual conversation about inane topics, whatever came into their heads. Surprisingly, Viktor was very easy to talk to, something Yuuri had learned when he had been living with him, and he was never short of something to say to keep the conversation flowing.

Throughout the whole evening however, Yuuri was very aware of Chris, of the way the other skater seemed to be watching him. Watching him and Viktor. Occasionally he would chip into the conversation but mainly he stayed uncharacteristically silent, simply observing. There was nothing malicious in his gaze, just watchful, but it still unnerved Yuuri slightly.

After a couple of hours it began to get late, the dark of the night fully settling over the city. All of the skaters needed to rise early the next day and many like Yuuri were still battling the curse of jetlag and so they mutually decided to call it a night and head off back to the hotel. Once they reached the building they split off into two groups, Michele and Cao taking one of the two small elevators and Chris and Viktor stepping into the other. Yuuri joined Viktor in his, noting that the button for the floor he was staying on had already been pressed.

There was silence in the elevator as the doors slid closed and it rose. Yuuri stifled a yawn, the combined effects of the jetlag and the long day creeping up on him. After a few seconds there was a ding and the doors slid open again onto the first floor. Only Chris stepped out, walking into the corridor before throwing a parting glance over his shoulder.

“Sleep well.” Chris tossed back at the two of them before the doors slid shut again and carried him and Viktor away. Once Chris was gone Yuuri allowed himself to yawn properly, running a hand across his eyes to try and banish some of the tiredness. When he looked up Viktor was looking at him with a soft light in his eyes.

“You look like you could use a good night’s sleep.” he commented and Yuuri nodded, not willing to admit that he probably wouldn’t sleep well at all. He never did before a competition, not when the nerves were so high, no matter what relaxation techniques he had been taught.

“If you were tired you could have left early.” Viktor added as the elevator dinged for a second time and the doors slid open onto their floor. “No-one would have minded if you needed to sleep.”

“No, I’m glad I stayed.” Yuuri told him and they walked down the corridor, stopping when they approached the door of his room. “It was…fun.”

Strangely, found that he was being completely honest. Never before had he thought that he would enjoy events like the one he had just attended but this time he had and he was glad that he had gone, that Viktor had invited him. So much of his skating career had been spent in isolation and it was nice to step away from that for a little while. He had Viktor to thank for that.

Digging into his pocket he drew out the keycard for his room before turning back to Viktor again.
“Good luck in the short program tomorrow.” he told Viktor with a smile and the other man grinned back, eyes lighting up.

“You too Yuuri.” Viktor replied but instead of being reassuring Yuuri suddenly found that he was nervous again. The pleasant evening had mostly distracted him from the thought of the final tomorrow but the reminder made the ever-present worries return, worries that he would mess up, would be a disappointment.

“Are you alright?” Viktor asked, his expression morphing into concern at the look that must have flashed across Yuuri’s face at the thought.

“I’m fine.” Yuuri said automatically. It was second nature by now to assure others that he was ok. He was always like this before a big competition, it was nothing new and nothing he wanted anyone to worry about. “I’m just thinking about skating tomorrow, that’s all.”

Viktor let out a little noise of understanding. “Just skate the way that you can honestly say you liked the best.” Viktor advised, eyes fixed on Yuuri. “And nothing will ever be able to hold you down.”

Despite everything, Yuuri relaxed at the words. It was good advice and he smiled up and Viktor, knowing the other man could read the thanks in his eyes. For a second he considered inviting Viktor back into his room but he was tired and he knew Viktor was too. They both had a big day tomorrow and they both needed to at least attempt to sleep. And after all, it was only the beginning. The competition would stretch over a few days, they still had time.

“Goodnight Yuuri.” Viktor said after a few seconds of comfortable silence and turned to walk back down the corridor.

“Goodnight Viktor.” Yuuri called after him and Viktor half turned around, shooting him one last smile as Yuuri unlocked the door to his room and slipped inside. After the door clicked shut Yuuri got ready for bed quickly, running through his nightly routine and sliding under the covers as soon as he was able. The nerves were still there, they always were and nothing would ever make them fully go away. But he turned Viktor’s words over and over again in his mind as he lay in the dark, thinking about the next day.

Yuuri had spent so much of his life skating to beat Viktor. But gradually that had changed and now, skating the way he liked the best sounded like a much better option.

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During the short program the next day, Yuuri kept the words in the forefront of his mind. During the intervening weeks between the Rostelecom Cup and the Final he had upped the difficulty of his routine, pushing all of the jumps into the second half and adding in an extra quad for points. Most skaters altered their routines as the competition progressed, aiming to peak at the final and Yuuri was no different.

When he skated, the routine felt better too, more similar to how it was at the Rostelecom Cup rather
than how it had become at the NHK Trophy. He didn’t have the same costume anymore which he missed more than he would admit but he knew again that somewhere out there while he skated, Viktor would be watching.

Every move in his skate was about passion, the music and the movements alluring with every step and Yuuri found it almost easy to dig down and bring that feeling up again. It wasn’t the same desperate seduction he had pulled off in Moscow when he had been doing everything he could to make Viktor want him again but it was a seduction all the same. Somehow, somewhere, throughout their time together, making Viktor want him had become what seduction meant to Yuuri. He didn’t quite know when or how it had happened but it had and it was Viktor that he saw in his mind’s eye when he skated. The world watched him but it was only Viktor’s eyes that he cared about. They were here, together again even if it was only for a little while and that was what mattered.

After he had finished his program and left the kiss and cry with a high score secured, Yuuri and Celestino climbed the stands to find a place to sit to watch the final short program. Technically Yuuri probably should have gone to talk to the reporters that were always hounding him during a competition but he had wanted to come and watch Viktor skate. It was so rare that he got to see it in person, even when they were competing against each other, and he didn’t want to miss it.

Years and years ago, back when Yuuri had been young he had fallen in love. He had fallen in love with Viktor’s skating from the very first moment he saw him, gliding across the screen and taking Yuuri’s breath away. And throughout all the years, throughout everything that had happened, despite everything, the awe Yuuri had felt when he saw Viktor’s skating had never gone away. Not really.

For so many years he had pushed the thoughts away, the bitterness of losing souring the beauty but this time was different. This time Yuuri could sit back and watch Viktor skate and enjoy it, really truly enjoy it, free from anything else.

The music Viktor was skating to was upbeat and fast-paced, an unusual choice. But then, that was typical of Viktor. Always loving to surprise the audience and defying what was expected of him year after year. This year he skated with an energy and a passion that surpassed almost anything that Yuuri had seen from him before. Viktor was always consumed while he skated, completely lost in the music and the movement but he had never looked more alive than he did in that moment. Out on the ice with thousands of eyes watching him and creating a story with his body and his skating that made the crowd hold its collective breath.

He was perfect. Technically and presentation wise he was beyond critique and Yuuri watched with the same bated breath as the audience. When the routine ended he almost sighed in disappointment. Celestino saw the slump in his shoulders and wrapped his arm around Yuuri’s shoulder in a gesture of comfort and Yuuri almost jolted in surprise. The action had startled him and for a second his wondered why Celestino had made as if to comfort him.

But of course. Viktor had just performed perfectly, something that in years before Yuuri would have resented, would have agonised over. Would have been sick with worry about how he was going to up his game, how he was going to beat Viktor now.

But this time Yuuri had been too caught up in watching Viktor’s skating to even think about that. Even when the scores came in, placing Viktor a few points ahead of him, he only felt the slightest of lurches in his stomach. It wasn’t a pleasant feeling, being surpassed, but it was one that he could live with. Viktor’s program had been stunning and he deserved every point he earned.

After the competition had ended for the day Yuuri wanted nothing more than to go and talk to Viktor but he couldn’t. The press were still circling and while he had dodged their talons after his own performance he couldn’t outrun them forever. There were still official statements to give, short
interviews to be filmed, all the official publicity that Yuuri hated.

It was a while before he could escape back to the hotel but when he did Yuuri shed his costume quickly, showering and changing into comfortable clothes as soon as he was able. Starving after a hard day, he ordered food to the room and wolfed it down, barely registering the flavour. After that task was done he went to sit cross legged on the bed, fiddling with his phone and debating what to say.

He wanted to see Viktor again. It was a little ridiculous, how quickly he had become used to Viktor’s presence when they had stayed together and he missed it. Then again, maybe it wasn’t so ridiculous. Viktor had been entwined in Yuuri’s life for so long that Yuuri couldn’t imagine a life without him, in one way or another. Maybe it made sense, that after all these years he had become so used to Viktor, so used to his presence that he was now craving it every time that it was gone.

For a few minutes Yuuri sat, typing and deleting and retyping a message as he tried to think of the best way to word what he was trying to say. He could hardly tell Viktor exactly what he was thinking, that would seem pathetic and desperate and Viktor probably had better things to be doing, celebrations to be had after winning the short program.

But Viktor had always come when he had called. Throughout the years there was one constant between them, one sure-fire way to see Viktor again. And Yuuri wanted to. Not guiltily like he used to, with the promise over and over again that this would be the last time, the last time, the last. Not guiltily but honestly, with the full acknowledgment that this was what he wanted, this was something that he didn’t want to end.

In the end he opted for a simple message, short and to the point. When Viktor had called for him he had been blunt, just a floor and room number. After last night Viktor already knew where he was saying so Yuuri simply sent a quick ‘my room?’, typing the words quickly into his phone and hitting send before he overthought it. It was useful that he could invite Viktor back to his own room this time, that he wasn’t staying with Celestino for once. It certainly made life easier for Yuuri. Celestino still didn’t know, no-one did. No-one could. And Yuuri hoped that they would never find out because that was an explanation he didn’t want to face.

In his hand his phone pinged loudly and Yuuri looked down to see a new message pop up under the one he had just sent.

**Viktor Nikiforov**

I’m on my way

Quietly, Yuuri breathed a sigh of relief. There was always the possibility that Viktor would refuse but Yuuri was glad he hadn’t, not this time at least. Somehow, this had become their normal. Their strange little routine.

For a little while Yuuri debated whether he should dress up a bit more. Take off his glasses, push his hair back. But really, there was no need. Viktor had seen him looking a lot worse and Yuuri was comfortable like this, comfortable with Viktor seeing him like this. They had fallen into such and easy, natural harmony during the time he had spent in Russia a few weeks ago and he didn’t feel the need to fret anymore.
A knock on his door interrupted the thought and Yuuri hurried over quickly, pulling it open to reveal Viktor standing out in the hallway. He was dressed casually as well, in loose trousers and a worn shirt.

“Hey.” Yuuri greeted, stepping aside to allow Viktor to enter.

“Hey.” Viktor replied as he stepped into the room and swivelled back around to look at Yuuri.

“Congratulations on your short program.” Yuuri added and Viktor seemed to relax fractionally, a little tension that Yuuri hadn’t realised was present leaving his shoulders in a breath.

“And to you too.” Viktor moved closer to him, small smile still quirking up the corners of his lips. “You gave a wonderful performance. No-one could look away.”

Yuuri couldn’t help but blush a little under the unexpected praise but part of his was preening, revelling in the knowledge that Viktor had indeed watched him. Had kept his eyes on Yuuri and only Yuuri again, the whole time he was skating.

Viktor kept on moving closer and he lifted his hand up to Yuuri’s face, fingers cupping his chin and thumb brushing gently across Yuuri’s cheek. It was a familiar gesture, one Viktor had used countless times before. Comfortable and normal in a way Yuuri would never have believed possible until it had suddenly become so.

Reaching up a little he lent in, tilting his head and kissing Viktor softly. There was no rush here, no desperation. There didn’t need to be.

Viktor returned the kiss, one hand still caressing the side of Yuuri’s face, the other sliding round his waist to pull him closer, fingers a warm weight on the bare skin of his hip where his shirt had ridden up. The kiss was gentle, unhurried and Yuuri took the time to enjoy the feeling, to explore Viktor’s mouth and let Viktor do the same to him. Instinctively he slid his arms around Viktor’s shoulder and Viktor hummed in approval, pulling at Yuuri’s hip slightly so that he was drawn in closer.

They stayed like that for a while, pressed close and kissing softly. Longer than they ever had before. But eventually the warm caresses across his skin and the feeling of Viktor’s mouth on his made heat begin to pool in the pit of Yuuri’s stomach and he nipped lightly at Viktor’s lip, encouraging. At the motion Viktor laughed a little into his mouth and obliged, deepening the kiss and pulling Yuuri in even closer by the waist, bending him over slightly and threading the hand that had been cradling Yuuri’s face into his hair instead.

In return Yuuri dug his fingers deeper into the muscle of Viktor’s shoulder, letting his body become pliable as Viktor pulled him closer until they were chest to chest. Gradually he allowed his hands to slide down the soft fabric covering Viktor’s torso, down the hem of his shirt and under to the warm skin beneath. The pace of the kissing changed, a little faster, a little harder and Yuuri slid his hands cross the smooth skin of Viktor’s back under his shirt, relishing in the feeling of his skin against Viktor’s.

Viktor’s hand moved too, sliding from Yuuri’s waist down lower and lower until it came to rest and Yuuri found himself pulling away, heat and embarrassment creeping into his face.

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to do that with Viktor because he could already feel the need growing, the desire. But he couldn’t. The last time he had slept with Viktor had been before his free skate in the Rostelecom Cup. There was nothing on the earth that could make him regret that night but trying to compete the next day had been uncomfortable to say the least. The ache that always came as a reminder of their time together was less pleasant and much more distracting when he was trying to
win a medal and even though he had finished the day with gold draped around his neck it wasn’t necessarily a good idea to repeat the experience.

If he lost to Viktor in the free skate the next day because the other man fucked him too hard the night before he would never be able to get over the sheer embarrassment of it.

Viktor stopped as soon as he felt Yuuri pulling away, releasing him and stepping back, giving Yuuri space. At the movement Yuuri reached out for him again, not wanting Viktor to get the wrong impression.

“No, don’t go.” he said and it came out far less casual and far more needy than he had ever intended. At Viktor’s confused expression he quickly added. “It’s just…can we maybe um, not do that tonight? Not before the free skate.”

Understanding dawned in Viktor’s eyes and he let out a slight laugh as he stepped back closer, hands finding Yuuri again.

“Of course. After all, there’s plenty of other things that we can do.”

Viktor drew him back into the kiss and Yuuri let him take the lead, content to follow wherever Viktor wanted to go. After a few more minutes of kissing that was rapidly becoming heated, Viktor tugged at the hem of Yuuri’s shirt and Yuuri pulled away, allowing Viktor to slide it over his head. Viktor’s own shirt followed soon after and Yuuri used the opportunity to run his hands unhindered over the exposed skin of Viktor’s chest.

Using his weight to guide Yuuri, Viktor began to back him towards the bed, never breaking the kiss. Yuuri went willingly, sitting down abruptly when the backs of his knees collided with the mattress and forcing him down. Viktor followed him down, coming to kneel between Yuuri’s legs where he was sitting on the side of the bed so that he was the one looking up at Yuuri for a change and recapturing Yuuri’s mouth in another kiss. Both of Viktor’s hands were clasped onto Yuuri’s thighs and Yuuri could feel the heat seeping into his skin from the contact.

After a few seconds Viktor pulled away, looking up at Yuuri through his eyelashes. They were thick and the same striking silver as his hair, framing his eyes perfectly and making the startling blue stand out against the pale outline.

“I never got the chance to reciprocate for last time.” Viktor told him and Yuuri nearly choked on his tongue when he realised what Viktor was implying. “I think it’s time I fixed that, don’t you?”

Yuuri just nodded, swallowing heavily and not trusting himself to speak. The last time he hadn’t done what he’d done with any thought of reciprocation. He hadn’t done it because he wanted a favour for a favour. He had done it because he wanted to, because he wanted to make Viktor feel good. But if Viktor was offering then there was no way that he was going to say no.

At his consent, Viktor slid down the zip holding his trousers closed and placed his hands on Yuuri’s hips, encouraging him to lift them so that he could slide the clothes off in one graceful movement and toss them away. Yuuri shivered a little in the cool air of the room, feeling exposed but the heat in Viktor’s gaze drove the thought straight out of his head and made his breathing speed up a little at the intensity.

Seeing Viktor kneeling before him, gazing up at Yuuri with his eyes shining in the half-light of the room, made Yuuri’s brain stutter to an almost complete halt. If anyone had ever told a younger version Yuuri that one day he would bring Viktor Nikiforov to his knees, his past self would have imagined a very different scenario. But this was better, infinitely better. Having Viktor here, with
him. Having Viktor as he was because that was what Viktor wanted, that was what Viktor offered, was better than any kind of shallow victory.

The heat of Viktor’s mouth brought Yuuri back to the moment and he shivered a little as the other man pressed kisses to the inside of his thigh, light heated touches that gradually moved higher and higher. One of his hands crept up, trailing fingers across the sensitive skin of Yuuri’s other inner thigh before moving higher and wrapping firmly around the base of his cock. Yuuri jerked at the sensation, biting hard on his lip to keep from making any noise and tasting the faint metallic tang as his teeth sank into his lip.

Gradually Viktor’s hand began to move, stroking Yuuri with a sense of surety while Viktor’s mouth was still pressed against his thigh, no longer kissing but sucking marks deep into the skin, still moving higher and higher. Yuuri couldn’t help the whimper that slipped through his lips at the feeling, his breath hitching at the sight.

Viktor’s lips finally reached the base of Yuuri’s cock and he kissed there too, moving his hand and pressing kisses up the shaft and Yuuri couldn’t stop the pleasure that rolled through him or the way his hands tightening reflexively on the bed, fingers digging into the sheets and clutching them in a death grip. The desire to bury his fingers into Viktor’s hair, to grasp the soft strands in his hands and hold on for dear life was almost overwhelming but he restrained himself. He didn’t want to hurt Viktor accidentally, wanted to let the other man set his own pace.

The trail of kisses reached the tip of Yuuri’s cock and Viktor pressed a final one there too, his tongue flicking out to taste the liquid that was beading on the skin. At the new sensation Yuuri let out a gasp which turned rapidly into a moan when Viktor moved back down and licked up his cock in one long stripe from the base to the tip, all the while keeping his eyes fixed on Yuuri’s face. The sight and the sensation combined was too much, too overwhelming and Yuuri found himself flat on the bed, no longer able to hold himself vertical, chest heaving. A hot, wet heat encircled the tip of his cock, teasing the sensitive skin and Yuuri had to stuff a fist into his mouth to stop the embarrassing noises that were threatening to escape.

Burning fingers were digging deeply into the skin of his thighs and Viktor’s mouth didn’t let up, sucking and kissing at the head of Yuuri’s cock until Yuuri thought he was going to cry from how good it felt. Having Viktor with him, having Viktor being the one doing it for him was just as erotic as the act itself and Yuuri couldn’t imagine ever letting anyone else touch him in the way Viktor was touching him, couldn’t imagine being with anyone the way he was with Viktor. He would never want to. Viktor had ruined him for anyone else, forever. It was only him, it could only ever be him.

Just when Yuuri thought it couldn’t get any better the heat of Viktor’s mouth moved, sinking down to take more and more of him until Yuuri could feel his cock hit the back of Viktor’s throat. Even then Viktor didn’t stop, swallowing Yuuri down further until he was completely encircled in the feeling. It was so good, almost too good. With a hitched cry Yuuri bit deeply into the skin of his own arm, hips jerking at the unexpected but glorious sensation. When he had done this to Viktor he had had to stop to prevent himself from choking but it seemed Viktor didn’t have that problem, or was practiced enough to surpass it.

The thought was driven out of his head completely when Viktor moved, pulling back before sinking almost fully down again and Yuuri could feel his eyes becoming unfocused as he stared up at the ceiling, lost in the feeling. Distantly he could hear the muffled whimpers that he was letting out and he dug his arm harder into his mouth, trying to stifle them.

Suddenly the heat was removed completely and Yuuri shuddered at the loss, raising his head dazedly and trying to get his eyes to focus again on the figure that was kneeling before him. A gentle
hand reached out, tugging Yuuri’s arm away from his face, running soft fingers across the raised red imprints where Yuuri had sunk in his teeth to hide the noises he was making.

“Don’t hold back.” he heard Viktor say and the other man’s face swam into focus, as beautiful as ever, gaze fixed on Yuuri. “Let me hear you.”

Viktor pressed another kiss to Yuuri’s cock and this time Yuuri didn’t hold back the moan, or the way his body jerked as the flash of pleasure rocked through it. Viktor made a pleased hum at the noise before taking Yuuri in his mouth again, sinking back down completely and Yuuri was lost.

He allowed himself to be carried away by the sensation, stopped holding back the noises that Viktor drew from him with every movement of his mouth. In a distant part of his mind Yuuri sincerely hoped that there was no-one in the rooms next door to his because he was sure that even the best sound proofing in the world wouldn’t be able to completely hide volume of the sounds that he was making now that he had finally allowed himself to let go.

Viktor’s mouth felt amazing, the other man seeming to know just where to lick and suck, just where to vary the pressure to make Yuuri come apart at the seams. He was good, much, much better than Yuuri knew he himself had been before, which would have made him embarrassed if he wasn’t so occupied trying desperately to hold himself together. Already he felt like he was ready to burst, full of want and need and desire and it was too soon but he couldn’t help himself.

“Viktor.” he gasped, arching back on the bed and digging his heels into the floor. “Viktor…I’m…”

Viktor hummed a little in response and then he did made a motion with his tongue that had Yuuri gasping and coming, his nails digging deep grooves in the bed as he tried to ground himself before relaxing and going boneless, sinking into the mattress as the waves of pleasure rolled through him. Sluggishly he lifted his head again to see Viktor finish swallowing, wiping a hand across the corner of his mouth and looking up at Yuuri.

Viktor looked like heaven and hell all rolled into one, sinful and beautiful. Face flushed, mouth red and eyes dark, gazing at Yuuri with an intensity that took his breath away.

Yuuri wanted to reciprocate, to make Viktor feel as good as he was feeling right now but he was still lying bonelessly on the bed, so blissed out that he was barely able to move. Loosely he grabbed for Viktor, pulling him up to join him and rolling to make room for both of them. Even that small movement was almost too much and he returned to just lying there once he was done, panting and loose limbed. Viktor didn’t seem to mind, stretched out on the bed on one side, turned to look at him.

“Was it good for you?” he asked and Yuuri huffed out a small laugh in between breaths because Viktor had managed to render him pretty much immobile and essentially speechless and the other man would quite clearly be able to see that. He nodded in response, not confident he would be able to form fully coherent words just yet.

Wanting to give Viktor something back at least Yuuri reached out for him, sliding closer and cupping the side of Viktor’s face in his hand, pulling him down into a kiss. Yuuri could taste himself on Viktor’s tongue but he ignored it, focusing on the sensation of Viktor’s lips against his instead. Viktor returned the kiss lazily, taking his time. He didn’t seem to be impatient at all but when Yuuri slid his hand lower to run his fingers over the bulge in Viktor’s trousers he could feel how aroused Viktor really was.

“Can I?” he asked, pulling away from the kiss slightly and Viktor nodded before capturing his mouth again, the pace of his kisses still slow and unhurried despite the arousal Yuuri could feel.
Yuuri unzipped the trousers and helped Viktor kick them off along with his underwear, uncaring of where they fell. Reaching for Viktor’s cock he slid closer so they were pressed nearly chest to chest, lying next to each other on the bed in the quiet peace of the room.

Viktor’s breathing hitched in the kiss as Yuuri began to move his hand, sliding it over the heated skin, trying to make Viktor feel even a fraction of what he was feeling. Licking up into Yuuri’s mouth, Viktor kept kissing him, hands reaching up to slide over Yuuri’s skin as he did so.

There was no desperation, no rush for either of them. Just unhurried pleasure, Yuuri savouring the feel of Viktor’s mouth on his as he stroked his hand up and down Viktor’s cock, feeling the way Viktor’s heartbeat sped up where it was pressed close to his own.

After a while Viktor began to tense as he drew closer and his kisses changed, moving from Yuuri’s mouth to press along his jaw and down his neck. Tilting his head back to give Viktor better access Yuuri twisted his wrist, drawing out a sigh of pleasure from the other man and Viktor pressed a final kiss into the hollow of his throat before burying his face into Yuuri’s neck.

Yuuri could see each individual strand of his silver hair, the tiny swirl where it parted that was slightly thinner than the rest. Yuuri twisted his wrist again in the way that he knew Viktor liked and the other man gasped, body strung tight.

Viktor’s mouth was still pressed into his neck but Yuuri could make out the vague shape of words that Viktor was murmuring, pressing them into his skin, spoken in a language that Yuuri could recognise by sound but still didn’t understand.

“Viktor?” he asked quietly but Viktor didn’t seem to hear him as he shuddered and came still curled up against Yuuri.

Afterwards they both lay there, disinclined to move. Viktor pulled away slightly to give Yuuri some space to breathe but he didn’t draw away completely and Yuuri was content just to lie there. But eventually he could feel the warm stickiness on his fingers cooling and he slipped away quickly with a glance at Viktor over his shoulder as he did so, darting into the bathroom to wash his hands and soak a washcloth to bring back for Viktor.

When he returned Viktor was sitting propped up on one elbow, turned towards Yuuri. Yuuri handed him the washcloth and Viktor cleaned his stomach and chest down with a few quick strokes, shivering a little as the water touched his skin. Once he was done Yuuri returned the washcloth to the bathroom and then made his way back over to the bed. The chill of the air was starting to hit him and so he slid under the covers once he reached the mattress, holding the heavy duvet up to allow Viktor to slip in with him.

He had missed Viktor. Had missed sleeping with him but more than that he had missed just being with him. Had missed the quiet moments together when they could simply be, the moments that he had grown so used to in Moscow. He had wanted to sleep with Viktor of course but it was his presence he wanted more than anything else.

For a second Viktor hesitated and Yuuri felt his stomach drop. He had thought that this was their new routine now but he knew that there was also every chance Viktor wouldn’t want to stay with him. Quickly he dropped the covers, feigning nonchalance.

“Sorry. I know you must have to go.” he told Viktor and saw the surprise cross the other man’s face as soon as the words were out in the air between them.

“No.” Viktor said, climbing up the bed to lie next to Yuuri, sliding under the covers with him. “It’s
not that. It’s just.” He bit his lip. “We’ve never stayed in your room before.”

“Oh. I guess we haven’t.” Yuuri replied, failing to see the significance of the statement or why Viktor had brought it up. Yuuri had a tendency to save money by sharing a room with either Phichit or Celestino and so he had never been able to invite Viktor back. It was much more convenient for Viktor to offer his own room, for both of them. There was nothing more to it.

There was silence for a while, Yuuri content to just lie in the low light of the room and drift off gradually with Viktor warm by his side. But when he looked at the other man there was a slight crease in Viktor’s forehead and he looked to be deep in thought. At Yuuri’s questioning glace he propped himself up on one elbow, the sheets pooling around his waist and exposing the pale skin of his torso.

“Yuuri.” he started, sounding unusually hesitant. “If there’s anything else you want to try with me, you’ll tell me won’t you?”

Yuuri blinked a little, taken aback by the question. “What?” he asked, the confusion evident in his voice and he sat up slightly too, matching Viktor so that their faces were level.

“When we sleep together.” Viktor clarified, although it didn’t make things any clearer for Yuuri. “If there’s anything else that you want, you can always ask. You know that don’t you?”

The words seemed to come from no-where and Yuuri had no idea what was going on inside Viktor’s head, what train of thought or incident had led him to initiate that particular conversation.

“What else would I want?” Yuuri questioned instead because Viktor had given him everything he could have dreamed of and more and Yuuri still had no idea what Viktor was really asking.

“There’s a lot of things we’ve never done before.” Viktor replied, his eyes flickering away for an instant before returning to Yuuri. “There must be more that you want. Things you’ve done with your other lovers. All you have to do is ask.” He must have caught Yuuri’s bewildered look because he quickly added. “What else do you like?”

Even in the low light of the room Yuuri could tell that he had gone bright red at the words, the blush extending from his cheeks over his ears and down his neck. He had never admitted it out loud before, that Viktor was his first. His only. In fact he had done everything he could to try and hide it, acting confident when he wasn’t, trying to cover up the fact that most of the time he had no idea what he was doing. He knew full well that he owed almost everything that was good about their encounters to Viktor, the way he took Yuuri apart so beautifully and inadvertently taught Yuuri how to do the same to him.

Even with all his false bravado however, he had assumed Viktor knew. From his general clumsiness and inexperience he had thought that it was obvious. It had never crossed his mind that Viktor might think differently. And no matter what he had tried to pretend about his own experience, he could never straight up lie to Viktor. Not about this. Not if Viktor actually asked.

“I’ve never…well…you know.” Yuuri motioned between the two of them awkwardly, feeling his blush deepen and fighting the urge to look away in embarrassment. “With anyone else.”

“What?” Viktor shot up in surprise, sitting up fully and staring down at Yuuri in shock, the words loud in the quiet of the room. Startled, Yuuri jerked back, not expecting the reaction. It was bizarre and he didn’t understand it. Why was Viktor so surprised?

Blushing harder he averted his eyes, clearing his throat awkwardly. “I’ve never slept with anyone
else before.” he clarified, proud of himself by how clearly the words came out despite his discomfort. “Just you.”

“Just me.” Viktor echoed faintly. Yuuri nodded in response, embarrassed. He didn’t want Viktor to make a big deal about it. He still didn’t really understand his reaction and he hoped Viktor wasn’t regretting sleeping with someone with so little experience.

Suddenly Viktor’s eyes widened and he grabbed Yuuri’s hand, holding it in a white knuckled grip that bordered on painful. “So that time, at the banquet.” he started and Yuuri realised that he must be talking about the banquet so many years ago, when Yuuri had won his first World Championship title when competing against Viktor. “That was your first time?”

“Yes?” Yuuri confirmed hesitantly because obviously it was but Viktor was acting very strangely and Yuuri had no idea what to make of it.

“God Yuuri, I’m so sorry.”

This time it was Yuuri’s turn to look shocked because he didn’t know what he had been expecting Viktor to say but it certainly wasn’t that.

“Why?” he asked, confused, and Viktor ran a hand through his hair, clearly agitated.

“I didn’t know.” Viktor was looking more and more distressed by the second. Yuuri wanted to comfort him but he didn’t know how and still had no idea why Viktor was acting the way he was. “I didn’t know. If I’d known I wouldn’t have…”

He trailed off, looking lost, leaving the sentence unfinished. Despite that, Yuuri could make a pretty educated guess where the words were headed and ‘ripped your clothes off and fucked you senseless’ was probably a pretty accurate assessment of where the phrase had been leading.

He really hoped Viktor wasn’t saying that he wouldn’t have slept with someone so inexperienced or was thinking back over their encounters and picking out Yuuri’s flaws, seeing them in a new light. Hopefully he wouldn’t be but Yuuri still didn’t really understand why Viktor was sounding so upset or even why he had been so surprised at the initial revelation. It wasn’t like Yuuri had hundreds of lovers clamouring for his attention, discounting all the rabid fans because they weren’t exactly reliable sources. And even if he did he wouldn’t want any of them. Only Viktor.

Sitting next to him Viktor ran a hand down his face, expression twisted and voice wavering slightly.

“If I’d known…Yuuri I’m so sorry. I would have been so much more careful. I would have gone slower. I wouldn’t have…not the way I did.”

Viktor still had one of Yuuri’s hands clasped in his own and Yuuri rubbed his thumb over Viktor’s knuckle soothingly, hoping the gesture would placate the other man.

“Don’t worry.” he reassured because there was really nothing to worry about. “I enjoyed it.” More than enjoyed it in fact, he had loved it, enough that he hadn’t been able to stay away. “It’s what I wanted.”

His words seemed to have a mildly soothing effect on Viktor because some of the worry dropped from his face, replaced by relief but he was still looking a little shell-shocked. Yuuri tugged at him gently, pulling so that they were both lying back down again.

“It’s fine Viktor.” he added, hoping Viktor understood that there really was nothing to worry about. “It’s more than fine.”
He smiled at the other man and Viktor gave a sort of half smile back, the corners of his mouth twisting up in the motion but his eyes still wide and far away. There was silence for a few minutes and Yuuri tried to relax but it was hard when Viktor was still so tense beside him, his mind still working over something that Yuuri couldn’t see or understand.

“No-one else?” he asked eventually and Yuuri’s brow furrowed a little at the words because he had already made that clear. It was embarrassing, to have so little experience when compared to Viktor, but he had admitted it and now he just wanted to move on.

“No.” he clarified, hoping that would be the end of it. Then added, “It’s late Viktor. We should probably both get to sleep if we want to be awake in time for the free skate tomorrow.”

Viktor didn’t answer but Yuuri took his silence as conformation and closed his eyes, trying to lull himself back into the pleasant dreamy state he had been in before the whole conversation started. There was silence from the other side of the bed, eerie silence and Yuuri opened his eyes again after a few minutes to see Viktor gazing at him, eyes far away. His throat was working, adam’s apple bobbing up and down as he seemed to struggle with words that he was holding back.

“Viktor?” Yuuri asked, curious. “What is it?”

Viktor jumped a little at the question, eyes focusing on Yuuri, startled as though he were surprised that Yuuri had seen him or surprised Yuuri had asked.

“Nothing.” he said, voice quiet in the stillness of the room. He gave Yuuri a small smile but there was something slightly off about it, something that didn’t quite reach all the way to his eyes. Something a little sad lingering in his face. “It’s nothing you don’t already know at least.”

Despite the surety in Viktor’s tone, Yuuri had absolutely no idea what Viktor was talking about. Curiosity pricked at him and he wanted to ask but the embarrassment stopped him, the knowledge that this was something that Viktor expected him to know and it would be humiliating to admit that he didn’t.

Instead he simply nodded and closed his eyes again, hoping that sleep would come quickly and that Viktor would follow his lead. A good night’s rest was important for competing well and even though Yuuri usually struggled with sleeping before a competition, he always slept better when Viktor was near. And he wanted Viktor to rest to, wanted him to be performing at his best tomorrow. Wanted them both to be.

Viktor didn’t say anything else and eventually Yuuri felt him relax a little, sliding fractionally closer as his breathing evened out. When he was sure that Viktor was resting Yuuri finally allowed his mind to wander and it wasn’t longer before sleep claimed him and carried him away.

When he was skating the next day, Yuuri loved every second of it. The thrill of the sport had always been there but this time he felt different, lighter somehow. The feeling carried over into his skating
and he scored highly, as did Viktor.

For so many years he had been distracted, agonising over his score, over how he was going to beat Viktor this year, how he was going to prove himself. But those feelings were absent and he didn’t mourn their loss. Not even when the final scores were announced and Yuuri saw Viktor’s name above his on the scoreboard, the numbers next to his own high but not quite high enough.

It was disappointing yes. He had worked hard this year to defend his title and losing it wasn’t what he wanted. But the bitter burn of failure never appeared, the shame and humiliation never seeped into his mind. Just as Viktor had advised he had skated the way that he liked the best, put his heart and soul into his routines and loved every second, in a way he hadn’t enjoyed skating for a long time. The silver medal he was presented with wasn’t the awful weight dragging him down to drown in his own head like it had been before. Instead it felt light, almost weightless.

Yuuri had skated to the best of his ability and he knew it. He hadn’t failed, he had come second and somehow that was a distinction that he had never made before. And Viktor had won yes, but Viktor deserved to win. Deserved to win in the same way that Yuuri had deserved every gold medal he had won in the past. They were matched, head to head, give and take. This time Viktor had taken, had taken the gold with a breath-taking performance and Yuuri had lost his spot on top of the podium. But there were always other competitions, other opportunities. Yuuri was good. He had won before and he could win again.

Yuuri could stand on the podium under Viktor and he could accept it. Could accept the silver around his neck glinting prettily in the light and feel only the slightest twinges of disappointment. He didn’t like losing, he never had, but somehow it didn’t seem to matter so much anymore.

It was strange, to be content with coming second for now. But then again, a lot of the things that used to be strange for Yuuri suddenly weren’t anymore. Something had changed, so slowly that he hadn’t even noticed the shift but it had happened all the same. And Yuuri found that, through everything, standing on the lower part of the podium, having enjoyed skating in the competition more than he ever dream that he could, with Viktor standing above him with a gold medal around his neck and a light in his eyes, Yuuri found that he was happy.

On the third part of the podium on Viktor’s other side was Chris. Instead of looking out at the cameras like Viktor was doing he was instead turned around, looking at Yuuri. Scrutinising him, eyes narrowed slightly and gaze fixed. His expression wasn’t hostile but it definitely wasn’t congratulatory either. It was more speculative, intense in a way that Yuuri found to be vaguely uncomfortable.

Instead of returning the gaze he kept his eyes fixed on the cameras, squinting a little at the bright flashes and trying to hold his smile even as the corners of his mouth started to ache from the fixed expression. Next to him, Yuuri could feel Viktor shift a little, probably just as uncomfortable as Yuuri was from holding one position for too long. The podiums that year were small, pressed close together and as Viktor moved Yuuri felt the slightest touch as Viktor’s arm brushed against his, the tiny point of contact warming his skin briefly as it flitted across his senses.

Yuuri turned his attention back to smiling for the cameras, still hoping that the ceremony would be over soon. But this time, his smile was completely genuine.
I’m so glad Nikiforov won gold this time! It’s probably his last season and I want him to go out on a high note! #GPF

@thelanabo It’s not his last season wtf where did that come from????

@thelanabo yeah idk what they’re on about there’s been no official announcement or anything. Why would he retire now?

I think what @thelanabo was meaning was it can’t be long before Nikiforov retires now. I mean, he’s almost 27, he’s already way past the age that most skaters retire at.

He’s good but his age is going to catch up with him eventually. Remember when he got injured that one time and had to sit a season out? Every new season he skates he runs the risk of injuring himself again and…

…the older he is the more likely it is to be serious and permanent. He’s still the most decorated skater in history (although Katsuki is catching up, I’ll give him that) and he’s pretty much set for life money wise. He could go into…

…coaching or commenting or pretty much whatever he wanted. But he can’t skate for much longer, that’s just the way life works. He may not retire after this season but…
After the ceremony, Yuuri retreated to the backstage area to grab the last of his kit before returning to the hotel. Once he had his bag slung over his shoulders he made his way out of the twisting maze of rooms, knowing he didn’t have long before he was expected at the banquet and wanting to return as quickly as he could.

As he walked he caught snippets of conversations from other skaters, the words flitting in and out of his ears. Two female skaters that he vaguely recognised were standing together a little out of the way, whispering together and Yuuri’s ears pricked up as he heard the sound of a familiar name.

“Did you get the picture of Nikiforov?” One of them asked, hunched over the phone in her friend’s hand.

“Yes.” Her friend replied, looking smug. “I got a picture of him at the top of the podium during the ceremony. Keep a hold of it, it’s probably the last time we’ll ever see that.”

“What? You really think he’ll never beat Katsuki again?” The other skater asked and Yuuri stiffened at the sound of his own name, slinking backwards so that he was further out of view.

“No.” The woman with the phone shook her head. “I think he might not beat anyone again. You’ve heard the rumours. He’ll retire soon, maybe now, maybe after the Worlds. But soon. He’s got to. He’s almost twenty-seven, he can’t keep going forever. I mean, he’s already older than most skaters. It’s only a matter of time. Better to end on a gold and go now.”
“It’ll be strange to skate in a world without him.” The first woman mused and her friend hummed in agreement, still staring at her phone.

Yuuri unfroze himself and slipped past as quietly as he could, trying to go unnoticed, mind racing with what he had just heard.

Viktor wasn’t retiring. He couldn’t be. There had been no word, no official statement. Viktor had never mentioned it, there had been nothing to indicate that the thought was even in his mind. But then again, why would Viktor tell Yuuri if he was going to retire? He owed Yuuri nothing. He could announce to the world he was going to retire tomorrow and Yuuri wouldn’t even know about it until it hit the press.

But Viktor wasn’t going to retire. Was he? True he was older than most skaters, than all the skaters in fact. But he was still in top form, still winning gold medals with ease, still skating like a god. There was no way he would give it all up now, no way that he would stop. Then again, skaters were only competitive for a short time and Viktor had already far exceeded what was normal. Maybe the female skater had been right, maybe Viktor was going for one last string of victories before stepping off the ice for good.

Yuuri couldn’t imagine it. Couldn’t imagine skating in a world without Viktor. Being in a world without Viktor.

Just the night before he had thought they had an established routine, a comfortable familiarity and surety that when they arrived at competitions, the other would always be waiting. Yuuri loved skating against Viktor, loved the challenge, the way it pushed him to become better, to work harder. And he loved seeing Viktor, the surety of seeing him. The way Viktor smiled, the way he laughed, the way he looked in the dark of the night with moonlight casting a faint glow across his skin during the short time when he was no-one but Yuuri’s.

With Viktor gone, everything would change. Competing wouldn’t be the same. Yuuri would have an almost easy shot at gold without Viktor there to knock him back down again but that hardly mattered. Skating and Viktor were one and the same, they always had been, ever since Yuuri had first seen a silver-haired boy gliding across a screen, so many years ago. Skating wasn’t skating without Viktor, it never could be.

If Viktor retired, there would be no reason for them to ever meet each other again and the thought made the breath catch in Yuuri’s throat and his heart thud painfully in his chest. If Viktor retired, Yuuri might never see him again. There would no longer be the easy excuses of competitions to draw them together, Yuuri would no longer be convenient for Viktor, living half a world away. And Viktor would be far, far out of his reach.

Yuuri didn’t want Viktor to retire. He wanted their routine to continue, to keep competing against Viktor, to keep having excuses to see Viktor, to be with him.

Yuuri didn’t want Viktor to go.
At the banquet Yuuri was distracted, distracted enough that Celestino started shooting him concerned looks. But Yuuri could hardly bring himself to care.

Ever since this thing with Viktor had started Yuuri had always known that their time together was limited. It had just been a fact of what they were, that Yuuri would never be able to have Viktor for forever and he had been making himself content with the time that he had. But even then, he had never really considered what it truly meant, or how soon the end might be coming. And now suddenly he did and it was terrifying, the thought that soon Viktor might leave, really truly leave for good. Maybe not just yet but surely soon, sooner than Yuuri ever wanted to think about.

It was hours into the banquet before Yuuri even managed to catch a glimpse of Viktor, surrounded by crowds of well-wishers and admirers. Almost as if he could feel Yuuri’s stare Viktor turned around, catching Yuuri’s eye and smiling but Yuuri could barely bring himself to smile back, the expression feeling wrong and at odds with the emotions churning in his gut.

After that brief contact it was even longer before Yuuri could get Viktor alone, late into the night when people were finally beginning to drift away. Celestino had already left, citing the desire to get a good night of sleep before their early flight the next morning and the words did nothing to help the writhing mess of Yuuri’s feelings. They would be leaving first thing tomorrow and once he was gone, it would be months before he saw Viktor again. Last night had been unhurried, easy because Yuuri had somehow forgotten that when it came to Viktor that time was never on his side. It never had been and it never would be.

None of that he said out loud however, not to Viktor. It would sound desperate, needy in a way that he couldn’t afford and he knew that Viktor wouldn’t appreciate. Instead he tried to keep his tone light, his body language inviting, determined to make good use of the little time they had left. Once it was late enough for them to leave without making a scene he slipped away and Viktor followed after him.

Even if Yuuri refused to voice any of his emotions out loud they still translated into his touch, running his hands across Viktor’s body, holding him close, making memories while he still had time. Viktor wasn’t retired, he wasn’t gone yet. Yuuri wanted to remember him, all of him, and a selfish part of him wanted Viktor to remember him too.

It was so different from the night before, where everything had been slow and comfortable. This time Yuuri felt needy and he would be embarrassed about it if he wasn’t too far gone to care and Viktor complied with him easily, matching Yuuri’s heated touches with his own and leaving them both panted and sated in their wake.

After they were finished, Yuuri was reluctant to let Viktor go and Viktor didn’t seem inclined to move away from him either. Instead they lay on the bed together, Viktor lying relaxed with his chest pressed against Yuuri’s, head propped on his arms that were resting folded just below Yuuri’s collarbone. His fingers were idly tracing patterns across Yuuri’s skin in the quiet peace of the room and it felt strange to Yuuri. That they could lie so peacefully together, touch each other so casually when he thought back to how they started, all heat and teeth and painful hatred and desperation in equal measure.

Their legs were tangled together and Yuuri found that he enjoyed the feeling of Viktor lying half on top of him, head pillowed on his chest and hands still tracing feather light touches across his rapidly cooling skin. His eyes were slightly unfocused and he looked deep in thought, lost in his own head.
But Yuuri still couldn’t quell the worry that was twisting within him, the words from the female skaters earlier that day still echoing in his head. Instead of focusing on them he tried to distract himself, to think of something else. When that failed he turned to Viktor. He couldn’t ask Viktor if he was planning on retiring or not, Viktor might not want to tell him and even if he did Yuuri wasn’t sure if he was ready to hear the answer. But he could talk to Viktor, allow the man’s words to distract him like his body had been doing minutes before.

“What are you thinking about?” Yuuri asked and Viktor looked up, raising his head a little so that his nose was level with Yuuri’s chin where he was sitting propped up slightly against the headboard.

“The first time I saw you skate.” Viktor replied and Yuuri jolted a little in surprise, not expecting the answer.

When must have that been? He cast his mind back, trying to remember. Back through the years, to his and Viktor’s second meeting in a deserted bathroom in the stadium of the World Championships during his final season in the Juniors. Viktor had insulted him then, pointed out Yuuri’s technical troubles in his skating during the Junior Grand Prix Final a few months before. That must be it then. His second Junior Grand Prix Final must have been the first time Viktor had seen Yuuri skate, the first time he had noticed the little Japanese skater who still couldn’t land a quad or win a gold medal.

“Why?” he asked, a little perplexed. Why was Viktor thinking about that now? It was years ago and Yuuri had improved a lot since then. The occasion had been nothing special, just embarrassing for him.

“Because you were captivating.” Viktor said and there was a smile in his voice, a strange kind of softness. “You looked like you were making music with your body.”

Well, that definitely wasn’t the answer that he had been expecting.

“I remember seeing you cry.” Viktor continued and Yuuri’s brows furrowed a little at the words, confused. “You were so scared. And then you went out and skated and it was like you were a different person. No-one could look away from you. That’s when everyone realised how special you were.”

Yuuri was confused. Yuuri was so, so confused. There was a lot in Viktor’s statement that didn’t make sense, almost all of it in fact, but one thing stuck out in particular, one piece of information that was completely at odds with what he had been expecting.

Yuuri hadn’t cried at his second Junior Grand Prix Final. He had been angry at himself yes, angry and frustrated but he hadn’t cried. But he had cried at his very first Junior Grand Prix Final. When the pressure had got to him and he had messed up his short program so badly, when he had run off to hide and be alone and cry until he couldn’t cry anymore. Before he had watched Viktor skate to find his motivation again, to remind himself why he needed to win so badly and then stepped back onto the ice for the free skate and skated better than he ever had before.

But Viktor couldn’t be talking about that. He couldn’t be. It had been so long ago, back when he was still angry and desperate and hated Viktor more than anything else. They had never met that season, Viktor had barely even glanced at him. They were from different worlds and Viktor had been untouchable.

“Viktor, when did you first see me skate?” Yuuri asked, cautiously. He must be wrong, he must be.

“Hmmm.” Viktor hummed contentedly, not picking up on Yuuri’s sudden change in mood, the wariness that was rapidly growing within him. “Your junior debut it must have been. You were so
“I heard that you messed up your short program but I saw you when you skated your free and I never would have thought it. Your technical components could have used a little work but there was something about the way you moved. You were fascinating.”

Yuuri gaped at him, not quite believing what he was hearing. Not just the praise, the unexpected praise that Viktor was flinging at him so casually but the fact that Viktor had apparently seen him in his Junior debut, over a year before Yuuri had thought Viktor had remembered seeing him for the first time.

But there was something more important, a comment that Viktor had made that was nagging in the back of his mind, demanding acknowledgment.

“You said you saw me cry.” he said, eyes widening as the full implication of the words finally hit him. “But you couldn’t have seen me cry. I was alone!” He could feel the panic start and he jerked fully upright, knocking Viktor off his chest as he did so. After his disastrous short program he had been distraught but he had fought back the tears in the public areas, choked them back until he was safely alone from prying eyes where he could break down.

But apparently Viktor had seen him. Had seen him when Yuuri was at his lowest and hiding from the world. Viktor had seen him break down and he hated people seeing him like that, seeing him vulnerable in that way. Viktor had no right to see that, not as he had been then, maybe not even as he was now.

“I know.” Viktor replied and he looked apologetic, raising himself onto his knees so that they were level again, his legs bracketing Yuuri’s.

“I was hiding from Yakov, trying to find an empty room. And I heard crying. I didn’t know what to do.” There was a blunt kind of honesty in Viktor’s eyes and Yuuri could see no trace of a lie in his features.

“I looked in and you were there.” Viktor continued. “You were crying, you were so upset and I didn’t know what to do. I wanted to help but I’m not good with people crying in front of me. I would only have made it worse. So I left before you could see me. I would have forgotten all about it but then I thought I saw you again after I finished my short program so I snuck off to watch the juniors out of curiosity the next day. And I saw you.”

Yuuri was still reeling at the new information, not quite sure what he was feeling. Humiliation was still burning in him that Viktor had seen him like that but there had been nothing malicious in the other skater’s actions. And he was right, making Yuuri aware of his presence would only have made things infinitely worse. His younger self would have been beyond furious if Viktor had come into the room, had made himself known. Viktor had made the right decision in walking away.

It wasn’t really Viktor’s fault, Yuuri knew that. And the irony almost made him laugh out loud, that Viktor didn’t remember what Yuuri knew was their first meeting and Yuuri didn’t realise when Viktor had thought he had first seen Yuuri. It was like some kind of ridiculous cosmic joke.

It was strange, that that was the moment when Viktor first remembered seeing him, that was the moment that Viktor thought had tangled their lives together when he couldn’t be more wrong. Stranger still that he was thinking back on it now, thinking back on Yuuri as he had once been. Yuuri had never been able to understand Viktor, the enigma that he was, had never been able to understand his thoughts, not really.

It’s strange.” Viktor said, looking contemplative. “That I met you before you remember meeting me.”
Yuuri choked back a hysterical laugh because of all the things that Viktor could have chosen to say in that moment, that was the most bitterly ironic.

For years, he had been avoiding the conversation, putting it off for so long until he had thought that maybe they would never have to have it at all. In the beginning he had been planning on gloating, on rubbing their first meeting in Viktor’s face, throwing it back at him, taunting him with the fact that he had made Yuuri, had made the man who had beaten him. But the opportunities had slipped through his fingers, never the right place, never the right time. Longer and longer until eventually he had realised that gloating wasn’t what he wanted anymore.

Things had changed, slowly but surely they had changed and Yuuri had changed with them and he no longer wanted to tear Viktor down with the words. Didn’t want to ruin the moments that they had together, to break their fragile peace and voice out loud the bitter memories that had driven him through so many years. And so he had kept it buried deep, festering in his heart but never finding its way past his lips.

But now, with Viktor’s words still ringing in his ears, Yuuri knew that he couldn’t keep it all locked away anymore. Not now. He didn’t want to tell him, didn’t want to say it out loud but if he didn’t now, he knew he never would. And it had been years after all, years and years and maybe it was finally time. Time for Viktor to know.

“That wasn’t the first time we met.” Yuuri said, feeling his throat clench up around the words as though his body was betraying him, trying to keep them locked away. Viktor sat up a little straighter, looking confused. Yuuri slid out from under him, moving so that he was kneeling in front of Viktor on the bed, eyes level. Viktor was still looking perplexed, brows furrowed as though he was expecting Yuuri to drop the punchline at any moment.

But Yuuri’s words were far from a joke, far from funny, and he ran a hand down his face, hiding his expression and giving himself a few seconds to compose himself. The memories still stung, even after so many years. They were buried too deep into his bones, too ingrained where he had carved them as bitter reminders to ever really let them go and he didn’t want to talk about it, not here, not now. They would ruin the moment, the little fragment of peace that they had stolen together, away from the rest of the world in the fraction of time that he had Viktor again. The memory was still so jagged and he didn’t want it to have a place here but he started and now he couldn’t back down.

“Viktor.” Yuuri tried again and Viktor looked at him, face open and curious. “We met before. Years before.”

“What…?” Viktor trailed off, the crease between his eyes furrowing as he processed the words, trying to fit them into his version of reality.

“When I was twelve, I went to see you. You were skating in the Junior Grand Prix Final. It was your last season. I…” Yuuri blushed because it was hard to admit, after so many years of burying the feelings that had started it all and choosing to hate Viktor instead. “I admired you.”

‘I adored you.’ He couldn’t say. ‘I worshiped you.’

“I was already skating and I wanted to skate like you someday. I wanted to skate with you, on the same ice as you. My parents knew how much it meant to me so they bought me tickets for my birthday and took me to watch you skate. I watched you win. And afterwards I waited outside to get a poster signed. And I met you.”

“Yuuuri, what are you saying?” Viktor’s eyes had widened, there was worry creeping into his tone and he reached out, taking Yuuri’s face in his hands, his thumbs brushing across Yuuri’s cheeks.
Yuuri shook him off, not wanting Viktor to touch him and he saw Viktor’s face fall. He looked anxious but Yuuri refused to make eye contact, staring out into the darkness of the room instead because he knew what needed to be said but he didn’t want to look at Viktor as he said it, to see his own memories reflected back in those piercing blue eyes that had haunted him all his life. He had underestimated how much it would hurt to bring up the memories again, the old wounds scarred but never fully healed.

“You…” he almost couldn’t bring himself to say it but he took a deep breath, pushing forward. “You broke my heart. When I met you. You broke my heart.”

From the corner of his eye Yuuri could see the way Viktor’s face twisted, the confusion in his expression turning into something much worse. He looked like someone had just punched him in the gut and when he spoke his voice was bewildered. He sounded lost.

“What? But Yuuri, I would never…”

“But you did.” Yuuri snapped and suddenly he realised he was angry and he resented Viktor for that too. Whatever Viktor said, whatever excuse he came up with it would be worthless because whatever his reasons, he had hurt Yuuri, hurt him badly and nothing he said was going to change that.

“You insulted me and you belittled me. You didn’t believe in me. I worshiped you and you broke my heart.”

It was only after the words came out that he realised that he was almost shouting, the words like glass shards in his throat. Turning back towards Viktor he wiped furiously at his eyes, ashamed at the tears that had formed there because he thought that he had gotten over it, had thought that it was finally gone, that he had finally let it go. But he could never free himself from it, not really. It was too much a part of him now.

Viktor still looked shell-shocked, gazing at Yuuri with eyes wide and mouth hanging open. He looked awful and Yuuri wanted to avert his gaze but found that he couldn’t.

“But…I don’t remember it.” Viktor stammered, the words broken and hesitant as though his brain was still trying to process what he had been told, uncomprehending. He spoke again, louder. “I don’t remember it.”

Yuuri suddenly felt very tired. There was a reason that he had been avoiding the conversation for so long and he just wanted to drop it, to go back to the way they were and avoid the hurt that from the past that neither of them could ever escape.

“Of course you don’t.” he sighed because he had always known that Viktor hadn’t, no matter how much that knowledge burned. That Viktor could so easily forget when Yuuri never could. “I was just one fan. One person. And you have so many. Why would you ever remember me?”

Viktor looked back at him and there was devastation in his eyes and written across the lines of his face.

“But it’s you.” he whispered, his voice sounding confused, like a child, like his whole world had just been turned upside down. “How can I not remember you? I would remember you.”

“But you didn’t.”

Yuuri lay back down, turning so that his back was to Viktor because he didn’t want to talk about this anymore, he never had in the first place. It was like picking off a scab, every time he thought the
wound was finally healed it stung and bled afresh.

“I didn’t mean…I never meant…” Viktor started and Yuuri felt his shoulder tense because he didn’t want to hear excuses, didn’t want to hear Viktor try and pass off the blame or trivialise something that had affected Yuuri so deeply.

Viktor must have noticed the sudden tension in Yuuri’s body, the way he began to close off, because Viktor cut himself off and Yuuri felt the movement of the bed and Viktor moved closer.

“Wait, Yuuri. I’m sorry. Yuuri I’m so sorry.” There was a hand on his arm, the briefest flash of contact before it was yanked away, Viktor clearly remembering how badly Yuuri had reacted to being touched before. At the sensation Yuuri rolled back over, turning his eyes towards Viktor again. The other man looked gutted and it made something in Yuuri’s chest twist. He didn’t want Viktor to look like that, that had never been his intention.

“I’m sorry Yuuri.” Viktor said again and there was pleading honesty in his tone and in his eyes. It was what Yuuri had been waiting to hear for years but now that it was here he wanted nothing more than for the conversation to end. To pretend that they were something other than what they were, with all their bitter history seeped like poison between them. He wanted to curl up next to Viktor and forget the conversation ever happened, to go back to the peace of before. To make good on the little time that they had left now that he had caught a glimpse of the end in the form of the retirement that was looming over them both.

“It’s ok.” he told Viktor and tried to smile. But his muscles refused to co-operate and it came out more like a grimace, strained and fake and utterly unconvincing. “It was years ago.”

Viktor still looked thrown, mouth parted slightly and eyes unfocused. Yuuri could almost see his thoughts swirling as he processed the new information that Yuuri had never wanted him to know.

“All these years.” he said but he wasn’t talking to Yuuri. Rather, the words seemed to be directed at himself, his mind cast back into the past. “That’s the reason. That’s the reason why. For all these years.”

His eyes slid back into focus and there was a sheen to them when he looked at Yuuri again.

“I always wanted to ask.” he said, but the words still seemed to be directed more at himself than Yuuri. “I always wanted to ask why but every time I tried you closed off and I stopped trying but I always wanted to know, for so long. And now…” He reached out but left his hand hovering, not quite touching. “Yuuri. I am so sorry.”

Reaching out, Yuuri linked his fingers with Viktor’s outstretched hand, gently pulling him down so that they were lying side by side, facing each other. He didn’t want to talk about it tonight, or ever. They already had so little time together as it was and he didn’t want to taint it with shades of the past. So he pushed everything back down, locked it away like he’d been doing for years because he didn’t want to deal with it. Didn’t want to think about the real world where things were difficult and complicated and so rarely came with a happily ever after. He wanted to stay with Viktor in the little pocket of time and space that they had for just the two of them, outside of all that, where they could just simply be and be together.

“It was a long time ago.” he said quietly and for a second Viktor looked like he wanted to say more but stopped when he looked at Yuuri and Yuuri was glad for it. Lifting their joined hands Yuuri kissed the knuckle of one of Viktor’s fingers gently, in a gesture that Viktor had used on him once, so long ago.
For so long, all he had been able to think of was telling Viktor the truth, of throwing it back in his face and laughing at Viktor’s shock when he realised just how wrong he had been. Just what he had done, what he had created. But Yuuri didn’t want that anymore.

He didn’t want to make Viktor angry. He didn’t want to make Viktor sad, wanted to wipe the emotion from Viktor’s face and never let it enter his heart again. All he wanted was to lie there, just the two of them, for what little time they had.

For the first time in his life, he didn’t want to think about the past.

In the intervening time between the Grand Prix Final and the World Championships, Yuuri found that separation was hard, in a way it had never been before. After he had left Viktor’s apartment in Moscow he had managed because the final was only a few weeks away and he knew that he would be able to see Viktor again soon. That it wouldn’t be long. But after the final was over, he didn’t have that reassurance anymore.

The next competition that they would skate in together was months away. Months before they would see each other again.

Yuuri knew that it was how it had always been between them, brief moments of time together and then long periods apart, their lives, their worlds, separated by more than just distance. And he had accepted that, he had been content with that before. But now everything was different.

With the extended time they had spent together in Moscow and the realisation of Viktor’s impending retirement, suddenly the time apart seemed so much worse than it had before. Yuuri had become used to having Viktor around, used to fitting together comfortably into a strangely domestic routine and now that the excuse of the Rostelecom Cup was over he wouldn’t have that again, was back to a handful of days in impersonal hotel rooms and the majority of their lives spent apart. And worse than that, now even those brief times together were limited.

Nothing had been said official about Viktor retiring, although there had been plenty of fan speculation. It seemed like many people were finally acknowledging that skating’s living legend wouldn’t be skating forever. Yuuri knew from official reports that Viktor would be skating in the Russian Nationals, then the European Championships and finally the World Championships, where they would meet again. But what about after that? Would he compete in the next season. The one after that?

How many times would Yuuri get to see Viktor again. Once? Twice? It wasn’t enough, he couldn’t accept that the way he had accepted everything else before. What they had between them, it wasn’t sustainable, wasn’t built to last. But Yuuri wished, oh how he wished that it was.

After the Grand Prix Final, Yuuri found that he was restless, distracted. Phichit noticed it immediately, as did Celestino and they both commented on it but Yuuri just couldn’t snap out of it. The weight of the new realisations were hanging over him, like a guillotine, just waiting to fall.
After a couple of disastrous practices, where Yuuri’s head clearly wasn’t in the right place, Celestino ordered him off the ice and announced that Yuuri was to take a few days off to clear his head. Usually Yuuri would have protested, the Four Continents was coming up and while skating in competitions without Viktor present was never anywhere near as thrilling he still couldn’t afford to start slacking. But instead he just agreed meekly and left the rink.

Without practice, Yuuri felt lost and even worse than before. Phichit was still skating all hours of the day and so he didn’t even have his friend to distract him. After a single day Yuuri was feeling more antsy than ever. Trying to take his mind off things he browsed through social media but the European Championships was approaching its final couple of days and every feed was filled with picture of Viktor, Viktor skating, Viktor talking to other skaters, Viktor smiling to the crowd. It didn’t help at all.

Yuuri wanted to see him again. Not even for the night, he just wanted to see him. To try and obey Celestino’s words and sort out the mess in his head because he was distracted and off balance and Viktor was the cause and maybe seeing him again would help Yuuri finally figure out what to do.

The decision he made was on impulse, a spur of the moment thing that he tried not to think too hard about because if he did he would have to rationalise it to himself and he wasn’t sure if he would be able to do that. The two plane tickets he booked were for flights close together, just enough time between them to watch the very end of the competition and leave before the night was done. That was what stopped him from feeling guilty at the ridiculousness of what he was doing. He would fly in and out within the same day, there would be no time or temptation for him to contact Viktor, to stay the night. He just needed to see the other skater, just needed to watch him. Just needed to be close to him, without oceans between them.

If Celestino found out, Yuuri had his justification ready. Viktor had changed the jump components of his routine since he had performed it in the Grand Prix Final and Yuuri could say that he had gone to watch Viktor skate in person to observe the new performance, to prepare himself to skate against it at Worlds. But that wasn’t the reason, not really.

Phichit would see through the excuse straight away and so Yuuri left him a note, explaining where he had gone and knowing he would have to explain fully to his friend when he returned. Phichit would likely not be happy but that couldn’t be helped.

On the flight, Yuuri found that as idiotic as his impulsive decision was, he couldn’t bring himself to regret it too much. Once he arrived it was already late and he went straight to the stadium. Without a ticket he couldn’t get in the main way but he managed to sneak in one of the back doors, using his ISU credentials and the slightly awestruck look of the security guard there to bluff his way through. Once he was in the stadium he kept his hood up, his mask covering the lower half of his face and praying he wouldn’t be recognised.

Thankfully the competition had already started and the corridors were mostly empty, giving Yuuri the freedom to make his way to the rink unaccosted. Slipping in one of the side doors he found an empty seat far at the back of the room, far out of sight and out of mind of anyone, the eyes of every person on the room fixed solely on the rink.

The second last skater was just leaving the ice and Yuuri could see a familiar silver head waiting at the side, preparing for his skate.

When Viktor finally glided out onto the ice, the entire audience seemed to hold its breath. Viktor had won the Russian Nationals of course and he was in the lead by a huge margin in the Europeans from his short program score the previous day. Collectively the audience waited with bated breath, the room thick with anticipation, waiting for him to begin.
Viktor was beautiful when he skated. It was a well-established fact, something that Yuuri had known for years, ever since he had first seen Viktor as a child. But it never ceased to amaze him, watching Viktor. Yuuri had already seen his free skate performance from the Grand Prix Final but it didn’t stop him from being enraptured as Viktor flitted across the ice, entrancing the audience with every step. His performance wasn’t quite as passionate, quite as full of emotion as his performance at the Grand Prix Final had been but that was only to be expected. At the Europeans Viktor was unmatched and it made sense that he would use it to warm up, building up his performance as he progressed through the competitions to peak at the World Championships, the main event still a couple of months away.

After Viktor finished his routine and left the ice, there was hardly a question of who had won. Yakov congratulated him gruffly, Yuuri seeing the man’s lips move from his spot seated far away but not being able to make out the words. After the scores had been announced Viktor waved to the crowds in acknowledgment and left the kiss and cry, making his way over to talk to a couple of reporters where a handful of other skaters were also milling around.

Seeing Viktor had helped, in a strange way. Yuuri had known it would, even if he wasn’t sure why. After watching Viktor skate however Yuuri wanted to go to him, to speak to him. But he couldn’t. His flight home was already booked and leaving in a couple of hours was a preventative measure, to stop him from doing anything reckless. There was just something about Viktor, something that made Yuuri lose his self-control and do things that he never would have considered otherwise and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

Instead he contented himself to watch from a distance, watch as Viktor finished his interviews and chatted to the other skaters scattered around the arena. Since the competition was over the crowds were beginning to disperse and Yuuri found it was easy to blend in with them, to wind his way closer while still staying out of sight. It was strange, being part of the crowd again, an observer only rather than a skater. The last time it had been that way Yuuri had been just a child, hopelessly enamoured with Viktor Nikiforov, awed to see him skate, with no idea of what was about to happen or where it would eventually lead him.

Yuuri wondered sometimes, what would have happened if they had never met then. If Viktor had never come out to sign autographs for his fans, or if his own parents had never bought the tickets, or a thousand other tiny things that could have prevented them from meeting like they did. It was such a pivotal moment in Yuuri’s life and it had changed everything, had shaped his future into what it was now. But if it had never happened, everything would be different.

Would he have met Viktor later, had they never met then? Would Viktor have said something similar and sent them down the same path regardless? Or would it have been different? Maybe he never would have met Viktor at all, maybe he would have lost his motivation to keep skating without his hatred to push him through. Or maybe he would still be a skater but one who had never lost his childish hero worship and awe. A skater who still admired and adored Viktor and would do anything to skate on the same ice as him someday.

So many possibilities, so many futures, all lost in one single moment that had changed everything.

Viktor was still standing next to the rink, talking to a couple of female skaters who had come to watch the performance. Yuuri slipped closer, as close as he dared, being careful to stay far enough away that there was no chance of him being noticed.

One of the female skaters laughed and placed her hand on Viktor’s arm, leaning closer and Yuuri found that he tensed suddenly at the movement. And Viktor didn’t shake the hand off, didn’t show any indication that he resented its presence. Instead he just smiled lightly, joining in with the laughter.
as the circle of skaters shared the same joke. Yuuri was too far away to hear the words but it wouldn’t have mattered because it wasn’t the conversation that he cared about. He was too fixated on the hand that was still resting on Viktor’s arm, the woman who was smiling up at Viktor with her eyes bright, body language open and inviting.

She was flirting with him, that much was obvious. It wasn’t a surprise, Viktor was beautiful and successful and considered one of the most eligible bachelors around. He had fans and skaters alike clamouring for his attention, Yuuri had always known it. And while Viktor wasn’t flirting back, wasn’t showing any more than polite interest, he still wasn’t pulling away.

Yuuri had always known that he wasn’t the only one to Viktor, Viktor who could have anyone that he wanted in an instant. And Yuuri had made his peace with that. Had accepted it from the moment Viktor had first touched him. Just because Viktor was his one, his only, didn’t mean that he had to be Viktor’s. He wasn’t Viktor’s. There had never been any agreement between them, no promise to stay true and Yuuri never would have expected it or asked for it, even if he was silently holding up his own end of a pact that had never been made. He knew that Viktor would have others, had always known.

But knowing something and seeing it were two very different things and Yuuri couldn’t help the burning, bitter jealousy that rose so unexpectedly within him at the sight, nearly taking his breath away. He had known and accepted it yes but he had never liked it and now what had once been an abstract thought was far, far too real.

Over the years they had both fallen into a routine at the events where they were together, competing during the day and sleeping together at night. But Yuuri wasn’t here now, not officially, not that Viktor knew of. Would Viktor still keep up the same routine then, with someone else in Yuuri’s place? He didn’t seem particularly interested in the woman next to him but that didn’t mean much and plenty of the other skaters, male and female alike were looking at Viktor with hunger in their eyes. Maybe Viktor would take one of them back to his hotel room that night, the way he had taken Yuuri. Would fuck them like he fucked Yuuri, would lie with them like they lay together.

The thought made Yuuri’s insides twist and he backed away, shocked at the strength of his own emotions.

He had thought that he was content with being one of many, for only having Viktor for the short fractions of time that they had together. But suddenly what was once a distant concept was now made gut-wrenchingly real and he realised that he didn’t want that. He wanted the woman to take her hand of Viktor’s arm, to back away and never touch him again. He didn’t want anyone else to touch Viktor again, not in that way, not like that.

He wanted Viktor to watch him and only him, to want him and only him. Not just on the ice, not just when they were sleeping together but all the time, in the same way that Yuuri had been bound to him now for years.

Gradually the group of skaters dispersed and Yuuri watched them go, still trying to fight down the emotions roiling in his chest. It wasn’t like him, to react so strongly, so violently, to something so simple but he couldn’t help himself.

Shaking his head, Yuuri tried to force the thoughts out of his mind. He had seen Viktor, had done what he had set out to do and now it was time to go home. With the Four Continents so close he couldn’t afford to take any more time off and he needed to leave.

Yuuri turned to go, slipping out of the main stadium and into one of the back corridors. It wasn’t a public area and so it was deserted, the perfect escape route for him to take without being noticed. The
only people around would be skaters and their coaches and they were probably all busy, preparing for the medal ceremony.

Yuuri had almost reached the end of the corridor before he was stopped, a harsh voice ringing out in the quiet behind him and causing him to startle and whip around.

“Hey asshole.”

Yuuri blinked, turning around to see if the speaker was talking to someone else but he was the only one in the corridor, the only one the words could be directed at.

Standing in front of him was a scowling blond teenager, arms crossed over his chest and looking directly at Yuuri.

“Hello?” Yuuri ventured, confused. He couldn’t think of any possible reason for the comment but the teenager was clearly talking to him and it couldn’t hurt to try and be polite. The blond moved a little, his hair falling back from his face that had been mostly obscured under his hood and Yuuri suddenly recognised him as Yuri Plisetsky. Russian skater, Junior Gold Medallist, referred to by some as the Russian Punk and well known for his fiery temper. But none of that explained why he was glaring at Yuuri like he was a piece of trash, radiating hostility.

“Yes, I’m talking to you asshole.” Yuri continued, stalking closer and making Yuuri back up on instinct. The teenager jabbed a finger in Yuuri’s face, mouth twisted in a snarl.

“Don’t think I don’t know who you are or what you do.” he spat out which only confused Yuuri further.

“The way I see it, this goes one of two ways.” Yuri told him, animosity dripping from his tone. Yuuri had no idea what turn the conversation had taken but he stiffened instinctively at the next words, muscles locking and eyes widening in shock.

“Either you actually do care about Viktor, even a little bit in that stupid fucked up head of yours, or you’re using him just like everyone thinks. So I’m giving you a choice. If you do feel something for him, you tell him and stop fucking him around. And if you don’t, you stay the hell away from him. Got it?”

Yuuri nodded dumbly, shock still coursing through his body, brain not quite able to process the words or the implication behind them.

“I hope you love him.” Yuri said and his voice was a little quieter, with the faintest hint of vulnerability creeping into his tone. Like there was much more to the words than he was saying or would ever say. But when Yuri spoke again the full force of his glare had returned and his voice was tight and angry, steel walls slamming up behind his eyes and cutting off any hint of other emotions.

“But if you don’t and you keep screwing with him, I’ll make you regret it.”

With that he spun around and stormed off, shoulders hunched and tense, anger still radiating from every pore.

Yuuri just stared after him, shell-shocked. After a few seconds he let out a breath that he hadn’t realised he had been holding and turned to hurry away before someone else walked into the corridor and saw him, mind whirling. Once he was outside he hailed a taxi to take him to the airport and slumped into the back seat, still trying to process what he had just heard.

Yuuri had no idea what had caused the encounter, what had caused *Yuri Plisetsky* to yell at him, to
glare at him like he was the worst person on the earth. So much of what was said just didn’t make sense and Yuuri could barely process it all, could barely register the new information that had suddenly been brought to light, such as the fact that apparently one of Viktor’s rink-mates knew about them, likely more than one. That they had been found out, somehow.

There was so much that didn’t make sense, so much to process but one thing stood out above all the others, circling in his head and getting louder and louder until it was echoing in his ears even as the taxi ride ended and he stepped into the airport. I hope you care about Viktor. No. Not just care. You love him. ‘I hope you love him’. That was what Yuri had said. ‘I hope you love him.’ Love him. Love him.

In his chest Yuuri could feel his heart beating fast, thumping against his ribs in an almost painful rhythm. He never thought about it before, never really let himself. Subconsciously pushed it away because it was easier like that. But finally he was confronted with the words and they were spinning round in his head, repeating themselves over and over and suddenly everything made sense. Everything that had happened over the past few years, everything that he had never acknowledged fully, not even in his own mind.

He didn’t hate Viktor. He hadn’t hated him for years. Part of him had always known that even if another part of him still clung onto the memory of the time-worn feeling. The obsession that had lived within him for so long, the obsession with beating Viktor had changed. Viktor had changed in Yuuri’s mind. He was no longer as he once was, a figure to loath, to obsess over, a motivation to do whatever it took to tear him down. He was a person, a person who Yuuri knew now as he hadn’t before. A person who played with his dog and looked dishevelled in the mornings and who couldn’t cook to save his life. A person who was kind to Yuuri when he was in need, whose smile made his heart warm and whose touch made his skin burn.

Yuuri hadn’t hated Viktor in a long, long time. The feelings he felt now weren’t hatred. They were love.

It made sense. It had crept up on him slowly, little by little, touch by touch, word by word, smile by smile. Viktor had always been a part of his life, for as long as he could remember. Yuuri was like a planet orbiting a brightly burning star, caught in Viktor’s gravity. First he had worshiped him and then he had hated him but Viktor had always been there, always a part of him. And then his feelings had changed again and Yuuri could finally place a name to all the desperate wants and desires that had been building in him for years.

It explained why he kept coming back. Why he could never stay away. Why he never wanted to be touched by anyone the way Viktor touched him, never wanted to have anyone the way he had Viktor for the moments that they were together. Why he was so awfully, bitterly jealous at the thought of Viktor with someone else, why the thought of Viktor retiring made him feel sick. Why he never wanted what they had to end.

It was the biggest irony that the twists of fate could possibly have thrown at him, that the one person he had sworn to hate was the one he had ended up falling in love with.

“I love Viktor.”

He tried the words out on his tongue, curling them around his mouth, how they felt, how they tasted. “I love Viktor.” And there was nothing in them that rang false, no lie sour on his tongue. Only honesty, the kind he had been denying for a long time.

While his mind was occupied his body went through the familiar emotions, checking in, boarding the plane. It was only when Yuuri was on the aircraft, the rumble of the engines loud in his ears as they
prepared for take-off that the panic hit him. Panic, so strong it was almost all consuming because
another thought had just occurred to him. The revelation that he loved Viktor had been a softened
blow because there had been a part of him that had always known and when he finally put words to
the feeling it was less of a revelation and more of a realisation. But now a new thought had occurred
and it was something completely new and infinitely more terrifying.

The scariest part wasn’t that he was in love with Viktor. In a way, in the back of his mind, he had
known that for years.

The scariest part was that now, now that he knew...

He was going to have to tell Viktor.

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medusaconstellations: Look who I spotted at the Europeans Championships Men’s FS
#KatsukiYuuri

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theartymoose Omg!!! I wonder why he was there?

Azapgiel Scoping out the competition maybe?

Chamirablossom Or maybe not…

Chapter End Notes

Haha, you all thought it was going to be Chris and Phichit who finally got Yuuri to
figure it out but no, it was everyone’s favourite angry little Russian instead!

In regards to Yuri(o) in this fic, his feelings about Yuuri are actually very very
complicated and there is a backstory behind them that will be explored a lot more in the
Viktor POV companion fic. But since right now Yuuri is the narrator, he doesn’t get the
whole story, just like how in the anime we see Yurio yelling at Yuuri in episode 1 and
it’s not until we get a glimpse into Yurio’s mind during episode 12 that we see what he
really thought rather than just what Yuuri saw. But even though the main bulk of his
feelings will be in the companion fic he will be reappearing in this fic, I promise!

I’d love to here what you thought of this chapter, comments literally sustain me and are
literally the reason I write! You can also find me on tumblr where I do more
worldbuilding and stuff for this AU as well as updates on the next chapter.

Just a few other important notes:

There is now also a Chinese translation of this fic that can be found on Weibo and
Lofter
Lofter
Weibo

Loveprez made this incredible video of the fic that you all need to watch
here

Nerdalay made an awesome playlist that you can find on spotify
here

And wahsinternally made a wonderful playlist that you can find on 8tracks
here

linni-t drew this stunning fanart of the final scene of chapter 11
here
commanderrockhard drew this incredible fanart of the end scene of chapter 10
here
salanayuniasis drew this brilliant fanart of chapter 9
here
Friendlyobservant drew this super hot fanart of the bedroom scene from chapter 10
here
thelanabo drew this beautiful fanart of Yuuri and Viktor
here
nomadshipper drew this adorable fanart of one of the scenes in chapter 3
here
lethallana drew two wonderful pictures of scenes from chapter 11
here
here
emvisc drew this really sweet fanart of Yuuri and Viktor and Makkachin from chapter 11
here
innerreviwwitch drew this really cool fanart of Yuuri in the Eros costume
here
goofnuggetkarlaa drew this hilarious ‘draw the squad fanart of Yuuri and Viktor
here
ella2040 drew this amazing drawing of Viktor
here
ursora drew this cute little Instagram fanart of the borscht scene
here

See you next chapter!
Rey xx

Music Used:
Viktor’s SP: You Only Live Once from the YOI soundtrack
The first thing Yuuri did when he arrived back in Detroit was to tell Phichit everything.

His friend was already waiting for him when he walked back into their apartment, exhausted after the long flight and still shaken from the revelations of the previous day. The note that Yuuri had left Phichit had been brief, explaining only that he was going to watch the final day of the European Championships but with no justification as to why. Phichit would have been able to figure it out himself and Yuuri had already been planning on explaining it fully to him when he returned anyway, even before the revelations that had turned his life upside down. Now he just had much more to tell.

After keeping the secret from his friend for so long, once Yuuri had finally confessed to Phichit what was happening between him and Viktor he had promised he would tell his friend everything from that point forward and he had not broken that promise. Most of the time Yuuri didn’t particularly want to talk about it in depth and he never really spoke about his feelings, had never really examined them too closely himself. But he still told Phichit the facts, kept him updated and in return Phichit gave him the support that he hadn’t realised he was missing until he finally had it.

Phichit always knew exactly what to say, although his wariness of Viktor and the strange non-relationship Yuuri had with him often shone through in his words. When Yuuri had first confessed to Phichit all those years ago he had warned Yuuri against letting things go too far, had warned him that continuing with Viktor would complicate things in ways Yuuri himself didn’t even realise yet. And now it seemed that Phichit had been absolutely right and Yuuri wondered if the other boy had somehow known back then what would happen. Had known that Yuuri would be unable to keep his heart guarded and would eventually and inevitably fall for the man who had broken his heart before and now had the power to do so again.

But despite his wariness, Phichit had never judged Yuuri and his choices, had always been there as an ear to listen and a shoulder to cry on. Yuuri knew that he could rely on him above and beyond anyone else and so as soon as he recognised his own feelings, the feelings that had been growing inside him for years now unacknowledged, the first thing he did was sit down and explain everything to his friend.

It took a long time. Yuuri opened up fully, sparing no detail. How his feelings had grown, had changed over the years. How he had pushed them aside, refused to acknowledge the shift until finally he was forced to confront it once and for all. The way Viktor made him feel, the sweet joy of being near him combined with the ache of the knowledge that Viktor wasn’t his and that what they had wasn’t built to last. The desire for more, for something stronger. His fears, the fears that ate at him every day and were twisted into everything he thought and said and did. Everything he could think of until all the words were spent and he had nothing left to say but one final sentence, the culmination of everything.

“I’m in love with Viktor.” he finished, watching warily for Phichit’s reaction. Phichit knew all of his sordid history with Viktor, knew how much and how deeply it had affected Yuuri. He had warned Yuuri time and time again that continuing to meet with Viktor was a bad idea, that from what Yuuri had told him of Viktor and their time together that it could only ever end in heartbreak.

“I know.” Phichit answered, giving Yuuri a small smile. There was a complicated mix of emotions on his face, a little sad, a little happy, a little resigned. “I’ve suspected for a while now.”
“What?” Yuuri stared at him dumbly in return, not quite fully registering the response. “What do you mean you know?”

“I mean, I know that you’re in love with Viktor. I’d already guessed, I’ve had my suspicions for years.” Phichit reached out and squeezed Yuuri’s shoulder in a gesture of comfort, sliding next to him so that they were sitting close. “I know you say you’ve only just realised it Yuuri but you’ve been in love with Viktor for a long time. It’s in the way you talk about him. The way you look at him. The things you do for him. I’d have to be blind not to see it.”

“But…why didn’t you tell me?” Yuuri sputtered, still reeling a little. “If you thought I was in love with Viktor why didn’t you tell me that I was?”

“Why didn’t I tell you your own feelings?” Phichit raised an eyebrow playfully and Yuuri felt his face heat up a little. When Phichit put it like that it sounded stupid but his point still stood.

“Yuuri, your feelings for Viktor, they’re something you had to figure out for yourself. I suspected what was happening, that you had fallen in love with him, but you were insistent that it meant nothing, that it was nothing. That you still felt the same way you’d always felt. Telling you would have only made it worse, made it harder for you to accept your feelings. I mean, can you honestly say that you wouldn’t have reacted badly if I told you you were in love with the man you kept insisting you still hated?”

Yuuri could see exactly what Phichit meant. If his friend had tried to tell him that he was in love with Viktor before he would have denied it, would have rejected the idea, felt betrayed by his friend, and it would have only made it harder in the long term to accept his feelings. Yuuri had been adamant for so many years that what existed between him and Viktor meant nothing, that nothing would ever come of it. Accepting the new knowledge was hard enough when he had come to the realisation on his own, if he had been told his own emotions he would have refuted it, dismissed the thought as ridiculous, there was no question about it.

“The only way you were ever going to be able to accept that you’d fallen for him was if you realised it for yourself.” Phichit continued and Yuuri nodded in understanding because the words were true. He might have needed the push from Yuri Plisetsky, the ultimatum he had been given, to kick-start the process but the realisation was one he had come to on his own.

“And if you never realised it, you never loved him and I was wrong.” Phichit finished. “If you really, truly loved him, you had to figure it out sooner or later. But you had to do it only when you were ready to accept it. I couldn’t tell you my suspicions, I couldn’t push you because it would have made it worse. It’s your life Yuuri. It’s your feelings, it’s your choice. No-one can do that for you.”

As always, Phichit was right and Yuuri would never stop being grateful for having a friend like him. Phichit had been there for him for so many years, giving support and advice and he was right. The realisation that he loved Viktor was one that Yuuri had to come to himself when he was finally ready to acknowledge and accept it. But now that he knew…

“What should I do?” he asked, already knowing the answer but needed to hear it from his friend regardless. “Now that I know, what should I do?”

“Tell him.” Phichit’s answer was immediate and without hesitation. “You need to tell him.”

It was only a confirmation of what Yuuri had already known but it was nice to hear it from Phichit all the same. Unfortunately, that didn’t lessen any of the terror the thought of confessing to Viktor brought on.
“If you’re in love with him you can’t keep on going the way you have been. It’ll only end up breaking your heart and god knows I’ve seen you cry over that man enough times when we were younger to never want it to happen again. You’ve spent a long time just being a thing on the side for Viktor and that was your choice, I couldn’t stop you. But you can’t keep doing that anymore. You both need to move forward, one way or another. You need to tell him you love him and if he cares about you he’ll commit. And if he doesn’t then you need to end it or it’ll only hurt you more.”

Yuuri couldn’t imagine ever giving Viktor up, ever being able to let him go no matter what Viktor’s true feelings for him were. But Phichit was right, if they kept going the way they were now, under the façade of a casual fling when Yuuri’s heart cried out for more it would kill him slowly. It had already been hard enough to live with when Yuuri wasn’t even aware of the extent of his own feelings. But now that he knew that he was completely, deeply and irrevocably in love with Viktor, being so close to him but knowing he could never have him would be beyond painful.

“I thought you didn’t like Viktor?” he asked instead, trying to banish the thoughts of living in such an agonising limbo by directing the conversation somewhere else.

Phichit was quite for a moment, contemplative.

“I hated Viktor for what he did.” Phichit said eventually. “For what he did to you. You might not remember it Yuuri, what you were like back then, but I do. You were so angry all the time and underneath it all you were hurting badly and there was nothing I could do to stop it. And that was all Viktor’s fault. And then you started sleeping with him and I was sure I knew what was going to happen next because you’re you. You don’t do casual flings, I don’t think you could even if you wanted to. It’s just not who you are. And when you love something you love it with your entire heart and soul and you were just handing that over to a man who had already ruined you once. So I was scared for you. I couldn’t stop you but I was scared of what was going to happen to you.”

Phichit shifted so that they were sitting closer and he looked more serious than Yuuri had ever seen him.

“I hated Viktor for what he did to you. But Yuuri, you’ve changed so much over the years. You’re not angry anymore. You’re skating because you love skating, you’re not tearing yourself apart for every tiny mistake like you used to. And you’re happy. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you as happy before as you are now and that’s because of Viktor.”

Phichit smiled a little, taking Yuuri’s hand in his and Yuuri could see how genuine it was, how much his friend cared.

“Viktor makes you happy. I’ve never met him although I know what you’ve told me about him and there are still some things that I want to hit him for for putting you through for all these years and damn the consequences. But he makes you happy. And I want you to be happy Yuuri. We all do. So if being with Viktor is what you want then I’ll do everything I can to make that happen.”

Yuuri could feel the tightness in his throat and the moisture begin to collect at the corner of his eyes and he pulled Phichit in for a hug, nearly crushing the other skater. Phichit hugged him back, rubbing a soothing hand up and down his back and Yuuri clung on. He had never done anything in his life good enough to deserve someone like Phichit as his friend but Yuuri would never stop thanking the world for giving him Phichit regardless.

“Thank you.” he said and his voice cracked a little at the words.

Eventually he pulled back and after a few seconds he finally voiced worries that the conversation had been unable to dispel, the ones that were still eating away at him and making the prospect of
“But what if he doesn’t want me? Or what if he doesn’t want to be with only me? I mean, he’s Viktor, he can have whatever he wants and I’m me. What if he doesn’t want to give it all up to commit to just me?”

“Then you end it.” Phichit said with an air of finality to his voice. “Because you deserve better than someone who can’t love you back the way you love them. But Yuuri, I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

At Yuuri’s questioning look he continued.

“Yuuri, how long have you been seeing Viktor? How long has it been since this all started?”

Yuuri couldn’t quite see the relevance of the question but he cast his mind back anyway, counting back to that first night at the World Championships when everything had finally come to a head and changed his life forever.

“Almost three years now I guess.” he said finally and Phichit nodded, looking satisfied.

“Three years. That’s a long time.”

“But we hardly see each other.” Yuuri protested because it was true that it was a long time but very little of that time had actually been spent together. Brief moments together and eons apart.

“Still Yuuri, three years. That’s not the kind of time you give to someone casually. If this really meant nothing to Viktor then he would have gotten bored and left by now.”

“And.” Phichit continued when Yuuri opened his mouth to protest. “If you were just a convenient fling at competitions that doesn’t explain what happened in Moscow. He let you stay in his apartment Yuuri. He let you into his life and you definitely weren’t just there for sex. That is not something you do for a casual thing.”

There was a certain logic to Phichit’s words and Yuuri turned them over in his mind, considering.

“Do you…do you think he loves me Phichit?” he finally asked and his voice was small, hesitant. He desperately wanted it to be true but he wasn’t sure, he was never sure.

“I don’t know if he loves you.” Phichit replied. “I don’t know how deep his feelings go but I know they must exist. I think he has the potential to love you at least, I’m sure of that. And I think the two of you could actually build something good out of this, you just need to give him a chance. Tell him you love him, talk to him properly. Stop running away from your feelings because I know you do and it’s not healthy. You need to have a real conversation with him, tell him everything just like you told me and then see what he says. Give him a chance Yuuri. Then we can work from there.”

Yuuri knew that he had a tendency to ignore his feelings, to push people away rather than deal with it like he knew he should. It had taken him long enough to figure out his feelings for Viktor after all and there was always so much left unsaid between them. They had talked yes, he had finally told Viktor what needed to be said, but they hadn’t really talked. Yuuri hadn’t wanted to think about the past, hadn’t wanted to talk things through and it left room for his worries to creep back in, insidious in the way that they always were. There was just enough doubt, just enough unsurety to make the thought of confessing infinitely terrifying.

“But what if he doesn’t?” Yuuri asked because even though Phichit’s words had dampened down the fear it was still very real and present at the back of his mind. “Or what if he does but just not
enough? What if he just wants to keep going the way we are, what if he doesn’t want a real relationship with me?” ‘What if he breaks my heart again’ are the words he left unspoken but they hung in the air all the same.

“Then I’ll make sure they never find his body.” Phichit joked, nudging his shoulder against Yuuri’s and causing him to let out a strangled sort of laugh, the humour breaking a little of the tension in the room.

“But seriously Yuuri, if he doesn’t want you then you move on. You stop this and you let him go. Because you’re amazing and you deserve the world and if he can’t see that then he doesn’t deserve you.”

“So I tell him.” Yuuri said and he could feel the finality of his statement, the commitment in his words. He had given Viktor the power to destroy him once before and Viktor had torn him down without a second thought. To give him that power over Yuuri again was madness. And yet Yuuri handed his heart over willingly and without regret and now all there was left to do was to take a chance and pray that Viktor wouldn’t shatter it again.

“So you tell him.” Phichit replied. “And hope that he makes the right choice.”

Phichit’s words followed Yuuri through the next few weeks and he turned them over and over again in his mind as the time flew by. During the Four Continents he was distracted, enough that some people began to comment on it but he couldn’t bring himself to care. His mind was too focused on the upcoming World Championships and who would be waiting for him there.

He had debated for a while whether he should confess to Viktor then and there but had eventually dismissed the idea. As Phichit had so aptly put it, ‘as much as I love the power of social media Yuuri, I think this is a conversation you need to have face to face.’ He was right, Yuuri knew. He would never be able to muster up the courage to tell Viktor in any other way and to do it from a distance would give him too much of a chance to panic and run. And he couldn’t just randomly show up on Viktor’s doorstep to confess his love out of the blue. So he would wait for the World Championships and he would tell Viktor there.

But as the date grew ever nearer his worries only grew along with it.

He was sure Viktor didn’t hate him anymore. Knew from the way that Viktor acted that that must have changed a long time ago. But he couldn’t be sure if Viktor’s feeling were any more than that. Viktor had never said anything and surely if he wanted a relationship with Yuuri, if he cared about him, he would have said something by now? Unless there was something holding him back, a reason that Yuuri couldn’t see or understand that prevented him from revealing what he felt, just like Yuuri’s blindness to his own feelings had stopped him.

And on the other hand, what if Viktor really didn’t feel the same? If Yuuri really was just convenient for him the way the darkest parts of his mind would whisper to him on his worst days. What if Viktor
didn’t want to give everything up for Yuuri, didn’t want to commit to Yuuri and be his in the way that Yuuri had been Viktor’s for years. What if he just wanted to keep going the way they were, close but never close enough and with a time limit that was rapidly running out. A relationship, a real relationship between them would be hard. They lived in separate countries after all, it would take time and effort and commitment and Viktor might not want to bother. Or what if Yuuri’s confession drove him away, what if the strength of Yuuri’s feelings made him end it. Yuuri wasn’t sure how he would survive it if he lost Viktor forever, if Viktor broke his heart again.

When the World Championships finally began Yuuri’s worries turned into full grown panic. He had spent a very long time running from his feelings and if confronting them was hard, the thought of voicing them was terrifying.

Despite so much time apart, he didn’t actually get a chance to see Viktor before the day of the short programs. He and Celestino landed in Tokyo late and there was no opportunity to sneak away to see Viktor that night. Instead Yuuri was forced to wait until the competition began the next day.

Even then it was hard. He and Viktor were constantly surrounded by people, other skaters, coaches, press, fans, endless faces that pressed in all around them, always watching. Yuuri couldn’t say anything in front of them, there was no way he was ready for that. Confessing to Viktor would be hard enough. Confessing in front of the whole world would be impossible.

The time seemed to fly by, lacking any kind of opportunity for a private conversation, and all too soon Yuuri found himself preparing to skate his short program, encouraged by the thunderous cheers from the audience.

The World Championships that year were in Tokyo which meant that Yuuri was skating on home ground. And it showed. The entire stadium was filled with Japanese flags, banners with his name plastered across them, his face staring back at him from numerous posters spread across the crowd. The audience was even more enthusiastic than they had been at the NHK Trophy and Yuuri could almost feel the pressure and expectations weighing down on him like a physical force in the room.

Everyone wanted to see their champion take home the gold again, wanted to see him face off against the Russian Legend and win like they knew he could. Yuuri had grown better and better with dealing with the pressure of competitions over the years with the help from Phichit, Celestino and his therapist but that didn’t make him completely immune to the nerves that were wracking him when he prepared to step out onto the ice.

Viktor was standing on the side-lines with his coach, a little distance from Yuuri as he prepared to skate, running through a last few preparations for his own program. Yuuri looked to him as he walked to the rink, taking in every little detail of Viktor’s face. It was for Viktor that he would be skating his next routine after all and he wanted to see the man properly before, even if he couldn’t tell him what he so desperately needed to with the thousands of eyes watching them.

Viktor looked up, seeming to feel Yuuri’s gaze on him and his face broke out into a smile. They were separated by several meters of space but they were close enough that Yuuri was able to hear his voice even above the roar of the crowds.

“頑張って Yuuri!” Viktor called to him and Yuuri startled a little at the sound of his native language rolling off Viktor’s tongue. The words came out slightly distorted, Viktor’s Russian accent much more noticeable to Yuuri when it was present in the language he had known from birth. But despite the strangeness, the sound was strangely pleasing, the Russian lilt to the words of luck sending a little shiver up his spine.

“Удачи Viktor” he called back, wanting to return the sentiment. When he had been much, much
younger he had begun to learn a little Russian, secretly in the hopes that one day he would be able to use it on his idol. It had been incredibly difficult and Yuuri had only picked a smattering of phrases, most of them useless. But even after everything, they had stuck with him throughout the years and it was weirdly ironic that he finally had use for them now.

Viktor’s eyes lit up at the words but beside him his coach scowled, barking something in Russian and tugging on Viktor’s arm, practically dragging him away. Around Viktor, some of the fans sitting at the front of the stands seemed to have heard the brief exchange and the hiss of whispering started up, many of them throwing confused or curious looks in Yuuri’s direction or at Viktor’s retreating figure.

Yuuri turned away, trying to force himself not to notice but only being semi successful.

Seeing Viktor had helped calm his nerves a little however and when he made his way out onto the ice to perform his routine he was able to work through them, skating to the music and allowing himself to fall back into the familiar routine. Everything wasn’t perfect, not like it had been at the Rostelecom Cup, but the routine felt comfortable and easy and Yuuri found it took relatively little effort to summon up the images he needed to get himself back into the right mindset. The cheers and gasps from the audience were a distraction and he almost let the pressure get to him a few times but he fought it back down, consciously making an effort to calm himself to give the best performance that he could.

Once the music finally stopped he allowed himself to relax and take in the praise that the audience rained down upon him, smiling and waving tiredly to the crowd. While his routine hadn’t been flawless it had still been excellent and full of passion and that was reflected in his results, the high marks immediately boosting him to the top of the score table.

There were a few skaters in between him and Viktor and so Yuuri used the time to appease the reporters, giving a few statements and quick interviews to get them off his back before going with Celestino to sit on the stands to watch the last couple of performances.

It was strange, watching the other skaters. For so long so much of his focus had been dedicated to Viktor and Viktor alone but the realisation that Viktor wouldn’t be skating forever had thrown everything into a new perspective. Each year new skaters were rising up through the ranks and they would continue skating long after Viktor was gone. Long after Yuuri was gone as well because the thought of Viktor’s retirement had made him seriously think about his own. He was twenty-three, not old enough to be forced to go just yet but old enough that if he left now no-one would be surprised. Skaters were only competitive for a short time and just like how someday Viktor would leave competitive skating for good, so too would Yuuri.

Who would be standing on that podium, when they both were gone? There were plenty of eager young skaters ready to claim the title. The Kazakhstani skater performing as Yuuri mulled the thoughts over was definitely one of them, talented and with a unique skating style and determination that would take him far. And he was just one of many. Their battles would continue long after both Yuuri and Viktor left and it was a strange thought but not a sad one.

Yuuri wasn’t sure what he would do once he retired. There were still a good few years of skating left in him and there was no reason to worry, he would have plenty of opportunities even after he stopped competing, just like Viktor would. But it wouldn’t be the same.

He needed to tell Viktor, he needed to try. Before they both retired and Yuuri lost the chance. What they had was unsustainable and it needed to change, needed to move forward or Yuuri would lose it - lose Viktor - forever. The younger skaters would keep skating but he and Viktor would eventually step down and when they did, Yuuri hoped that maybe, just maybe, they would have been able to
build something strong enough to last even after they no longer had skating to bring them both together. Something more than the insubstantial threads that connected them now, the careful dance around each other that was now so much less than what he truly wanted.

After the Kazakhstani skater finished his routine and left the ice to cheers and applause, Viktor reappeared, looking cheerful and relaxed. As the other skater was in the kiss and cry he ran through a couple of last minute stretches before taking off his skate guards and stepping onto the ice as his name was called over the speaker.

When every other skater had slid onto the rink it had been to cheers and whoops and whistles and thunderous applause from the audience. With Viktor, it was different.

There was still cheering for him, still loud applause and cries from enthusiastic fans but there were additional sounds in the mix, a low undercurrent of hissing, twisting and malicious. A few outright boos and catcalls that stood out sharply in contrast to the rest and made Yuuri tense up in anger, glaring at the crowd because how dare they?

It shouldn’t be as unexpected as it was but the shock of the actions still hit Yuuri like a punch to the gut. He had dealt with similar things before, some fans of Viktor were very vocal in their dislike for him and it was always especially bad when he was competing in Viktor’s home country but he had learned to tune it out over the years.

It was a shock however, to hear the same thing directed at Viktor. Viktor was figure skating’s living legend, people adored him and were falling over themselves to please him. But this was Yuuri’s home, his country, his territory. And the people here were almost overwhelmingly on his side, loyal to the core. They wanted him to win and more than that, they wanted him to beat Viktor.

Somehow, the supposed rivalry between the two of them had spun rapidly out of control, the story getting more and more elaborate and dramatized the more that it was told. Yuuri had never consciously encouraged it and neither had Viktor. They had never spoken badly about each other to the press, had never explicitly stated the desire to beat each other. But Yuuri had been young and careless and his dislike of Viktor had shone through clearly enough for the world to see. His anger and frustration at constantly losing to the man, his desperate desire to beat him.

Viktor had been skating’s golden boy and no-one had come close to him for years. So when Yuuri appeared, young and viciously determined to tear Viktor down the press and fans had latched onto it, had spun a tale of a bitter rivalry that might have been somewhat true then but was so wrong now. Neither of them had encouraged it but it had happened and now it was far, far beyond either of their control.

Yuuri had experienced his fair share of backlash from fans and the press alike, had been branded arrogant, a usurper, and upstart that needed to be knocked back down to where he belonged. But he had never realised how much of a two way street it had become, not until he heard the reaction of the crowd as Viktor prepared to skate, not until he felt the cruel desire to see Viktor fail twisting in the air around him.

Maybe many, many years ago Yuuri might have enjoyed the reaction, would have been satisfied with the idea that there were people who wanted to tear Viktor down to raise him up. But now the thought did nothing but horrify him. Viktor seemed unfazed, waving to his fans and moving to take his starting position with an easy grace but Yuuri had been in his position before and he knew the way the cries could slither under the skin, the way the negativities seemed to drown out the support of the rest of the crowd so easily.

He wanted to yell at them, to the people who aimed their hatred so obviously at Viktor to stop it, to
shut up and never dare insult him again. To scream that Yuuri didn’t want that, didn’t want to see Viktor fail just so that he could get some sort of hollow victory. He wanted Viktor to skate his best, to love skating the way Yuuri loved skating. Yuuri wanted to win yes, but he wanted to win against Viktor at his best, with the crowd supporting both of them in equal measure. He wanted everyone to love Viktor because it hurt to see otherwise and hurt more to know that he was to blame.

But he couldn’t say anything because a hush was falling over the crowd and the music was starting and had Viktor begun to skate, still seeming completely unfazed.

Yuuri watched, mesmerised. Before he wouldn’t have thought it possible but Viktor’s short program was even better than it had been when Yuuri had seen him at the Grand Prix Final and it was so much livelier and full of life than when he had watched Viktor during the Europeans. Viktor was stunning and Yuuri never wanted him to stop, the beauty of the routine temporarily driving away thoughts of what had happened moments before.

But eventually the routine came to a close and Viktor acknowledged the cheers from the audience with a smile and wave, ignoring the disappointment that was ripping just under the surface of many of the fans who had cheers so joyfully for Yuuri just minutes before.

The displeasure only rose once Viktor’s scores were announced, placing him slightly above Yuuri in the score table. There was still a huge wave of cheering and celebrating from Viktor’s fans but Yuuri could sense the irritation from those around him and it terrified him.

He left as soon as he could, just wanting to escape from the oppressive atmosphere of the stadium. After the performances he wanted to see Viktor more than ever but Viktor was busy talking to reporters and Yuuri couldn’t approach him, not in public. Instead he went back to the hotel, showering the grim of the day away until he finally felt fresh and clean again and changing out of his costume into more comfortable clothes.

As he was finishing redressing there was a buzz from across the room and the screen of his phone lit up, alerting him to the fact that he had a message. Walking across the room he scooped up the device, flicking his thumb across the screen to open the text in full and reading it quickly.

Viktor Nikiforov

Would you like to get dinner with me tonight? We could get room service if you don’t want to leave the hotel?

The words made something warm in Yuuri and he sent back a response as quickly as he could. Objectively it hadn’t been that long since he had last seen Viktor but it had felt like years, the time dragging and dragging until they could be together again. And being at the stadium had made it worse, being so close to Viktor but not able to approach him like he so desperately wanted for fear of the judgmental eyes that were always watching. A quite room service dinner at the hotel was exactly the opportunity he had been looking for.

Viktor Nikiforov

I’m still at the rink with the reporters but I left the door of my room unlocked. I’ll meet you there as
soon as I can

Viktor Nikiforov
Room 101

The room was a few floors away from Yuuri but it only took him a couple of minutes to walk there, slipping through the corridors of the hotel with practiced ease. Once he got to the door he hurried quickly inside, glad that the hallway was empty and that no-one would spot where he was going.

The door clicked softly shut behind him and Yuuri took in the empty room, pleasant but sparse in the way that most hotel rooms were. An empty suitcase stood at the foot of the bed and the door of the wardrobe was hanging slightly open, offering a glimpse into the rack of clothes hanging within. Yuuri was hit with the sudden urge to look closer, to pry through Viktor’s things for more tiny glimpses at the man to whom he had given his heart but he resisted. Viktor had trusted him enough to allow him into his hotel room and Yuuri wasn’t about to betray that hospitality by invading Viktor’s privacy.

It was only after he arrived however that Yuuri realised he had no idea what he was supposed to do now. At Viktor’s text he had immediately come running, wanting to see the man after time spent apart but Viktor had already told Yuuri that he wasn’t back yet and likely wouldn’t be for a while. He had offered Yuuri his room but he probably hadn’t expected Yuuri to show up straight away, to be sitting there waiting for him when he returned. Now that Yuuri thought about it the action seemed desperate, embarrassingly so.

But he had no idea when Viktor would be back and there was no point leaving now. Instead he sat on the bed, waiting and letting his mind wander back to the events of the day.

He knew he would have to tell Viktor. But his fears had only been amplified by what had happened at the rink and Yuuri couldn’t help the worry that arose at the idea of confessing and what might come after.

The primary fear, the fear of rejection, was always on his mind. But there was more than that. Even if Viktor accepted his feelings, even if they managed to work something out, their lives didn’t exist in isolation, in the little bubble they had managed to create for themselves away from prying eyes where they could simply be together.

Even if everything went exactly the way Yuuri dreamed it would, nothing would be easy. They might be able to keep it a secret for a while but a full-blown relationship was impossible to hide, unlike brief encounters in anonymous hotel rooms. Eventually people would find out and they would have to deal with the fallout when they did. And fallout there would be.

The media had always been a part of both of their lives, an ominous presence hanging over them, interwoven into everything. The news, the reporters, the fans, they all had a hand in creating the concept of the bitter rivalry that was still so alive in the minds of almost everyone to that day. The fantasy that he and Viktor still hated each other, still wanted nothing more than to beat each other was still very present in the minds of all their fans and it had polarised the figure skating world into two groups, regardless of either of their own desires. There were fans of Yuuri that hated Viktor, there had been a pretty clear demonstration of that today, and it went both ways, with some of Viktor’s fans absolutely despising Yuuri. How would they react, to find out the truth?
And even without the hatred, even with the fans that were still reasonable, what kind of reactions could they expect from them? People loved the rivalry, loved the concept of a bitter struggle for victory and to undermine that whole image, to expose themselves for what they had actually become to each other would shock the world. Maybe the reactions would be good. Maybe people would support them, see it as romantic, two rivals falling in love under the most unlikely circumstances. But then again, they might not.

They might feel betrayed, like everything they knew about the two of them was a lie. They might think that they had been faking it for publicity all these years, that they were frauds. Or that they had gotten together as a publicity stunt rather than due to any real feelings.

People might be disappointed, might feel let down. The rivalry had extended beyond just them, it had become a point of national pride. Both he and Viktor skated with the weight of their respective countries on their backs and Yuuri had no idea how the people of his home would react to the knowledge that he had fallen in love with the man they were all so desperate to see him beat. Would they feel betrayed, feel like Yuuri had given in to the enemy? What of Viktor’s home? Would they think that Viktor was weak, that he had chosen Yuuri, the man who had broken his winning streak and stolen his medals not once now but time and time again?

And there was another fear, one that clawed at Yuuri’s insides and made him feel sick just to think about it. He had started sleeping with Viktor at the World Championships three years ago, just after he had begun to win gold. Every medal he had won since then he had won on his own merits, he knew he had. Viktor would never lose on purpose, he respected Yuuri as a skater far too much for that.

But that’s not what people would say. The media was vicious and the gossip articles spared no mercy. They would tear Yuuri down, claim they he only fucked Viktor to get the gold, claim that everything he had worked so hard for was a sham and if that happened it would break him. Yuuri had spent his whole life proving his worth, proving himself and the thought of all his achievements, all the medals that he had bled and sweated and cried for, all being attributed to underhand tactics and cheap sexual favours would hurt more than he could bare.

There was so much that could go wrong, so much that could ruin everything. Yuuri had no idea how people would actually react but the endless possibilities, each worse than the last made his fear build and build until he was choking on it.

Maybe it would all be fine. Maybe people would be supportive, maybe the fans would be delighted, maybe the world would think it was a lovely story and accept everything with no viciousness and spite. But even then, the thought of going public still made him feel sick with worry.

Yuuri was private, as private as he could be with so much of his life in the limelight. But if he and Viktor began a relationship, they would never be left alone. Every move they made would be scrutinised, criticised and analysed. People would pry into their private lives with more vigour than ever, would never be satisfied until they knew every little detail about them that Yuuri wanted to keep from the world. They would never be able to be a completely normal couple, not with the spotlight that would be glaring down on them. The media, the fans, they would always be watching, always present.

Yuuri wanted Viktor. He wanted to be with Viktor, more than he had ever wanted anything in his life and more than he would ever want anything again. But he wanted them to exist as they had in Moscow, cut away from the world with no-one to worry about but each other. He didn’t want the crushing pressure that their fame would place on them, didn’t want the eyes of the world watching. He just wanted Viktor.
It would be easier for things to stay as they were, deeds done behind closed doors where no-one could see. If Yuuri didn’t confess, if nothing changed between them then he would never have to deal with the world and their expectations and whatever consequences came with it.

But that wasn’t an option, not really. Yuuri had to confess. They couldn’t go on as they were, not now that Yuuri knew his love and was desperate to have it returned. Viktor needed to know, Viktor deserved to know. And whatever reaction he gave, at least Yuuri would know that he tried, that he did everything he could. If Viktor rejected him, that knowledge would finally allow him to let go.

And if Viktor didn’t, then Yuuri had a chance. A chance to build something with Viktor, something good, something to hold on to. A chance that Viktor would stay even after he retired, a chance that they could be together. Really be together, in the way that Yuuri longed for. A chance for a future.

So Yuuri had to tell Viktor. And only then could he try to deal with everything that came after, whatever that might be.

While he had been thinking Yuuri hadn’t really been aware of the time passing and it was only after he glanced at his phone that he realised how long he had been there. At some point he had changed from sitting on the edge of the bed to curled up lying on top of the covers, trapped in his own head.

Part of him wanted to move but the bed was comfortable and he was tired after such a long day. Skating was always exhausting and he found himself more and more disinclined to get up the longer he lay there, waiting for Viktor to return.

Instead he tried to banish the worries that were still twisting in his gut and turn his mind to what exactly he was going to say to Viktor, how exactly to confess. He could hardly just blurt out a confession of love. Planning was essential, he needed to know exactly what he was going to say and how he was going to do it so he wouldn’t freeze at the last moment. Phichit had been right that he had a tendency to run away, to ignore things that he didn’t want to deal with and he needed to make sure that didn’t happen here.

Maybe he should tell Viktor over dinner. It was the perfect moment, they would be alone and private and Yuuri had the easy escape route out the door and back to his room if everything went wrong and Viktor turned him down.

But what would he say? He could hardly just blurt the words out with no warning but he couldn’t even begin to imagine how he would broach the topic. There was no good way to introduce the idea, no way that would feel easy and natural. He could hardly take the casual route, ‘this dinner is delicious Viktor and also by the way I’ve been in love with you for years and I want to be with you forever’ was definitely not the way to start the conversation. But he also didn’t want for it to be too heavy, wanted to give Viktor the chance to refuse without making it horrifically awkward for both of them.

‘Viktor I have something to tell you.’ That was a good start. Casual enough that it wouldn’t put either of them too on edge but still emphasising the importance of what was about to come. That was something at least.

Yuuri continued to turn it over in his head, running through every possible scenario he could imagine, every one of the ways that Viktor could react and how he would deal with each. As he did so the minutes ticked on and Yuuri found his eyes begin to fall shut as he imagined, the softness of the bed moulding to his body where he lay.

Eventually his thoughts began to drift away from him as the tiredness of the day began to take over. Yuuri could feel his breathing begin to slow, could feel the heaviness that settled over his eyes and
he couldn’t find the willpower to shake it off. Instead he drifted, not quite asleep but gradually sliding further and further away from consciousness.

It was in that dreamlike state that Yuuri hovered in as more time slid quickly past. He could have continued like that for hours, could probably have drifted fully into sleep if he had had the chance but instead he was startled back into full awareness by a sound, a faint thud that tugged on the edge of his senses and made him sit up in surprise, rubbing at his eyes blearily.

Viktor was looking at him guiltily from across the room. Caught up in his own mind and lured by the pull of sleep Yuuri had completely missed him coming in the door and he could feel his cheeks colour at the fact that he had just been caught dozing in Viktor’s bed by the man himself.

“Sorry.” Viktor said quickly as soon as he saw Yuuri sit up. “I was trying not to wake you.”

It was a sweet gesture, especially since it was Viktor’s own room and technically he could do what he liked, and Yuuri felt the affection bloom in his chest, curling round his heart that was beating a little faster at the sight of the other man.

“It’s ok.” he replied, running his fingers through his hair to try and flatten it where he knew the bed covers must have turned it into a rumpled mess. “I’m sorry for almost falling asleep. I didn’t mean to but it’s been a long day and I was more tired than I realised.”

“I know the feeling.” Viktor smiled and came closer, sitting on the edge of the bed where Yuuri was, turned to face him. “If you just want to go back to sleep don’t let me stop you. We can easily skip dinner.”

Yuuri stomach chose that exact moment to let out a large grumble and Viktor laughed lightly at Yuuri as the embarrassment flooded through him.

“Or maybe not.” he added, before grabbing a piece of paper off the nightstand. On closer inspection Yuuri saw that it was the hotel information pack, including the pages about room service. Conveniently the text was written in both Japanese and English which saved him from having to translate the whole thing for Viktor.

Together they chose a few items off the menu, Yuuri mournfully passing over the option for Katsudon. As per tradition he could only eat it if he won a competition and he hadn’t won yet. And there was also the strange feeling that he didn’t really want Viktor trying the dish for the first time in an impersonal hotel room in Tokyo. Yuuri’s mother made the best Katsudon in the world and there was a secret part of him that wanted Viktor to try the dish for the first time from her.

Once they had chosen the food Viktor insisted that Yuuri order it for them over the hotel phone, claiming that it would be better for Yuuri to do it since he actually spoke the language. Yuuri put up a token protest, ‘you know they do actually speak English here too Viktor’ but he caved quickly. There was no real reason not to and it was nice to have the chance to speak in his native language for a change. After so long in Detroit Yuuri had grown used to communicating almost exclusively in English but the comfortable familiarity of his mother tongue was something he still missed.

Yuuri ordered quickly, the words rolling off his tongue effortlessly as Viktor watched, looking intrigued, and the food arrived not long after, the staff in such an upmarket hotel as efficient as always. Together he and Viktor passed the time talking comfortably, aimless conversation about the competition and everything that had happened in the time since they had last seen each other at the Grand Prix Final that continued once the food had arrived.

Strangely, Viktor didn’t comment on the fact that Yuuri had been present at the European
Championships and Yuuri didn’t bring it up. Despite being careful, he had been spotted there and although the information had never made the leap from social media to the news he would have thought that Viktor would have seen it somehow. After all, Viktor was very active on social media. And even if he had missed it there, Yuuri would have thought that he other Yuri might have said something, might have told Viktor that Yuuri had been there even if he hadn’t come to meet Viktor during his brief stay.

But if Viktor knew he was keeping quiet about it and Yuuri decided it was best not to bring up the fact. There was no good explanation that he could give and ‘I missed you so I flew halfway across the world to see you for a night but didn’t actually come and say hello’ sounded bad in his head and would invariably sound much worse out loud. Instead he steered clear of the topic altogether.

All throughout the meal, throughout the conversation, Yuuri tried to bring up the courage to tell Viktor the one thing that was really on his mind. Viktor seemed cheerful, talking animatedly and waving his chopsticks around when he was trying to make a point which forced Yuuri to stifle his amused laughter, but he never left a gap in the conversation, a lull that would be a good time for Yuuri to try and force himself to approach the topic that needed to be said.

At points, Yuuri almost just blurted it out but he bit it back every time. The fears from before were still very present and they felt like a gag, keeping the words locked away. Three words that should be so simple to say and yet felt so incredibly hard to get past his lips.

‘Tell him. Just tell him’ Yuuri tried to chide himself but still the words stuck in his throat, refusing to be spoken. The worries were still there, crowding in on his mind and so he talked and laughed with Viktor as though nothing was wrong and all the while tried to summon up the courage to say when needed to be said.

Eventually they finished eating and together they stacked the dishes out of the way, lapsing into a comfortable silence. Viktor was standing very close to him, shoulders pressed together and Yuuri could feel the heat of the contact, the comfortable warmth of Viktor being near. Throughout the whole meal Yuuri had noticed that he was being far more physically demonstrative with Viktor than he had ever been before, light touches on his hand and arm, standing so close and refusing to break warm point of contact. Yuuri just wanted to be close to Viktor, it had been so long, too long, and he didn’t want the feeling to end.

Maybe that would make him braver, he reasoned to himself. Touching Viktor, being with Viktor, it always gave him the confidence that he could find no-where else but the ice. Maybe that would help him finally find the courage to say what he needed to say.

They were standing so close that it barely took any effort at all for Yuuri to tilt his head up, to half turn towards Viktor so that he was facing the other man and looking up at him through his eyelashes. Viktor moved too, in perfect synchrony, ducking his head a little as he pressed a light kiss to Yuuri’s mouth, soft and sweet. There was something inevitable about the contact, like magnets drawn to each other time and time again.

Yuuri had known from the moment he had arrived in Viktor’s room that they would end up like this again at some point and this time he had finally come prepared for once. Buying the lube and condoms had been an embarrassing experience to say the least but he was a twenty-three year old adult and it was about time he stopped relying on Viktor to handle everything.

Dismissing the thought he pressed up into the contact, trying to draw courage from the kiss. ‘Say it now’ a part of him whispered but the words still wouldn’t come. Instead he deepened the kiss, wanting to feel more, to be closer.
Viktor responded almost instantly, his kiss changing from sweet to needy in a heartbeat. His hands found their way quickly to Yuuri’s waist and Yuuri slid his own into Viktor’s hair, tilting his head to get a better angle. It had been so long, too long since they had last been together and Yuuri had missed Viktor with a desperate ache. The feeling bled over into his actions and he kissed Viktor harder, winding his fingers into Viktor’s hair and taking a few steps backwards until his back hit the hard surface of the wall behind him.

Viktor followed willingly, pressing Yuuri back and keeping him close. His kisses were matching Yuuri’s eagerness perfectly, his hands digging marks into Yuuri’s hips and Yuuri wondered if maybe, just maybe, Viktor had missed him too. ‘Tell him’ his mind whispered, more insistent now. ‘Tell him and you’ll know.’

But still the words wouldn’t quite come, still stuck in his throat and Yuuri didn’t want to end the moment so instead he just settled for kissing Viktor harder, faster, pulling him as close as they could be without even an inch of space between them.

Viktor’s hands slid across his hips, thumbs rubbing small circles into the exposed skin and fingers gripping tightly. After a few minutes of kissing as the sense of urgency increased Viktor pulled away, his lips swollen and red and his pupils widened and dark.

“What do you want Yuuri?” he asked and his voice was rough and low and made heat pool in the pit of Yuuri’s stomach. “Tell me what you want.”

Instead of replying Yuuri reached blindly into his back pocket, fumbling for a second before finally drawing out the condom and the packet of lube that he had hastily shoved in there as he left his room. Not leaving himself time to be embarrassed he pressed them both into Viktor’s hand, watching the way the man’s eyes widened slightly at the gesture, his pupils seeming to dilate even further.

“Are you sure Yuuri?” Viktor asked and Yuuri could hear the concern in his voice, mixing with the lust that was so evident on his face. “You’re skating tomorrow.”

“Yes, I am.” Yuuri drew back a little to look Viktor in the eye, wanting to make his point clear. He wanted to feel Viktor, to feel possessed by the man and be possessive in return. Wanted to be close to him, as close as they could be and maybe then he would finally have the courage to take the final step and blurt out what he had been trying to say for so long. It was probably an awful idea the night before the free skate but he couldn’t bring himself to care.

“So make me remember you when I do.”

Viktor let out a choked little noise at the words and his fingers flexed on Yuuri’s hips, digging deeper. Capturing Yuuri’s lips in another kiss he pressed them both further back into the wall, licking up into Yuuri’s mouth and making his knees go weak.

Their last time had been slow, almost lazy, comfortable and easy but this time Yuuri could feel his own desperation and how it was reflected back off Viktor, driving them both further and faster. An absent part of his mind wondered if maybe they should take this to the bed as he pulled his shirt up over his head, Viktor following a second after but the thought was quickly driven from his mind. He wanted to be close to Viktor now, didn’t even want to stop to move. They had spent months apart and Yuuri couldn’t bear distance even for a second longer.

Once they were both completely undressed Viktor let his hands roam freely across Yuuri’s skin, leaving trails of heat wherever they went. It was almost as if he was mapping out Yuuri’s body, trying to touch every part of it and leave the memory burned into his skin. Yuuri was hardly complaining. His body was reacting to the touches and he pressed them both closer, urging Viktor on
“Yuuri, I want to try something. Something new for you.” Viktor panted, pulling away slightly but still keeping them pressed close. “I’ll make you feel good, I promise. Will you let me try?”

“Yes.” Yuuri replied before leaning in and stealing another kiss. He trusted Viktor, trusted his words and Viktor had never let him down before. He had already given himself over mind, body and soul and he knew that he would give Viktor anything he asked for without a moment’s hesitation.

Viktor smiled at him and it made Yuuri’s heart soar, the way his face softened, the way the expression lit up his features. Viktor was beautiful when he smiled, all the more so because Yuuri knew that the smile was for him and him alone, that he had put it there, that he was responsible for Viktor’s happiness in that moment. It was the best feeling in the world.

“Turn around.” Viktor whispered, pressing another kiss to his lips as his hands slid around Yuuri’s body, twisting him gently so that he was facing the wall and away from Viktor. Viktor was still pressed close, the lean line of his body a hot weight against Yuuri’s back. Yuuri could feel every inch of him and he shivered a little at the sensation, pressing back closer into Viktor’s heat.

With his head facing the wall Yuuri found that Viktor’s mouth was distressingly out of reach. Instead of kissing his lips however Viktor instead pressed a kiss to the shell of Yuuri’s ear, dragging his teeth along the skin lightly before working his way down Yuuri’s neck, pressing his lips to each of the knobs of his spine as he sank down lower. The touches made a new wave of heat roll through Yuuri and he braced his hands against the wall, trying to find some stability as Viktor moved lower and lower until he was finally kneeling on the ground behind Yuuri.

“Tell me if you want me to stop.” Viktor said and Yuuri heard the tearing sound as he opened the packet of lube Yuuri had brought with him that had been discarded on the floor moments before.

Yuuri shivered a little in anticipation, not quite sure what Viktor was planning but willing to go along with it anyway and he let out a soft gasp of pleasure when he felt a finger circle his entrance, warm and familiar. It had been a long time, too long, and he pushed back against the sensation, drawing Viktor in.

Viktor moved agonisingly slowly, working Yuuri open with a careful hand and he could feel himself squirming at the sensation, wanting more even as the pleasure began to build. He almost vocalised the thought but then he felt a wet heat at his entrance, teasing the sensitive skin there and the words turned quickly into a hitched gasp.

Viktor seemed to enjoy the sound as the fingers of one of his hands dug deeper into Yuuri’s skin, the other still pressed deep inside him and his tongue working alongside it, licking and teasing until Yuuri saw stars. He could feel the sweat begin to gather on his forehead and across his shoulder blades and he braced his hands against the wall, trying to keep his balance even as he felt his legs begin to go weak.

The sensation was strange, like nothing he had ever experienced before but his body was reacting to it and he could feel the heat and desire build within him. Viktor’s finger was still moving inside him and Yuuri couldn’t help the moan that he let out when Viktor’s tongue joined it, working him open with practiced ease. The heat dipped in and out, so good but still not enough and Yuuri found himself begging.

“Viktor…please…” he gasped out and Viktor obliged, adding another finger and sending another wave of pleasure run through his body.
“Does it feel good?” Viktor asked, pulling away for a moment and Yuuri let out a whine at the loss. Viktor’s voice was low and husky with his accent more pronounced the way it always was when he began to let go.

“Yes.” Yuuri gasped out because he didn’t want Viktor to stop and he could already feel his ability to form fully coherent words begin to slip away.

“Good.” Viktor said as he added another finger and there was something in his tone, a satisfaction that was laced through every word.

“I’m the only one who’s ever seen you like this. The only one who’s ever touched you like this. Made you feel like this.”

The words were hushed, reverent in the quiet of the room and Yuuri wanted to reply but then Viktor added a fourth finger and all rational thought was driven out of his head. Viktor was relentless and by the time he was finished Yuuri was already a panting and shivering mess. Somehow he had forgotten just what being with Viktor did to him and now that he finally had it back he couldn’t even begin to imagine losing it again. He wanted Viktor to keep touching him, to never stop touching him. He wanted to feel more, to be marked by Viktor, be claimed by him and claim him in return, join them both together and to never ever part.

Finally Viktor withdrew and he stood up behind Yuuri again in a fluid motion, body fitting perfectly along the curve of Yuuri’s spine. With his hands still braced on the wall, Yuuri was facing away from Viktor but as Viktor moved he heard the distinctive sound of a condom wrapper being torn open and he spun himself around, wanting to see Viktor’s face. His legs were still weak from what had just passed and he kept his back pressed against the wall, supporting his weight as he reached for Viktor, drawing him in.

Reaching up his hands to cup Yuuri’s face Viktor moved closer and Yuuri hooked one of his legs around Viktor’s waist, keeping him in place. He was ready, almost desperate and he didn’t want to wait any longer.

Viktor’s hand moved from his face to clutch tight onto his leg, almost bruising and his eyes were dark and wide.

“Are you ready?” he asked and Yuuri could do nothing but nod because Viktor was so, so beautiful and it took his breath away. He couldn’t understand how he somehow managed to have this, have Viktor. And more so, the arrogance of his desires, the selfish need to have Viktor not just now but for forever, the words that wouldn’t come that would beg him to stay.

When Viktor finally pushed in Yuuri could feel the thud reverberate through his skull as the back of his head connected with the wall, his back arching and his breath heaving in his chest. His grip on Viktor reflexively tightened and he could feel himself slide a few centimetres further down the wall, the support suddenly not enough to keep him fully upright as he gave himself over completely to the feeling.

Sweat slicked skin caressed his own as Viktor slid his free hand under Yuuri’s other thigh, Yuuri complying with the gesture instinctively and allowing Viktor to lift him from the floor so that both of his legs were wrapped tight around Viktor’s waist and his back was braced against the wall, keeping him balanced.

Despite the fact that the majority of his weight was resting on the wall behind him, Yuuri could still see the muscles standing out taught in Viktor’s arms from the effort as he held Yuuri in place, starting a slow rocking pace that gradually sped up as Yuuri dug his fingers deep into Viktor’s shoulder and
gasped his pleasure out loud.

His head was still thrown back against the wall, exposing the smooth line of his throat and Viktor latched onto it, kissing and sucking bruises into the skin where they would be impossible to hide. Sliding his hands up from Viktor’s shoulders Yuuri twined his fingers into the soft strands of Viktor’s hair, trying to memorise the feeling, to burn it into his mind so that he would never forget no matter what.

Viktor’s pace was unchanging but eventually Yuuri could see the strain begin to show in his muscles from holding Yuuri up for so long, pinning him in place against the wall as they moved together. For a second Yuuri considered offering to slide down, to stand on his own feet again to take the weight off. Viktor was skating the next morning as well after all and Yuuri didn’t want him to be hurt in any way.

Viktor on the other hand seemed to have other ideas. Instead of letting Yuuri down he adjusted their position, one hand sliding around Yuuri’s lower back to keep him balanced before spinning them both around so that Yuuri was supported by nothing but Viktor’s own body as he moved from the wall over towards the bed. Tightening his legs around Viktor’s waist, Yuuri used some of his own core strength to hold himself upright, keeping their bodies pressed together.

As he moved, Viktor released Yuuri’s neck and instead he looked up, their positions putting his face a little lower than Yuuri’s. Leaning down Yuuri pressed their foreheads together, looking into Viktor’s eyes and knowing that the love in his heart was reflected onto his own features as clear as day, even if he couldn’t quite yet bring himself to say the words.

Viktor smiled up at him, hands warm against Yuuri’s skin. He kept them pressed close as he moved but as he approached the end of the bed the moment was suddenly broken. With his eyes fixed on Yuuri, Viktor hadn’t been paying attention to where he was going and his foot caught on the edge of the suitcase that Yuuri had noticed before, lying at the foot of the bed. The unexpected motion threw them both off balance and Yuuri heard Viktor’s startled noise as he lost his footing, staggering a little and practically dropping Yuuri onto the bed. Their foreheads knocked together painfully at the sudden change in position, Viktor landing almost on top of him although he had enough foresight to break his fall with his arms and avoid crushing Yuuri completely.

Looking up at where Viktor was hovering above him Yuuri could see the shock and embarrassment on Viktor’s face at the mistake and he couldn’t help the laughter that bubbled up from his throat, breaking the tension as it filled the room. For a moment Viktor looked startled but then he laughed too, rubbing the red patch on his forehead where their heads had collided together, his cheeks flushing even as he relaxed.

“Well, that wasn’t exactly how I was expecting that to go.” he laughed, still looking a little embarrassed but with a smile spreading across his face as he took in Yuuri’s own amusement.

“There would have been a deduction for the landing.” Yuuri joked and Viktor snorted at the skating reference, following Yuuri as he slid up the bed pulling Viktor with him until they were both fully lying on the mattress. “But it was still a pretty good move.”

And it had been. There had been something about what Viktor had done, the ease with which he had lifted Yuuri and held him that had Yuuri’s animal hindbrain purring in satisfaction. Not wanting to waste any more time he moved his hands gently from where they had been resting on Viktor’s shoulders to cup lightly around the sides of his neck, wrapping his legs around Viktor’s waist again and angling his hips upwards. Viktor complied immediately, sliding back into Yuuri with a practiced ease and bracing his hands on the bed on either side of Yuuri’s head as he moved.
Yuuri could feel the heat building in the pit of his stomach, his toes curling at the sensation and the feeling was only heightened when Viktor reached on of his hands down, sliding it over Yuuri’s cock and moving it in time to the rocking of his hips, making Yuuri moan.

Feeling suddenly overwhelmed Yuuri dropped his hands from where they had been resting against Viktor skin, instead moving to clutch at the sheets next to his head as he dug his heels deeper into Viktor’s back, urging him to go faster. One of the hands that was fisted in the sheets was right next to Viktor’s own and Yuuri moved his grip again, letting go of the sheets and instead threading his fingers through Viktor’s where they were braced against the bed, the point of contact somehow seeming to burn the brightest of them all. Viktor’s hand was locked against his, pinning it to the bed but the grip was gentle and Yuuri could feel the warm caress of Viktor’s fingers where they were intertwined.

‘I love you. I love you so much.’ Every fibre of his body was screaming the words and he felt almost drowned in them, drowned in his all-consuming love for the man above him that had blossomed against all possible odds until Yuuri’s heart ached with it, a physical pain in his chest because it was too strong, too much for him to hold on his own.

It didn’t take long for him to come apart completely under Viktor’s hand but it was Viktor that came first, hand tightening in Yuuri’s, nails biting into the skin and shuddering his release with a hitched moan. Yuuri followed not long after, Viktor’s hand never ceasing its movements until Yuuri was lost too, Viktor’s name on his lips as he gave in to the sensation.

Afterwards there was a lull, a peaceful few moments as they both basked in the afterglow, only moving to clean themselves up a little before sliding into bed together. Yuuri could feel the dull ache that ran up his spine and radiated across his hips but he couldn’t bring himself to regret it, even if he knew that his body would be protesting come the next morning. Instead he curled up against Viktor, resting his head on the man’s shoulder and letting the soft, rhythmic breathing calm the still frantic beating of his aching heart.

Viktor seemed content to just lie there too, one arm wrapped around Yuuri, holding him close. Their faces were close together, their breaths mingling and Yuuri didn’t even think about it as he reached up and pressed another kiss to Viktor’s mouth, soft and sweet. Jolting a little in surprise Viktor seemed to be frozen for a moment before he finally relaxed into the kiss, returning it as he threaded his fingers through Yuuri’s hair and drew him gently closer.

It was only then that Yuuri realised why Viktor had reacted so strangely to the kiss. They had never kissed outside of sex or foreplay before, not after they were finished. They had lain like this together, held each other close but they had never kissed. It was like some unspoken barrier that had never before been broken, a point of no return that Yuuri had crossed unthinkingly because it was so natural and easy and kissing Viktor felt like coming home.

Yuuri moved his hand up to rest against Viktor’s cheek and Viktor brought his free hand up to lie there too, a warm weight on top of Yuuri’s. Running his fingers lightly across Yuuri’s hand Viktor linked their fingers together. As they kissed his hand played circles with Yuuri’s and Viktor’s fingers absentmindedly toying with Yuuri’s ring finger, where a wedding band would sit if it had been his left hand rather than his right.

Eventually they broke apart again and Yuuri settled his head back onto Viktor’s chest, feeling the tiredness of the day begin to creep back up on him. It had been an exhausting day and the new day that was rapidly dawning would be even more so. They both needed to get some sleep before they skated tomorrow.

‘You should tell him.’ Yuuri’s mind whispered into the darkness and he could feel his heart speed up.
a little at the thought, the buried fears beginning to raise their ugly heads again. ‘You should tell him now.’

He had put it off and put it off and kept putting it off because once the words were out in the open he could never take them back. Once they were spoken he would have no choice but to deal with the consequences, whatever they may be. And the thought scared him, had been scaring him for weeks now because so much could go wrong and even if it all went right so much would be so difficult and he didn’t want to break the peace of the night with words that had potential to ruin everything just as much as they had the potential to save it.

‘I’ll tell him tomorrow.’ Yuuri promised himself. ‘When the skating is finished. When I can do it properly.’ It was a weak excuse and he knew it, even in his own mind. In truth, he was scared to tell Viktor here, where he had no escape if it all went horribly wrong. If he waited until tomorrow he could approach Viktor on his own terms, somewhere private where he could walk away with his head held high if it came to that rather than the scramble of shame it would be to leave the bed and the room here and now if it all went wrong.

“It doesn’t always have to be you, you know.” Viktor said suddenly into the silence and Yuuri looked up, startled out of his own thoughts by the words. Viktor smiled down at him, arm still warm around his shoulder, but his eyes were far away and he looked deep in thought. At Yuuri’s small noise of confusion his eyes slid back into focus and his looked back at Yuuri fully, the small contented smile still playing across his features.

“When we sleep together.” Viktor clarified. “It can be the other way around too, if that’s something that you want to try. You only have to ask.”

Yuuri knew that the surprise was painted across his own features but he couldn’t help the way his body reacted instinctively to the words, his heartbeat speeding up a little at the image that they conjured. It wasn’t that he wasn’t content with the way they were at the moment, he was more than happy. But Viktor was offering to try something new and appealing and he found himself nodding without even thinking about it.

“Do you want that?” he asked because he needed to make sure that Viktor wasn’t offering out of some sense of misplaced obligation. “You would be happy with that?”

“More than.” Viktor’s fingers pressed gently against his skin and his face was soft and open in the darkness. “Although maybe not tonight.” he added, his tone light and joking and Yuuri smiled back, feeling the expression light up his face and doing nothing to conceal it.

“Another time?” he added without even thinking about it.

“Another time.” Viktor agreed and Yuuri felt his throat tighten a little at the words because they had never ever talked about the future before but this was a promise, not one set in stone but one made all the same, with the implication that there would be more, an assurance that he had never had before.

‘Another time’ wasn’t forever. But it was a start.

‘Tomorrow.’ Yuuri promised himself. ‘Tomorrow I’ll tell him.’

And he knew deep in his heart, categorically, that he would.
The next day during the early morning practice it was all that Yuuri could think about. How he was going to tell Viktor, how Viktor was going to react, how the world was going to react if it got that far. Part of him was full of wild fantasies about kisses on the podium, about dragging Viktor down or up, it changed each scenario, by his medal and kissing him for everyone to see. But the more rational part of him knew that he wasn’t quite ready for that, for people to know and to deal with the weight of the opinions of the world that it would bring.

First he would tell Viktor. It had been the wrong time last night and he was glad that he hadn’t blurted it out in a moment of passion. This was something special, something he had to do properly, had to do right.

And maybe Viktor would turn him down, maybe he wouldn’t want to commit himself to Yuuri the way that Yuuri was already devoted to him but maybe he would. There was a chance, a real chance that he and Viktor could have a future together, not the end that he had been dreading for so long. If he said nothing he would lose Viktor in the end, to retirement, to distance, to a million things that would keep them apart. But if he confessed he would at least have a chance.

The fears were still there, swirling around in his head and churning in his gut and he was distracted during the whole early morning practice. He flubbed a triple axel, one of his favourite jumps and one that he had perfected before he even moved into the senior division and he left the ice early, trying to calm himself down.

The fears about his upcoming confession were dominating his mind but below that was the constant thrum of worry that always existed before a big competition, heightened by the expectations that were pressing down on him. After being bested by Viktor the day before his fans were more rabid than ever, desperate to see him win on his home ground in front of the crowd that were all rooting for him. The crippling weight of his country was resting on his shoulders and the expectation terrified him to the point that he struggled to fight it back, working to control his breathing and to try and drag his mind out of the spirals it was so prone to.

Wanting to be alone he left the rink, dodging the public areas that were gradually beginning to fill even though it was hours until the competition really began and ducking into the backstage area where only skaters and staff were allowed. Even there it still felt too crowded, too many eyes on him and Yuuri retreated further, seeking out the quieter more deserted areas where he could be alone.

After a few minutes of wandering he found a deserted corridor, not too far from the main rink but out of the way enough that it was unlikely that anyone would stumble across him by mistake. All down the corridor there were scattered unlocked doors, most of them leading to storage rooms or similar and Yuuri slipped into one of them gratefully.

The room was quiet and empty and he could feel some of the tension he hadn’t realised he was holding relax from his frame. He just needed some time alone and a silent place to think.

For a little while he entertained the thought of calling Phichit, of asking for advice but he already realistically knew what he friend would say. To tell Viktor as soon as possible, to stop running away and finally confront what he had been dancing around for so long. And Yuuri knew that Phichit was right.
He couldn’t tell Viktor straight away, that wasn’t the kind of thing he wanted to spring on someone just before the definitive performance of the season. But he would do it afterwards, as soon as he could get Viktor alone. The banquet was that night and Yuuri swore to himself that he would do it before then. He would catch Viktor after they had skated or after the medal ceremony. Or if there were no chances then he would go to Viktor’s room before the banquet, would knock on the door and finally lay his heart on the line and hope that Phichit was right, that Viktor would want him fully, completely, for something that would last. Thinking of Viktor from last night, of the way that he had held Yuuri, accepted his kiss when there was nothing to gain and touched him so tenderly, Yuuri was more confident than he had ever been before that maybe it was true.

He had delayed and delayed and delayed but he would have to do it sometime, couldn’t keep delaying it forever. And in his head, every scenario Yuuri created involved him telling Viktor before the banquet. Then if Viktor accepted they could talk, really properly talk for the first time in what might be forever and then go to the banquet together. Viktor always made situations like the banquet more bearable, always knew exactly what to do to make Yuuri feel at ease when otherwise he wouldn’t be.

They could spend time together, maybe they could dance. They had once before and even back then Yuuri had marvelled at how well he and Viktor moved together. It was a pretty picture, a pretty thought, dancing at the banquet with Viktor. Not in anger this time but in love. He just hoped that it was something that very soon would turn into a reality.

But first, before the banquet, before even his confession, he had to get through the skating.

As time had gone on Yuuri had realised he was rediscovering his joy for skating, his drive to skate because he loved the sport rather than anything else. But even then, his mounting anxiety before a competition wasn’t something that had ever gone away. His therapist had reassured him that it was normal, that it was nothing to be ashamed of that he couldn’t banish the feelings entirely. What was important was learning to work through them, to not let them rule him.

Yuuri had been seeing her for a long time now, not as frequently as she would like she had once told him, but he had been trying. She had helped immensely with the fears that always clawed at him during competitions, teaching him techniques to calm himself, new ways to think, ways to deal with the worries, to rationalise them and fight them back even if he couldn’t banish them altogether. Over the years Yuuri had been able to see the improvement and he was proud of himself for that.

The only thing that he disliked about the sessions was her desire to talk about things that weren’t related to his skating. He wanted to improve, to be able to work through competitions without losing it to nerves but he didn’t see the need to talk about anything further than that. He had never mentioned Viktor to her, had never let himself talk about that because it was hard enough to open up about his feelings already and that was something that he had never wanted to talk about, had never wanted to examine too closely. Some things he just wanted to keep to himself.

After running through a few of his usual techniques for dealing with his nerves Yuuri felt marginally calmer. Digging into his pocket he pulled out the little box that he had kept in his skating jacket pocket, safe at the side of the rink while he skated.

It had been a gift from Phichit for his seventeenth birthday, small and compact with the picture of a poodle painted on the front. When Yuuri was first prescribed the pills he had been embarrassed, had been ashamed of them and had refused to take the bottle anywhere with him, scared that people would know. So Phichit had bought him the pill box with its cutey picture so that he could take his medication wherever he needed to without his fears getting in the way.

Yuuri wasn’t ashamed anymore, he hadn’t been for years after Phichit and his therapist had finally
talked him round but he still used the pill box, a sort of thank you to his friend for how far he had helped Yuuri to come.

Flipping the lid open he tipped a couple of the pills onto his open palm and slipped the box back into his pocket. He was just about to swallow them, hand already halfway towards his mouth when he heard the sound of the door being opened again beside him. Yuuri spun around, startled. He hadn’t been expecting anyone to be this far out and he took a step backwards away from the door just as a familiar figure stepped though.

“Yuuri, I tried to find you after the practice but you disappeared and someone said they saw you come this way and…” Viktor trailed off, looking at Yuuri, his eyes widening in shock as he took in the scene before him.

Before Yuuri even had time to blink Viktor had crossed the distance between them in a few short strides and his hand shot out, finger clamping around Yuuri’s wrist in a vice-like grip, so tight they were almost bruising. Yuuri cried out, the pain in his wrist causing him to drop the pills that he had been holding, scattering them to the floor around him as Viktor jerked his hand away.

“What are you doing?” Viktor asked, his voice low with horror lacing his tone and Yuuri tried to step away but the grip on his wrist held him firmly in place, allowing him no escape.

“Viktor, let go of me.” he cried out and Viktor released him immediately. Yuuri backed away, hand coming to clutch at his wrist where the indents of Viktor’s fingers were standing out clearly against the skin.

“Yuuri, what are you doing?” Viktor asked again and the horror was now written across his face, pleading in his eyes. “You don’t have to do that. God Yuuri, why would you do that? You don’t need it to win, I swear. Yuuri…”

And Yuuri knew. He knew what it looked like but that didn’t stop the betrayal from tearing through him, ripping his breath away and making his eyes sting with the tears that he knew were welling there even as he tried to fight them back.

From an outside perspective he could see what Viktor saw, a high class athlete hidden away from prying eyes with pills in his hand. Doping wasn’t a huge problem in figure skating, not like it was in some sports but that didn’t mean it didn’t happen. There was always scandals, always suspicions and Yuuri could see how easily Viktor’s mind could make the leap. Yuuri was top of his game after all, renowned for his stamina on the ice, how he could pack in jump after jump in the second half of his routines and seemingly never tire, his strength outlasting almost every other skater.

But that didn’t make it hurt any less, that Viktor would think that of him.

It stung, that Viktor assumed the worst. Stung and ached and tore at him because he had been ready to put his heart back on the line and the realisation that Viktor could so easily believe that of him had ripped that all away.

Viktor didn’t trust him. Thought him so pathetic, so desperate that he’d stoop to the lowest of the low for victory. Couldn’t trust that everything that Yuuri had worked his whole life for he had earned on merit alone. Could so easily believe that all of Yuuri’s talents came from a bottle, a chemical concoction rather than the burning passion that had carried him through his whole life.

Viktor hadn’t believed in him when he was a child and he still didn’t believe in him now. Viktor had changed, Yuuri knew Viktor had changed from the boy he had been back then and they had talked about it but they hadn’t actually talked about it and there was just enough doubt, a tiny sliver like a
shard of ice that froze his heart and made his whole body feel numb with it. Because Viktor hadn’t believed in him before, had dismissed him before and here he was again now, so many years later and accusing Yuuri without a second thought because despite everything, Yuuri still didn’t have Viktor’s faith and that hurt more than anything else.

“Vitya?”

Just when Yuuri thought it couldn’t get any worse the world proved him wrong again, each new blow hitting harder than the last and making the joy of just a few moments before seem like a long forgotten memory.

Yakov was standing in the doorway, halted just inside the frame as he took in the scene before him. The two of them in their secluded room, hidden away from discovery. Viktor, his body tense, his eyes still wide with shock and horror. Yuuri backed away, clutching his wrist with unshed tears clinging to his eyelashes, panic radiating from every feature. The pills lying on the floor between them, stark white against the dark background and damning.

Yakov’s eyes narrowed in anger and Yuuri could see his brain processing the scene in a fraction of a second, analysing and drawing his own conclusions faster than Yuuri could protest his innocence.

“I’ve always know there was something wrong about you. After everything that you’ve done. And now I have proof.”

The words were cold, final and they chilled Yuuri straight down to the bone.

“You won’t get away with this. They’ll ban you for life once I tell them.”

“Yakov stop it.” Viktor said and this time there was real anger in his voice, replacing the horror that had been there moments before. He took a step forward, angling his body so that he was between Yuuri and his coach but Yuuri barely noticed. The room was swaying around him, shifting in and out of focus and he could feel the tears that had finally spilled from his eyes, running wet trails down his cheeks.

He had done nothing wrong, he knew that. The ISU wouldn’t ban him, they knew about the medication and always had. Celestino had been very careful to clear it with them beforehand, knowing that Yuuri put his career before anything else and that Yuuri would despise the thought of winning with anything other than his own talent. He wasn’t breaking any rules, they wouldn’t ban him but the words and the anger from Viktor’s coach coupled with Viktor’s own betrayal was too much and Yuuri needed to get out of there before the panic overtook him completely.

Pushing past Viktor he bolted for the door, not caring that he slammed into Yakov as he ran and ignoring the cry of “Yuuri wait” that echoed from behind him.

“Yuuri!” he heard Viktor call again but he was already out of the door and sprinting down the corridor, tears still stinging in his eyes and his heart in shards that were digging painfully into his chest.

There was a string of angry sounding Russian as Yakov snapped something at Viktor and Viktor hurled furious words back in the same language but Yuuri didn’t stick around to hear more, not even as he heard the hurried footfalls step out into the corridor behind him. Without looking back he sprinted around the corner, dodging down into the endless maze of corridors in front of him, his only thought to get away, to get away and not look back.

By the time Viktor’s panicked footsteps had reached the end of the corridor, he was already long
Katsuki Yuuri and Viktor Nikiforov Involved In World Championships Doping Scandal

Katsuki Yuuri and Viktor Nikiforov, top male figure skaters and notorious rivals, were involved in a doping scandal today at the final of the Figure Skating World Championships that shocked the skating world.

Katsuki Yuuri, the previous year’s World Champion, and Viktor Nikiforov, his long-time opponent, were involved in a scandal regarding accusations of doping levied against Katsuki by the coach of Nikiforov, Yakov Feltsman. Katsuki had allegedly been caught red handed by Feltsman and subsequent investigations were made into the serious allegation. The use of performance enhancing drugs carries the risk of a lifetime ban by the ISU and the matter was treated with the utmost severity.

However, it turned out to not be the accused Katsuki in the wrong but Nikiforov himself. Katsuki, a notoriously private individual despite his celebrity status, claimed that he was breaking no rules and that the drugs he had been seen to be taking were prescription medication that had been previously sanctioned by the ISU, something that was later confirmed by thorough testing.

The story broke just hours before the Men’s Single’s free skate where both athletes were due to perform and quickly spread throughout the skating community. A public statement of apology was issued from Nikiforov almost immediately on behalf of both himself and his coach who had made the initial accusation but the damage was already done.

A spokesperson representing the ISU claimed that they had no knowledge of how what should have been a classified internal affair was discovered by the press, calling it an ‘unforgivable breach of Mr Katsuki’s privacy’ but the statement did nothing to stop the rapid spread of information. First the news that the skater had been caught doping and then the revelation of the truth, that Katsuki had been taking ISU sanctioned medication commonly used in the treatment of anxiety, spread through sports news websites and social media like wildfire before any kind of gag order could be issued to protect the skater’s private medical information.

There was a multitude of reactions from fans of both Katsuki and Nikiforov alike, ranging from suspicion of Katsuki to condemnation of the actions of Nikiforov’s coach and by extension Nikiforov himself. The discovery of Katsuki’s previously unknown medical history sparked a debate between fans, with some criticising him and claiming that any kind of medication should be classed as cheating by international standards while others vocally defended the skater, many calling him an inspiration for his achievements and garnering massive online support.

Nikiforov fared much the same under the critical eyes of the fans, with some rushing to defend him and claim that his actions were only logical while others were outraged by the accusations flung at his fellow skater. His rapid and heartfelt public apology helped to salvage some of the situation, along with the fact that he did not accuse Katsuki personally and the conformation that neither he nor
anyone on his team were responsible for the information leakage to the press. However, his reputation took an undeniable hit due to the incident and speculation rapidly turned to his relationship to Katsuki, who was not present during the hastily called press conference where he made his statement of apology.

Viktor Nikiforov and Katsuki Yuuri have become practically household names ever since Katsuki broke a winning streak of Nikiforov’s that was years long, elevating himself from a young skater with ambitions of glory to a serious rival who eventually became the only person to be consistently successful in knocking Nikiforov off the top spot, stealing medal after medal from the man who had previously dominated the sport. The rivalry between the two rapidly grew into legendary status, with both slated to go down in skating history. However, the personal relationship and history between the two has always been notoriously shrouded in mystery which only added to the intrigue and appeal of their competition.

Early footage of Katsuki clearly shows the undeniable animosity the younger skater held for the skating legend and fans of the sport were quick to pick up on that fact. A dislike of the man who consistently beat him to the gold, sometimes by only the most hairsbreadth of point difference between them, was expected on Katsuki’s part but while he never spoke ill of Nikiforov in interviews, the intensity of his emotions lead to some fans speculating that personal history between the two was the only justifiable explanation, although nothing has ever been confirmed.

However, the story only grew more intriguing as the years went on. After the crash between the two skaters at a previous World Championships that left Katsuki unconscious on the ice, Nikiforov’s emotional reaction sparked speculation that maybe the relationship wasn’t really as hate filled as fans and press alike loved the claim. A growing subset of their respective fan bases even went as far as to claim that the two were involved in a romantic relationship and their evidence to back up that claim was not as insubstantial as some might suspect.

Regardless of the truth of their beliefs, it was undeniable that tensions had begun to cool between the two, with Katsuki’s general demeanour towards Nikiforov changing considerably over the years from what it had been when they first stood on the podium together. After so many years competing side by side it was not unreasonable to assume that hatred had eventually dulled and a more sportsmanlike relationship, if not something more, had formed in its place.

This was partly why fans of the sport were so shocked when the accusations of doping came to light. One distressed fan tweeted that ‘I actually thought that there might be something more between Katsuki and Nikiforov but after this mess I guess I must have been wrong.’ It was not an uncommon reaction and while some avid fans of each of the skaters leapt to defend their idols and fling vicious insults at the other, the majority of fans seem to simply be in a state of shock.

It has been a dramatic day for figure skating and many are waiting, in fear or anticipation, to see what will happen next.

Once upon a time, many years ago, Yuuri had vowed never to care about Viktor Nikiforov again. Sworn to himself that he would never let Viktor back into his heart because it hurt far, far too much.
And yet he had done just that, given himself fully and now his heart was in pieces and he had no-one to blame but himself. He had let Viktor back in and Viktor had broken him once again, however unintentional that might have been.

As soon as Yuuri had fled from the room, leaving Viktor behind, he had gone straight to Celestino. His coach had been furious at what had happened and set to work immediately making several angry phone calls to various members of the ISU. But eventually he had admitted to Yuuri that the accusations had already been made and the best thing for them to do would be to definitively prove them false.

The ISU was on his side, Celestino said. They knew about his medication, knew and approved of it fully. But they couldn’t just let an accusation of doping slide, they had to investigate further and the safest thing for Yuuri to do was play along and prove that he had nothing to hide.

And so instead of spending the final few hours in the run up to the free skate practicing, Yuuri had spent them locked away in the bowels of the building, undergoing a series of humiliating tests with Celestino staying by his side the whole while, standing guard.

During the whole ordeal Yuuri’s phone had been buzzing non-stop and eventually Celestino had picked it up from where Yuuri had left it on the table beside him, taking in the endless string of missed calls from the man that Yuuri currently had no desire to speak to. Celestino had blocked the number without a moment’s hesitation, sending the phone into deathly silence and Yuuri hadn’t protested. He didn’t want to see Viktor, didn’t want to talk to him while the wounds were so fresh.

When the news that somehow the story had gotten out to the press was brought to them Celestino had pulled Yuuri in a hug, allowing him to bury his face into a comforting shoulder. He wasn’t ashamed, he refused to be ashamed but that didn’t mean he wanted people to know. Thousands of nameless faceless people all thinking they had the right to an opinion about his life.

He didn’t want people to know because it was private. And it hurt all the more because it was his life, it should have been his choice whether he wanted to share that information with the world and that choice had been taken away from him.

Yuuri wanted nothing more than to leave, to go home because the thought of facing the world so soon was terrifying and he didn’t want it. But there was still the free skate and he couldn’t back down, couldn’t forfeit because that would be like losing and he refused to do that now. So he strapped on his skates when it was time and left only when he absolutely had to, Celestino at his side.

Celestino went ahead, making sure Yuuri only went on the rink just as he was being called to skate, allowing him to avoid the prying eyes of everyone until the last possible moment. But when Yuuri stepped out onto the ice he could still feel the weight of the gazes pressing down on him, could hear the hushed whispers that were filling the stadium even as the crowd cheered their support.

He didn’t want to be there, wanted to be anywhere but there. None of his love for skating, none of his passion, none of his desire existed in that moment, all buried under the crushing sense of sadness and loss that was threatening to choke him. Yuuri could hardly bring himself to move, let alone fill his skating with the emotion that had invigorated it for so long now.

Every movement was lacklustre, clumsy. He touched down on an embarrassingly large number of his jumps, fell on a quad toe loop that he had never even stumbled on before, hurried through his step sequence with no finesse. Even then he could hardly bring himself to care because what was losing a medal compared to what had just happened, to the beautiful imagined future that had been lost only hours before.
As soon as Yuuri finished he left the ice, barely acknowledging the crowd. They still cheered for him, still clapped and whistled and showed their support but he could feel the undercurrent of bitter disappointment like a tangible taste in the air. They had come here to see him win and he had let them down and the worst part was that he could hardly bring himself to care.

When the scores were announced he ignored them. He already knew they would be terrible and as soon as he could he left the kiss and cry, Celestino following in his wake. There was no requirement for him to stick around after all and there was only one program left, one that he didn’t want to see.

But even with that thought in mind something stopped him just shy of the exit, turning around at the last minute from some instinctive compulsion even as his mind yelled at him to just walk away. He needed time, time away from it all to sort out his head because so much had happened and he couldn’t even begin to untangle his mess of feelings and work out where he could possibly go from there. But still he stopped. And still he looked because he had been looking back his whole life even as it destroyed him and he couldn’t help but do it one last time.

Viktor was the last skater left, the last to perform. He hadn’t been present during Yuuri’s performance but Yuuri could see him now, a tiny figure in the great expanse of the stadium. But even though Viktor’s name had already been called he wasn’t on the ice. Instead he was standing at the side of the rink, facing away from where he was supposed be and making no move to step onto it. Everything in his body radiated tension and he was facing towards his coach, standing his ground as the older man tried to force him back onto the ice and gaze focusing not on his coach but on the crowds around him, eyes scanning over face after face.

Yakov was shouting something at Viktor although Yuuri was too far away to make out the words and even if he had been nearer the shocked murmuring of the crowds would have drowned it out anyway. From overhead the announcer called for Viktor again and Yakov practically forced Viktor backwards, making him to take a step out onto the ice. Even then Viktor made no move to comply, arguing animatedly with his coach, eyes still flicking around the room, his hand gestures sharp and full of tightly contained fury.

The announcer called Viktor’s name for the third time and Yuuri could see the way Yakov’s eyes narrowed. Instead of shouting like he had been doing previously he seemed to lower his voice, hissing something at Viktor and even from far away Yuuri could see the way that Viktor’s shoulders slumped, all the fight draining out of his body. Usually when Viktor skated out on the ice for the first time his was full of bright smiles and waves for the audience but this time when he slid to the centre of the rink his eyes were downcast and his movements were uncontrolled, imprecise, so at odds with the skater that Yuuri knew him to be.

Viktor barely seemed to care when the music started and even when he finally began to skate his movements were rushed, hurried, almost losing time with the music. Watching made something twist in Yuuri’s stomach because Viktor skating was supposed to be beautiful, full of joy and life and Viktor was nothing like that now, skating as though he wanted nothing more for the routine to be over.

He missed the landing of one of his jumps, stumbling so that his knees hit the ice and Yuuri could feel the shock radiate from the audience, the collective intake of breath. The jump had been a quad flip, a move that Viktor could perform as easy as breathing. A move that Yuuri had watched him jump for the first time in competition at a Junior Grand Prix what felt like lifetimes ago and a move that Viktor had never failed to land before. Not until then.

When Viktor finally finished the routine he held his final position for barely a second before dropping it and hurrying to the exit of the rink, twisting his head as he did so, eyes still searching the
Yuuri could pinpoint the exact second when Viktor spotted him, a tiny figure in the distance, still standing halfway through the exit as though he were frozen in place. From his position across the rink Yuuri was too far away to make out many of the details on Viktor’s face but he saw the way Viktor’s head jerked fully up at the sight, saw the way his pace changed from hurried to almost full out sprinting as he covered the last few meters and staggered off the ice, already reaching down to tug at the laces of his skates.

They were separated by the rink, two opposing figures on opposite sides of the room with a great swathe of distance between them.

“Yuuri, come on.” Celestino called and Yuuri snapped his head back around because he had almost forgotten that his coach was there, waiting for him. He half turned away, making as if to walk towards Celestino and out of the door for the last time but he couldn’t help throwing a final glance over his shoulder.

Viktor had finished untying his skates, discarding them on the floor without a second though. Yakov moved towards Viktor, placing what looked to be a comforting hand on his student’s shoulder but Viktor shook him off, starting to run from where he had left the ice, around the rink, eyes still fixed on the place where Yuuri stood.

The stadium was a riot of noise, the fans still in shock from what they had just witness and voicing their bewilderment to each other, each voice louder than the next. Loud enough to drown out any sound that Viktor might be making, even as Yuuri though he saw his lips move. Loud enough to mask the sound of what he thought might be his own name, called across the distance between them.

Instead of calling back, of running towards Viktor like a part of him begged him to, he turned away. He needed space, he needed time. He didn’t love Viktor any less but he couldn’t see him, couldn’t bear to be near him just now.

Everything that had happened had shaken him to his very core and he couldn’t even begin to process what he was feeling. He still loved Viktor, still loved him with all his heart but the betrayal and everything that had come after was still stinging sharply and Yuuri knew that he needed time to think and space to breathe. Knew that he didn’t want to talk to Viktor, didn’t want to see Viktor. Not right now.

And so he left, left with Celestino, left the rink and Viktor behind and maybe it was running away but he did it all the same.

Yuuri needed time, needed space and more than anything in the world he needed the comfort of home. Not Detroit but his real home and all the safety and refuge that it brought. A little town far away from the prying eyes and pressure of the rest of the world where he could hide away and decide what the hell he was going to do.

It took barely any time at all for Yuuri to throw everything he owned into his suitcase with a brief explanation to Celestino and within the hour he was on a train headed to Hasetsu, towards home for the first time in eight years. He didn’t care about the banquet, didn’t care about the exhibition skate. He just wanted to get away.

There was so much caught up in his head, far too much, so much that he felt like he was drowning in it. Too much had happened too quickly and everything had been uprooted and overturned and Yuuri wasn’t sure what he wanted, what he should do.
A sharp ping alerted him to a new message on his phone and he picked it up apathetically, glancing down at the notification from one of the sports news apps he owned, the little bubble of information detailing the final results from the skating that day.

Chris’s name was at the top, followed by the Kazakhstani boy Yuuri had been admiring the day before. And all the way down the list, further down than he had even seen them both before sat his and Viktor’s names, the scores almost mocking in their lowness. Neither of them had medalled and Yuuri had never expected them to, not after the performances they had just given, rigid and rushed and devoid of life.

Objectively he noticed that his name was positioned above Viktor’s, his score higher by a handful of points that meant nothing. Neither of them had won a medal but Yuuri had still beaten Viktor, the thing he had spent so much of his life striving to do.

It felt absolutely nothing like a victory.

Chapter End Notes

I am so sorry

(But remember this is the umfb&mha version of ‘after the final let’s end this’. But I have this tagged as happy ending so don’t lose hope!)

Also, this work is part of a series and I would recommend subscribing to the series. The next fic is a companion fic from Viktor’s POV showing what he has been thinking all this time and explaining some crucial details like why the hell he has stayed silent for so long about his feelings.

Also, I’m sorry for making Yakov be cruel to Yuuri but he has his reasons. You will see more in the next fic but he thinks he’s protecting Viktor and doing the right thing even if it actually makes things worse.

You can find me on tumblr where I give updates on the fic and do more worldbuilding.

I’d love to know your thoughts on this chapter so please drop me a comment and let me know!

Finally, there’s been more beautiful things made for this fic.

Burningthegallows made a brilliant playlist chapter by chapter here

sirgwainestolemyapples made a beautiful playlist here

Meganpaigeart drew a stunning piece of fanart based on the dinner scene of chapter 12 here

Leblacknoir made a beautiful picture of the photograph that Viktor takes of Yuuri in
chapter 11

xuue drew a wonderful comic of the confrontation scene between Yuuri and Yuri and a lovely picture of Yuuri

viktors drew some fantastic fanart of Viktor and Yuuri based on chapter 12

randompasser drew a brilliant (and hot as hell) picture of Viktor and Yuuri

56205607 drew this heart-breaking comic based on Yuuri’s speech to Phichit in chapter 10

ssugar9005 + friend drew this adorable picture of young Yuuri and Viktor

salanayuniasis drew this incredible comic strip based on the song that Viktor sings in chapter 10

zoelblack28 drew this lovely picture of a hope for the future

Emvisc drew two amazing pictures of Viktor and Yuuri

dis-hoe-aint-wise drew a hilarious picture of Yuuri and Phichit and an awesome comic about Viktor’s revelation in chapter 12

ella2040 drew a great picture of a wish for chapter 12

papa-archie drew an amazing picture of a scene in chapter 8

easybakedoodle drew a super cool picture of the Instagram post in chapter 10

See you next time!
Rey xx

Music Used:
Viktor’s FS – Love Story by Francis Lai, lyrical version originally sung by Andy Williams

Translations:
頑張って – good luck
Удачи – good luck
Stay Close To Me (And Never Leave)

Chapter Notes

Important Notice Before Reading!!!

If you have not been listening to the skating program music that I have been linking to in the text and listing at the end of each chapter I strongly recommend that you do before you read this chapter, especially Viktor’s. It might seem irrelevant at first but I promise that it isn’t and this chapter might seem very confusing if you have been skipping it as you read the fic.

You can find a list of the music by chapter here

Enjoy!

Hasetsu was simultaneously everything and nothing like Yuuri remembered.

The place itself had changed, gradually modernized in a way that wouldn’t be noticeable to the residents living there but stood out starkly to Yuuri after so many years away. The old station that his train arrived in was almost completely unfamiliar with elevated tracks, all shiny and new. Things had changed and shifted with the passage of time, old shops closing down and new ones opening in their place, little differences that reminded Yuuri just how long it had been.

And yet somehow it still felt the same, the same peaceful idyllic little town by the sea away from the hustle and bustle of the outside world. Cherry blossoms lining streets that his feet could still walk by muscle memory alone, the little castle sitting quietly on the hill. Picturesque and perfect and protective, a safe haven that Yuuri could retreat to.

Thankfully even though everyone in the town must have known exactly why he had returned so unexpectedly, no-one seemed inclined to question him about it. Despite the embarrassing number of posters of himself that he had seen scattered around everyone kept a respectful distance, allowing him the privacy that so few people offered now-a-days. It helped that he barely left the onsen, sequestering himself away in his childhood home as though the walls alone could keep out the weight of the world.

When he had arrived his parents had been overjoyed to see him, although he could sense their concern and sorrow at the reason for his return lying just beneath the surface. Thankfully neither of them had pressed him to talk about it, they knew him far too well for that. Instead they simply welcomed him back as though he had only been away for a short time rather than growing up without them halfway around the world. On his first night back his mother had made him her specialty Katsudon, embarrassingly now named after him on the onsen menu, and for once Yuuri had broken his rule about only eating after winning. The familiar taste and comfort of the food from home made him feel a little better and the warmth of his parents was more comforting than placating words ever could be.

Mari was much the same. She had changed too, growing with the town in all the years that Yuuri had been absent. On the day he had left he had been so young, just a shy nervous teenager with a
single goal in mind and a bitter determination to see it through to the very end no matter the cost and she had been on the cusp of true adulthood and just starting to become cynical with the world. Now she was fully grown and he was too and yet somehow he still felt like a child around her, someone who believed without question that his big sister could protect him from anything just the way she had always done.

When she had first seen him, hidden away after his impromptu arrival home and reunion with their parents she had simply stood there for a few seconds, taking in the way he looked, his hair a mess, shoulders slumped and eyes that he knew had a suspicious red tinge to them. Like his parents she hadn’t commented on it, she hadn’t needed to. Instead she just held out her arms the way she had done when Yuuri was young, offering him the comfort that he would never be able to ask for out loud.

“Come here little brother.” She had said and Yuuri had gone immediately, wrapping his arms around her and burying his face into her neck while she rubbed soothing circles into his back. So much had changed, everything had changed, and he no longer believed like he once had that Mari had the power to protect him from the world the way she had once protected him from the bullies that had hounded him but she still knew exactly how to comfort him when comfort seemed impossible.

When Yuuri had finally released her she had held him at arms-length, hands still clasped comfortingly on his shoulders as she looked at him.

“Come and talk to me when you’re ready.” She had told him and Yuuri had nodded an agreement without even thinking about it. He didn’t want to talk about it, didn’t want to think about it but he knew that at some point he would have to. Would have to face it eventually because he had kept silent about so many things for so long, left so many things unresolved and that had been a mistake, something he only understood when it was already too late.

But as comforting as his parents had been, as comforting as Mari had been, there was one person who Yuuri had been desperate to see more than anyone else.

Once he had left the company of his parents and later Mari he had finally retreated to his bedroom where a familiar shape was waiting for him. The room was just like he remembered it, like taking a step back into the past so jarring it almost brought him to a stand-still. Perfectly preserved as though a fifteen year old version of himself was about to step back into it at any moment, as if the years that separated them meant nothing. And sitting on the bed where he had always been, was Vicchan.

Yuuri had seen him at the NHK Trophy not so long ago but the reunion had been brief and there was something about seeing Vicchan there, sitting on his bed and waiting as though he had been waiting there ever since Yuuri had left eight years ago, waiting in the same spot he had always been in for Yuuri to return.

Yuuri had spent a lot of nights crying into Vicchan’s fur in his childhood, holding the dog close and letting the sobs wrack his body because Vicchan was loyal and silent and unjudging in a way no-one else could be and Yuuri loved him for that. The night he had arrived home had been no exception. Vicchan might have been older, silver lacing through his soft fur and Yuuri might have been older too but that didn’t stop him from holding Vicchan close and finally letting the tears that he had been holding behind his stinging eyes fall.

He cried because had failed his country, failed his coach, failed himself and it wasn’t fair. He cried because now the whole world knew something he had never been comfortable with sharing and nothing could ever take that back. And he cried most of all because for a few brief days his future had seemed so beautiful and bright and full of hope and suddenly it had all come crashing down and
he had lost everything.

He cried and cried and Vicchan snuggled close and licked his face and Yuuri clung to him and sobbed all the grief and anger and misery out until his tears were spent and all he was left with was the aching, hollow feeling of loss like a gaping hole that had been carved into his chest, silent and empty.

He felt better after crying. Not much, but better. Afterwards he curled up with Vicchan on his bed, staring at the blank walls and letting his mind wander anywhere but the past as he finally fell asleep.

In the days that followed, Yuuri existed. He couldn’t quite bring himself to call it living because there was such a purposelessness to everything, as though he were simply drifting through the hours, passing time as it trickled away. The Nishigori’s had come to see him, as had Minako and while he had enjoyed their presence the emotion felt hollow and far away. Nothing seemed quite real and there was still a part of Yuuri that ached, an emptiness that nothing he did could ever seem to fill.

It didn’t help that he had no real purpose in Hasetsu. He had run there to hide and hide he could but there was precious little beyond that. He helped his parents and Mari in the onsen and took Vicchan for long walks on the beach. The same beach that he had once run along every morning, relentlessly driven to a goal that had once seemed impossible and now seemed like a distant memory.

Yuuri loved his town and the sanctuary it provided. He loved his family, loved his friends. But he couldn’t help the part of him that cried out for more. He had lived an ocean away for so long in the hectic life of the city and everything that entailed, had stood in front of crowds of thousands and awed them all, had captured the attention of the world and held it for reasons both bad and good. Had seen things and done things and been things that were so far removed from the quiet provincial life of his home that he could barely remember what it felt like to once belong to the little town, to fit the way he now never could again.

He loved Hasetsu, loved being home. But he couldn’t imagine staying there forever. There was just a part of him that called out too strongly for the ice and everything and everyone that it entailed.

And yet, Hasetsu was where he might stay, was where he might never leave again.

Yuuri knew that Celestino was expecting him to come back. Before he had left he had told his coach that he needed time and space and a safe place where he could work through what had happened and decide what to do next. But he also knew that Celestino assumed that Yuuri was just taking a break. Maybe just over the summer, maybe taking the next season off if they were particularly unlucky. But only a break. Not a retirement.

Periodically he sent Yuuri updates about what was happening, all the relevant information that Yuuri needed to know but couldn’t bring himself to care about. The official apology from Yakov Feltsman and further statements from both he and his student to help clear Yuuri’s name. The libel charges being brought up against the news websites that had initially reported the doping scandal without any
solid evidence to back up their claim that Celestino assured him would be an easy win. The legal action being taken against the ISU employee that had sold first the information that Yuuri had been accused of doping and later the results of his tests and private medical information that had shattered his world. Celestino had sounded especially and viciously pleased about that one but Yuuri couldn’t even bring himself to feel satisfaction at justice being served on the person that had been responsible for such a large chunk of his misery. He could barely bring himself to feel anything, just empty and hollowed out and lost.

He didn’t want to retire. But maybe it would be for the best. He had given everything to skating, to the world that took and took and kept taking even now. To the pressure and the expectation that had been manipulating his thoughts for so many years. And now he had nothing left.

A few reporters had made their way to Hasetsu looking for a story but the town had rallied against them, making it clear how unwelcome their presence was and eventually driving them away. Yuuri was grateful for that but the thought that if he returned to the ice he would have to face so much worse, so many questions and speculation and expectation, made him feel almost physically ill.

He loved skating, it was in his blood, in his bones, in his soul. But he wasn’t sure if he would ever be ready to leave his sanctuary and go out to face that world again.

Phichit tried to convince him otherwise.

Against his better judgement Yuuri had ignored the phone calls from his friend for the first several days of his stay in Hasetsu. It wasn’t because he didn’t care deeply about Phichit because he did, with all his heart. He just hadn’t been sure if he was ready to hear what he had to say, whatever that might be. Phichit had been right when he had once claimed that Yuuri preferred to run but eventually, and after much internal reprimand, Yuuri finally picked up one of the numerous calls that had been blowing up his phone with every day since he had disappeared.

Immediately he was met with a relieved voice as the call connected.

“Thank god Yuuri, I thought you were never going to answer!” Phichit cried and Yuuri had to hold the phone away from his ear a little at the volume of the exclamation.

“Sorry.” he replied and meant it. He hadn’t been ignoring Phichit’s calls through any fault of Phichit’s own, it was all on him. “I just needed…”

He trailed off, not sure what he had been intending to say. Just needed time? Just needed space? Just needed a place to stay that he could associate with memories other than the ones that were haunting him?

“I know.” Phichit told him and he didn’t sound annoyed, only sad. “How do you feel Yuuri? Do you want to talk about it?”

“I don’t know.”

Yuuri didn’t want to talk about it but he also knew that he should and more than that he had to, if only to help resolve things in his own mind.

“I was going to tell him Phichit.” he said and he could hear the way his voice cracked on the word, the hollow empty feeling his chest rising to wrap its cold hands tight around his throat. “I was going to tell him and then…and then…”

Phichit made a soothing noise of comfort down the phone and Yuuri desperately wished that they were in his room together.
“The people who told, Celestino is making them pay you can be sure of that. I’ve never seen him so angry. And Viktor is a…” Phichit let out a string of rapid Thai that Yuuri couldn’t understand but got the gist of all the same.

Part of him wanted to smile at his friend’s show of support but a larger part of him just ached because he could still remember the protective way Viktor had stepped between him and Yakov, shielding Yuuri with his body and sounding angrier that Yuuri had ever heard him at Yakov’s mention of reporting Yuuri to the ISU. The way Viktor had ruined his routine after what happened, the routine that had won him gold in the Grand Prix and European championships just months before. The way Viktor had run after him even as Yuuri had turned and walked away.

Phichit seemed to notice Yuuri’s extended silence because he paused for a minute and then asked, “Yuuri. How are you feeling. About Viktor?”

Yuuri swallowed, trying to find the words to explain the maelstrom of emotions that rose up inside him whenever Viktor’s name was mentioned. The pain at Viktor’s accusations even though Yuuri could see exactly why Viktor had jumped to the conclusion that he did. The circumstances had been more than suspicious and Yuuri had never spoken up to defend himself. He hadn’t been able to, not then, not frozen with panic and devastation that Viktor would think that of him. Yuuri could see why Viktor had made the assumption that he did but it didn’t make it hurt any less.

And more than just the pain, the betrayal, the heartbreak and overlaying all of them the love that he still felt, so deeply rooted in his heart that he wasn’t sure even he could rip it back out again. Because even after everything Yuuri still loved Viktor. Even if he couldn’t stand to be near him, to see him, to hear him. Not now. He didn’t know how long for. Days? Week? Months? Years?

Forever?

“I love him.” Yuuri said because it was all that he could say, even if he had failed so spectacularly in saying the words to the man himself. “I love him and it hurts.”

“I know. And I don’t think you’re the only one feeling that way.” Phichit sighed and Yuuri hesitated, waiting for him to continue.

“Will you tell me what happened between you and Viktor that day?” Phichit asked, sounding serious. “I need to know everything, I need to know his exact words. And trust me Yuuri this is very important because what you tell me in the next few minutes is going to determine whether I have to find a good place to hide a body or not.”

Yuuri hadn’t told anyone exactly what happened. Not his parents and not Mari. But he found that with Phichit the words came easily because Phichit knew everything, knew and understood and he had always been Yuuri’s support when Yuuri needed it the most.

And so he told Phichit everything. How he had been hidden away and how Viktor had walked in. The split second where he could see Viktor react on instinct, the fingers that had gripped so tightly they almost bruised and yanked his hand away from his mouth. The horror in Viktor’s face and voice as he had begged Yuuri to tell him what he was doing, the assumption hanging heavy in the air and constricting Yuuri’s throat so no air let alone words to defend himself could come.

How Yakov had walked in and everything had spiralled so quickly out of control, how Viktor had put himself between the two of them and how Yuuri had run because what else could he do? Everything had been too loud and too awful and everything in him had been screaming at him to get out and get far away and he had obeyed without thinking.
Phichit listened silently, taking in every word but making no comment until Yuuri was finished and silence fell between them again.

“And that’s what he said exactly?” Phichit questioned once Yuuri had finished speaking. “Word for word?”

“I think so?” Yuuri replied because it was all a bit of a haze, memories blurring into each other in his panicked mind but he could still hear the words Viktor had said ringing out loud and clear in his head. “He asked me what I was doing. Then when I didn’t reply he told me that I didn’t need to do it, that I didn’t need it to win.”

“Of course you don’t” Phichit scoffed, sounding disdainful. “You have more talent in a single toe than most skaters have in their entire lives and you’re the one famous for your presentation and step sequences, not him. You can’t cheat that and you never would even if you could.”

There was another short period of silence as Phichit mulled over the words and Yuuri waited, wondering what his friend was thinking.

“Did he hurt you?” Phichit questioned after a minute and Yuuri almost blurted out ‘yes’ because the hollow ache in his chest was still painfully present but he stopped himself in time, knowing that wasn’t what Phichit was talking about.

“No.” he said, then corrected himself, remembering the raised red imprints that Viktor’s fingers had left on his arm when he had pulled Yuuri’s hand away. “Not intentionally anyway. And he let go as soon as I told him to.”

“Good.” Phichit sounded satisfied, although there was something darker lurking under his words. “Because if he had you wouldn’t even need me to kill him for you, Celestino would have done it well before I got to him.”

Yuuri remembered how furious Celestino had been when he had told him what happened, not in detail like he had told Phichit but enough, and he didn’t doubt it.

“Yuuri.” Phichit said finally and there was a strange sort of hesitation in his voice, as though he was unsure whether to continue or not. “I don’t know if you want to hear this right now because you have every right to be angry but I genuinely think Viktor might have been trying to protect you. I don’t understand why he would ever think what he did of you, that’s something you’ll have to ask him yourself, but from what you’ve told me it sounded like he just panicked and thought he was trying to stop you from making a horrible mistake. I mean, if he really hated you he would have just let you take the pills and then reported you. If he had been right that would have guaranteed you to test positive. But he didn’t. He tried to stop you. And he didn’t even report you did he? That was his coach right?”

“Yeah.” Yuuri mumbled because that was what he had been told at least and there didn’t really seem to be any reason to doubt it.

“Viktor and I definitely need to have a little chat.” Phichit said and there was something sharp about his words, a tone that implied a specific type of smile that, had Yuuri been able to see Phichit in person, he was sure wouldn’t reach all the way up to the other boy’s hardened eyes. “But despite everything, no matter how awful it was, I really think that Viktor was trying to protect you.”

“But what does that matter?” Yuuri burst out because there was still a tiny spark of resentment burning in him and it flared up at Phichit words, hot and painful. “What does it matter what he was trying to do. He didn’t protect me. He thought I was a cheat and then his coach accused me of
cheating and then someone told the whole world and I lost Phichit. Don’t you understand that? I was going to tell him, I love him and I was going to tell him and now this has happened and I’ve lost.”

“You’re hurting Yuuri.” Phichit said and he sounded like he was trying to be soothing, trying to rationalise everything that had happened in a way Yuuri couldn’t be objective enough to yet. “You hurting because you have every right to be hurting and you’re angry because you have every right to be angry and if you never want to see Viktor again I can’t blame you. But you’ve not lost. You’ve given up and that’s a very different thing.”

Yuuri was taken aback by the words, stunned into silence and Phichit continued, voice softer.

“If you want to give up on Viktor then do it. Let him go, cut him out of your heart and come back to kick his ass on the rink next season no holds barred. Hell, I’ll help you. But I don’t think you want to do that do you? You still love him, you said that yourself. You’re still in love with him. And that means something.

Phichit paused and Yuuri let the words sink in, waiting.

“Yuuri, you had a good thing with Viktor.” Phichit said and Yuuri felt his mouth go slack at the statement because it was absolutely not what he had been expecting to hear.

“I mean, it was messy.” Phichit continued, trying to explain and obviously struggling with the words. “It was complicated and you deserved way better than what you had. But it was also good Yuuri, in a way. You were happy. Maybe it was less than what you deserved but it was a start and it could have become so much more and you were happy. I think I can pretty safely say that you’re not happy any more.

Yuuri wanted to protest but there was nothing he could say that wouldn’t be a bald-faced lie and he owed his friend far more than that.

“You’ve not lost Yuuri.” Phichit added. “You can give up on him but don’t think you’ve lost him. I know you saw his free skate, everyone saw you there but I don’t know how much you saw of what happened after, once he got off the ice. It was…kind of horrible actually. And nowadays, he doesn’t look so well. He’s barely been seen out as it is and there’s been nothing online from him. The few times reports have caught him he looks ill. And I don’t know if you’ve seen that clip of him, the one that’s gone viral?”

Yuuri made a noise that sounded enough like a ‘no’ that Phichit continued.

“A reporter found him somewhere in St Petersburg a few days after. They asked him about what happened, they were trying to be sympathetic to him I think. But they made it sound like you were a cheat, like you’d somehow tricked the ISU, pretended you were innocent to defame him. And Yuuri, I’ve never seen Viktor so angry before, not like that. It was kind of terrifying.”

Yuuri could feel the surprise run through him at the words because he hadn’t known. He had been staying far, far away from any form of news or social media because they had hurt him enough as it was and he didn’t want to ever see them again and so no news of the outside world had reached him, for better or for worse.

“The way he reacted. And the way he is now. I’d say you’re probably not the only one who’s hurting at the moment. He tried to get in contact with me as soon as it happened. He knows we’re friends, it was actually all the notifications from him that I saw first, before I even saw the news. I blocked him obviously, I wasn’t going to talk to the bastard who broke my best friend’s heart but if you want to talk to him you definitely can because I can pretty safely say he wants to talk to you.
“And you don’t have to forgive him.” Phichit added, forestalling any of Yuuri’s words before they could come. “But don’t ever say that you’ve lost because you haven’t, not yet. If you still want this, if you ever decide to forgive him, I think you still have a chance.”

“I don’t know Phichit.” Yuuri tried, even though the words sounded weak even to himself. “I love him but I don’t know. I don’t know what I should do.”

“You don’t have to do anything yet.” Phichit told him. “The ball’s in your court now, not his. It’s your choice. Take some time, think about it. Talk to him when you feel ready to talk to him again, either to forgive him or end it. But don’t give up just because you think that you’ve lost. After all…”

There was the slight hint of a smile in Phichit’s voice, creeping into the words and filling them with a confidence that Yuuri had never had in himself.

“When has the Yuuri Katsuki I know ever been content with losing.”

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That night after Phichit’s phone call Yuuri stayed awake late, Vicchan sleeping soundly beside him. Faint moonlight shone through the crack in his curtains, falling in a stripe across the room and illuminating the bare walls, bringing the faint marks where posters used to hang into clear view.

There were a lot of them, years of collecting, of carefully searching and cutting out of magazines and spending every penny he had until the wall of his room was plastered with them. Viktor’s face, innocent and childlike in a way that it hadn’t been for so many years now, gazing down on him from every angle. Watching him, inspiring him to work harder, to do better so that one day he could meet his idol on the same level, on the same ice and have all his dreams come true.

And then had come the fateful Junior Grand Prix Final, the moment that changed everything and sent Yuuri careening down the path that he had been walking ever since. The single lost nail that had brought down a kingdom.

After that he had ripped down every poster he had of Viktor, all but one and that was safely tucked away in Detroit now regardless. All that was left on the walls of his childhood room were imprints, faint marks where once there had been so much. Little reminders scattered everywhere of what Viktor had once been to him.

Yuuri had adored Viktor then, had worshiped him. And then he had hated him, had wanted to beat him, to tear him down and prove to him that Yuuri was worth every scrap of respect that he had been denied.

But now he loved him. And now everything was different.

Yuuri had worshiped Viktor as a concept and hated him as a memory. But he loved him as a person, a person that he had had to know in the worst circumstances and despite everything that existed between them and Yuuri had fallen anyway. Fallen hard and completely and irreversibly, even now.

Thinking about it, Yuuri knew that he would never be able to pinpoint the moment that he had fallen in love with Viktor. Not the moment he realised it, he could time that down to the very second. But the moment that he had fallen, the moment that his heart had looked at Viktor and decided ‘it’s you, it could only ever be you’. That he would never know.

It had happened slowly, gradually, as each new piece of Viktor had been revealed to him and shown him who Viktor truly was. The real person, not the twisted image Yuuri had been carrying for so long.

Phichit had been right once, on that night far in the past when he told Yuuri that he had been obsessed with Viktor for years. But obsession and hatred and deadly attraction had mixed and changed as affection and need and longing slowly began to creep in and the more Yuuri learned about Viktor the faster the process became until one day he realised he had been in love for years and hadn’t even realised it.

And more than just love, he and Viktor worked. On every level they simply fit together, like two pieces of a puzzle made to join. The week in Moscow had shown Yuuri that, the ease with which they had fallen into a comfortable routine, the way they complimented each other, so different and yet more together than they ever could be alone. The easy domesticity and casual affection that transcended even nights of passion and stolen kisses because that was something that could last, something that Yuuri could see keeping forever even as time and the world wore them both away.
The worst part, the part that still tore at Yuuri was that he had been so close. He didn’t know how Viktor would have reacted to the confession that never came and now he never would but he had been almost sure back then, almost sure that he had a chance. And now everything was in pieces at his feet like the pieces of his heart and yet he loved Viktor still. But he wasn’t sure if he could put the fragments of his heart back on the line again. Put them back into Viktor hand’s because he had done it twice before and each time it had been broken further. If it happened a third time then there would be nothing left, not even fragments. Nothing but dust.

Viktor had broken his heart not once now but twice. And the strangest thing was Yuuri couldn’t even resent him for it anymore. Could only mourn what was now lost because Viktor might have broken his heart but he had done it unintentionally and somehow that almost made it worse.

When he had been young he had thought that Viktor was cruel, spiteful and malicious with no concern for the feelings of others. But that wasn’t Viktor, not as he was now and probably not even as he had been back then. On one of their rare nights together when the truth had finally come spilling out Viktor had told Yuuri about the first time he had watched Yuuri skate and the admiration and awe that had filled his voice had been undeniable and nothing in Yuuri could ever rationalise it away as anything other than it was.

Viktor had admired his skating. Had admired him. Even before their second encounter in the bathroom when Yuuri’s hatred of Viktor had been reinforced. And that was another thing to look back on because he had thought that Viktor had been mocking him, had thought that Viktor had been looking down on him. But maybe he had been wrong all along. Their first encounter had shaped Yuuri’s views of the other man so thoroughly that even now looking back on his memories he couldn’t tell what was true anymore, what was real and what he had only imagined while locked in his own head.

Viktor had been cruel to him when they were children yes, casually cruel and dismissive but the horror in Viktor’s voice, the shock and devastation in his eyes when Yuuri had told him about it all those years later had proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that whatever the reason for it, whatever the excuse that he had never heard, Viktor regretted it. Regretted it and apologised for it and Yuuri finally realised he had forgiven him for it.

They had never talked about it properly, Yuuri had denied them that. He had never described it in more than vague terms, had never given Viktor a chance to explain himself, had never given either of them the chance for closure and that had come back with a vengeance with Viktor’s accusations, had made everything seem so much worse because the hidden feelings had always been lying in wait for him, just waiting to rear their ugly heads and ruin everything.

They should have talked about it then, Yuuri should have given them that chance. Because it was only now that he realised he had forgiven Viktor for what had happened when they were children, forgiven him completely and finally with no hidden seed of resentment threatening to grow insidiously through his mind again and he had only realised it when something much worse had come along and ruined everything again.

Lying in his childhood room, surrounded by memories Yuuri finally realised that he had forgiven Viktor for the past. But the realisation came far, far too late.
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This is actually heartbreaking

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It’s his face at the end that gets me every time

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The way he just froze for a second when Katsuki turned away and then sprinted out after him!

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This is the worst I’ve ever seen Nikiforov perform and that’s including his time as a junior and even a novice

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Almost a week later Yuuri finally broke and decided to go skating again.

He had been putting it off and putting it off because he had been missing the ice desperately and yet he was terrified of what would happen if he set foot in a rink again, of what memories it might bring.

But skating had always been his solace from the world, his way to drive away everything but the joy of being on the ice and eventually he could deny himself no longer. Rising with the sun he slipped out to take Vicchan for their customary early morning walk and once that was completed he headed straight over to ice castle, only stopping briefly by the onsen to drop Vicchan off and pick up his skates.

It was too early for the rink to be open to the public but he knew that Yuko and Takeshi would just be starting to prepare for the day. Turing up out of the blue might not have been his best idea but Takeshi met him at the reception with a smile and welcomed him in, promising that Yuuri could skate for as long as he wanted but warning him that the rink would begin to fill up in a few hours as the public began to trickle in.
Ice Castle was nothing like Yuuri remembered. The well-worn old rink from his childhood memories was gone, replaced by shiny modern glass and chrome. The building had been completely redecorated and expanded, pristine and well cared for in a way that truly showed the Nishigori’s love for the place.

When he had first walked in Yuuri had almost stopped short, gaping in surprise because not only was the building so drastically improved from what he could remember but there were also pictures of him everywhere, ranging from official posters and photographs to screenshots of videos catching him mid-skate, eyes focused but far away, lost in the music. Takeshi had laughed at his stunned reaction and pointed to a little display case off to one side where a pair of tiny skates were resting, well-worn and familiar and bringing back memories that Yuuri had almost forgotten.

“Your parents donated them.” Takeshi told him as he lead Yuuri towards the rink. “Katsuki Yuuri’s first pair of ice skates. It adds a bit of character to the place don’t you think?”

Taking in Yuuri’s still slightly shell-shocked expression he laughed, slapping Yuuri on the back and almost sending him toppling over with the force of the affectionate blow.

“What did you think we were doing with all that prize money you kept sending home Yuuri? We weren’t going to spend it on ourselves and we thought doing this place up would be the best way to honour your legacy. And people love it. We get tourists from all over coming to skate at Olympic gold medallist Katsuki Yuuri’s home rink. We were almost persuaded to name it after you a couple of times but Yuko thought you’d probably prefer it to stay the way it is.

Yuuri cast up a prayers of thanks for Yuko because he wasn’t sure he could have even set foot in the place if it had been named after him, the embarrassment would have kept him away no matter how desperate he was to get back on the ice. It was bad enough to see his own face staring back at him from all across the walls.

Takeshi seemed to notice his discomfort because he stopped by the side of the rink, looking a little more sober.

“Yuko said you might be embarrassed by all the decoration. But Yuuri, the kids love it. So many of them here look up to you, there are so many more people skating now than there ever were even when we were growing up. We’ve even had to hire extra instructors to keep up with it all. And they all come because of you.”

“There must be another reason people come here too.” Yuuri protested, not quite willing to believe. Part of him was overjoyed that his childhood refuge had been treated as well as it deserved, that the sport he had devoted his life to was being enjoyed by so many more people who would keep skating even when he finally left for good. But part of him couldn’t believe that he was the cause.

“Why would people look up to me?”

He wasn’t that special, wasn’t as important as Takeshi was making him out to be. And even if people had looked up to him before, after the disaster that was his last World Championships they certainly wouldn’t any more. He had failed everyone’s expectations of him in the very moment that they had been prepared to see him win and he could never make up for that.

Takeshi looked at him for a second, eyes intent as though he were analysing, trying to work out if Yuuri was being serious or not.

“People come here because they all think you’re amazing.” he said eventually. “And you know what Yuuri. You really are.”
kuroshitsuji-ciel-freak  @kuroshitsuji-ciel-freak · 34m
I will actually physically fight anyone who is talking shit about Katsuki for taking anxiety meds

Ember @ember-hinote · 31m
@kuroshitsuji-ciel-freak Some people are literally so vile and they need to be stopped!

bearisonford @bearisonford · 26m
‘Taking medication is cheating’ more like ‘The ISU cleared it but obviously my gross ass knows better than actual medical and sports professionals’

Ultra Queen  @ultra-queen-of-the-nerds · 23m
@bearisonford I’m so happy that he has so many people defending him though! From what I’ve seen the overwhelming majority is on his side

Katie K  @actualkatsuki_trash · 17m
I can’t believe Olympic gold medallist Katsuki Yuuri has anxiety suddenly I feel like I’ve done nothing with my life in comparison

Nadiiia @mrskatsuki · 11m
Knowing that Yuuri Katsuki has anxiety and is still a professional athlete has finally given me the courage to tell everyone who calls me pathetic for my own mental health to go fuck themselves

d-lawliet @d-lawliet · 9m
My little sister has to do a presentation in class about ‘My Hero’ and she did hers on Katsuki Yuuri I’m so proud
Figure skating legend Katsuki Yuuri did all that while also dealing with anxiety??! Someone give that boy a fucking medal. Not that he needs another one or anything!

Sometimes I feel really overwhelmed by everything and sometimes I remember that Yuuri Katsuki has won like a million gold medals while still feeling just the way I do sometimes.

I have never related to someone more than I do to Yuuri Katsuki.

Ignorant People: ‘people with mental health issues are lazy and will never amount to anything’.
Katsuki Yuuri surrounded by gold medals: ‘You were saying?’

If Katsuki Yuuri can be an Olympic gold medallist and also have anxiety then so can I.

After Takeshi left him Yuuri strapped on his skates slowly, still taking in the rink, familiar and yet so different all the same. The place itself was very different, the decoration a jarring contrast to what he remembered. But familiar memories still lingered there, woven into the very walls of the building.

Memories of long days and longer nights spent practicing over and over again until his feet were rubbed raw and bleeding and every part of his body ached. Memories of coming to the rink as a sanctuary, an escape from the outside world where he could skate his troubles away until it was just him and the ice.

And even further back than that, memories of he and Yuko watching skating competitions together, in awe of the young Russian skater who had captured both of their attention and Yuuri’s heart. Of replicating his routines over and over again, childish and clumsy but with perfect care and devotion.
Even after all the years that separated Yuuri from the boy he had once been, that he had never forgotten.

It seemed almost natural to fall back into the familiar memory once he stepped out onto the ice. There was no music but Yuuri didn’t need any, not for this. The routine and the music was worked deep into his memory, deep into his bones. Buried for years but never gone.

After his first disastrous meeting with Viktor he had skated the routine only once more, on the ice of a deserted Russian rink more than four years ago when Viktor had been absent from the competition due to injury and Yuuri had realised that skating wasn’t really skating without Viktor there with him.

But when he had been much younger he had skated it over and over, perfected it while watching Viktor perform at competition after competition in the run up to the Junior Grand Prix Final when Yuuri had known he would finally meet his idol like he had always dreamed of doing.

It was Viktor’s routine from that season, the one that had broken all the junior records and wowed the world, the first routine that Yuuri had watched him skate in person the same day that Viktor broke his heart for the first time. Despite everything he had never forgotten and the movements came naturally.

Yuuri fell back into the familiar routine with ease, despite the huge expanse of time since he had learned it first and loved it last. It held so many memories and he lost himself in the feeling, hoping in vain that maybe it would finally allow him to clear his head enough to decide what to do.

There was no music but Yuuri heard it regardless, a beautiful aria of love and longing that filled his mind to match his movements as he skated, so lost in his thoughts that he didn’t even hear the sound of another person entering the room until he stilled, holding the final position as the sound of clapping echoed from the side of the rink.

Startled he spun around to see Yuko standing there, watching him with a sad light in her eyes.

“You’ve improved that routine a lot since I last saw you skate it” she said as Yuuri slid over to meet her, the barrier the only thing between them. “You can even do all the jumps now. Last time we skated that together we were still only doing doubles.

“Not all the jumps.” Yuuri pointed out because when he had seen Viktor skate the routine in person Viktor, fifteen and already astonishing the world, had added in a quad flip for the first time in a competition skate, a jump that would later become his signature move and a jump that Yuuri still couldn’t consistently land, not even now.

“Still Yuuri, I never thought I’d see you skate Viktor’s routine again.” Yuko was looking at him and there was something in her voice, an implication in her tone, as if she was waiting for an answer. When Yuuri gave none she sighed and continued.

“Don’t you think it’s time you told me Yuuri?”

“You know what.”

And Yuuri did. He had never told Yuko what had been going on between him and Viktor, had never told his family. No-one but Phichit. But he could read the expectation in Yuko’s face and voice easily and he knew what she was expecting him to say.

“I’m in love with Viktor.” he replied and he was surprised by how easily the words came when it
had been so impossible to say them before.

Yuko nodded in acknowledgement but didn’t react in any other way.

“You don’t look surprised.” Yuuri added and Yuko laughed, smiling fondly at him but still with the same sad light reflected in her eyes.

“No Yuuri, I’m not. It’s good to finally hear it from you but it isn’t a surprise to anyone here. We didn’t know but we all kind of assumed. If the whole world figured out you hated Viktor without you having to say a single word did you really think that the people who love you wouldn’t notice when you fell in love with him. You might have changed a lot Yuuri but you haven’t changed that much.”

“All of you?” Yuuri asked, shock mixing with a strange sort of relief at the truth finally being out in the open once and for all. “Even…”

“Yes, all of us. We never talked about it, we all figured that you’d tell us when you were ready, if you ever were. But I could tell that everyone knew, even your family.” Yuko smiled sadly at him. “Lately, when we were meeting at your parents place to watch your competitions, whenever your mum mentioned him she had started to call him ‘Yuuri’s Viktor.’”

The words made the empty place inside of Yuuri ache because it didn’t matter that he had been in love with Viktor for years, that Viktor had been his first everything and might very well be his last. The one thing that Viktor had never been was Yuuri’s.

“And Yuuri,” Yuko added, motioning for him to step off the ice and pulling him into a hug the moment he did so. “I am so sorry about what happened.”

Yuuri couldn’t bring himself to speak so instead he just hugged Yuko harder. After a while they broke apart and she handed him his skate guards, walking with him to the changing rooms and waiting as he pulled off his skates and replaced them with his normal shoes. Afterwards they walked together back to the entrance in comfortable silence. Yuuri knew that he needed to leave before the public started showing up, the last thing he wanted right now was attention, but he was also reluctant to go. Skating again had felt so good and he had missed it so badly. He couldn’t imagine a life away from the ice altogether.

As they walked Yuuri noticed an old storage room, the door standing ajar and a pile of old boxes stacked up in front of it, a random collection of assorted objects spilling out of the room and into the corridor beyond.

“We’re doing some cleaning.” Yuko told him, noticing where his attention had turned. “Some of that stuff has been in there for years, we figured it was about time to finally get rid of it.”

But Yuuri hardly registered her words. All his attention was fixed on the battered old TV standing unobtrusively in one corner, outdated and dusty and so very familiar. Walking over to it he ran his fingertips along the surface, eyes drawn to the screen which was staring back at him, blank and empty.

“I’d almost forgotten about that.” Yuko commented, coming up behind him. “We used to watch the skating on it when we were kids, do you remember?”

“Yes.” The word felt heavy in his throat and Yuuri blinked a couple of times, trying to push away the feelings that were threatening to overwhelm him. “This was where I first saw Viktor.”

“Oh.” Yuko made a soft noise of understanding but didn’t say anything further, instead simply
watching Yuuri as he touched the screen, the place where he had watched Viktor skate that had changed his whole life.

If he could go back, if he could change that one day so that he had never seen Viktor, never loved him, he wouldn’t. Not even now, not even after so much heartbreak. Viktor and skating had brought so much to his life, so much he was sure he never otherwise could have had and he would never want a life without it, not even if it erased all the pain that his life had brought. He couldn’t bring himself to regret his past even if he regretted how it ended. But the question now wasn’t about the past. The question was about the future.

Letting Viktor back in could be a horrible mistake and one that would only cause to serve him more pain and heartbreak. But letting him go, giving up on him and losing what they might once have had and the slimmest possibility that they might have again, that might be a worse one.

“Yuko, how did you know that Takeshi was the right choice for you?” he asked suddenly because he needed to know. Because he loved Viktor, loved him so much but he had been hurt by him and it seemed like the whole world was trying to come between them and Yuuri just didn’t know what to do.

“I don’t mean how did you know that you were in love with him.” he added. “But how did you know that he was the right choice?”

Yuko sighed and put her hand on Yuuri’s shoulder, turning him so that they were eye to eye and giving it a comforting squeeze.

“Oh Yuuri. You never know. No-one is perfect and there’ll never be one right choice, it doesn’t work like that.”

“So...you just loved him enough to have faith?” Yuuri asked, a little confused because Yuko and Takeshi were perfect for each other. They had clicked from the moment they met and their friendship had grown into such casual and easy intimacy. And now they lived the perfect small town life together with their business and their children and Yuuri couldn’t imagine it ever being any other way or it ever being anything other easy and obvious for both of them.

“No Yuuri, it’s not about love.” Yuko said and Yuuri could feel the confusion become evident on his face because he had no idea what Yuko was trying to say.

“Of course you have to love them.” Yuko clarified, noting his expression. “But love isn’t the be all and end all of everything. Lots and lots of people love each other and never end up together. It’s not about love it’s about choice.”

“Look Yuuri.” Yuko added, obviously seeing the confusion that was still written across Yuuri’s face. “Being with someone, it’s difficult. It’s complicated, it’s hard, it’s messy. You both mess up and you both hurt each other and you both do stupid things even if you love each other. Being together and staying together isn’t just about how much you love them. It’s about being willing to try and make it work. It takes time and effort and commitment and a whole lot of apologising because no-one lives the perfect life and no-one is the perfect person. But they make it all worth it in the end.”

“This is about you and Viktor isn’t it?” she added and Yuuri opened his mouth to try and deny it but shut it again at the look on Yuko’s face. “You love him but a terrible thing happened to you and now you’re not sure if you should try again, is that right?”

Yuuri nodded and Yuko looked satisfied with the response, brief as it was.
“You can walk away now Yuuri, love or no love. You can end it if you’re not willing to fight for it and no-one will think any less of you for that. But it has to be a clean break. Talk to Viktor - tell him. He deserves that at least. Then leave and leave for good. No going back, no one-time things, no exceptions. If you’re going to end it then you have to commit to that ending, for both your sakes.

“But if I don’t end it.” Yuuri said hesitantly because he still wasn’t sure what he was going to do, what he wanted to do, but the thought of never seeing Viktor again almost brought him to his knees with the aching feeling of loss. “If I do decide to fight for it, if I do try and make it work like you said. How do I know that he feels the same, that he wants that too?”

So much of Yuuri’s life with Viktor had been defined with uncertainty and even as he had prepared to confess it had still lurked in his mind, banished but never gone. From what he had seen he knew Viktor cared for him at least, knew that Viktor was sorry that he had hurt Yuuri. Knew that Viktor was kind and generous and had extended that to Yuuri time and again.

But Yuuri loved Viktor. Loved him so much that it hurt, loved him so much that it scared him with its intensity. And the knowledge that he loved Viktor so much more than Viktor could ever possibly love him was terrifying. The thought of confessing those feelings to try again, of offering them to Viktor with no guarantee that Viktor felt anything more than affection for him, and after Yuuri walked away maybe no longer even that, was worse than even the choice about his future that he would soon have to make.

“You just have to take that chance.” Yuko told him but her tone was placating, the tone of someone trying to soothe a child of their irrational fears no matter how incomprehensible they seemed. “But I think you already know what he feels for you Yuuri. After what happened at the World Championships I think everyone does."

And part of Yuuri thought that yes, maybe Viktor had loved him before. But there was another part of him that whispered that he was wrong. A part that had always existed inside him and maybe always would and Yuuri might think he knew but he could never quite be sure, not when so much had always been left unsaid.

“But he never told me.” he said to Yuko, trying to voice the fear and doubt in a way that she would understand, in a way that would sound at least-semi rational. “If he did actually love me once why did he never just say it?”

“There are lots of ways to tell a person that you love them.” Yuko replied and her eyes drifted slightly, a small smile appearing on her face as though she was remembering something very happy. “And you’d be surprised by how few of them involve the actual words.”

“But why wouldn’t he just tell me?” Yuuri insisted because he needed the words, he needed the explicit conformation before he could truly believe anything because if not his self-doubt would always be lurking, just waiting to trip him up and drag him down and prove him wrong.

“Oh Yuuri.” Yuko looked at him, the memory fading from her eyes and a knowing look replacing it. “Yes, maybe he never said the actual words. But think about it. Did you?”
Alright that’s enough, I am sick of seeing people in the Viktuuri tag like ‘omg why did Yuuri-chan walk away from Vitya that was so mean *sob sob* ’ because seriously you all need to fucking stop. Aside from the whole ‘these are actual human beings we are talking about stop being so disrespectful’ issue I will defend Katsuki’s decision to walk away to the death.

Am I a Viktuuri shipper? Yes. Do I hope this was all just some horrible misunderstanding and that they will eventually reconcile and be happy again? Obviously. But am I angry that Katsuki walked away? No, absolutely not. Because what happened to Katsuki was really, really awful and I know that Nikiforov didn’t do the accusing and it clearly wasn’t his fault that the information got out but that probably isn’t going to make Katsuki feel much better. Getting your private information released to the world and then having everyone discussing and analysing it is such a horrific thing to happen to someone and I can’t even imagine what he must be feeling right now. He’s received a lot of support and encouragement and thank god for that but that doesn’t change what happened and I’m very glad he seems to have disappeared for a while because he deserves a break.

So people need to stop acting like he was just being mean to poor Vitya or something ridiculous like that because he is a real person with real feelings and if he wants to leave then I will fight every single other goddamn shipper on this site for his right to do exactly that

#Viktor Nikiforov #Katsuki Yuuri #Viktuuri #y’all need to stop

Source: cajuncherrybee

1,287 notes

u-dubstep-my-heart reblogged this and added:

seconded! ^ ^ ^

thecullenlinguist reblogged this and added:

I totally agree but I still hope that he’ll forgive Nikiforov in the end. Because Nikiforov wasn’t even the one that accused him and we all saw how absolutely destroyed he looked after his FS when he tried to run to Katsuki and Katsuki turned away from him.

just-insert-a-username-here reblogged this and added:

I hope that one day they reconcile too but I don’t think it’s going to be soon if it is ever going to happen. What happened to Katsuki was a really big hit to take and it’s going to take him some serious time to get over that and be ready to speak to Nikiforov again
Over the next few months, Yuuri fell into a sort of routine. There were rumours that the hot springs of Hasetsu had healing properties and the longer he spent there the more he thought there might be some truth to the legend. Gradually he began to feel better, not completely but little by little, day by day. He still missed skating and missed Viktor more but the pain and heartbreak of the rumours and scandal that had caused him to flee Tokyo were finally starting to fade. Not gone but lessened as he healed little by little in the privacy of his hometown surrounded by his family and friends. He still hadn’t decided what he was going to do but he was content to put it off for a little while longer.

His routine was a simple one. Wanting to pull his weight after so many years of absence he helped out around the onsen during the day and spent his nights skating when the rink was closed and empty, or in Minako’s studio.

That was where he found himself one night, dancing late into the evening in the privacy of the room, practicing the same moves over and over again until he was soaked in sweat and his mind was calm. Minako had offered the room to him any time he needed and Yuuri was immensely grateful for the offer. His old teacher had been excited to finally see him return although she had expressed her sympathy and sorrow at the reason and given him an open invitation to her studio to practice.

In return, Yuuri had finally worked up the courage to tell her what he had told Yuko, just a few weeks after the first conversation. He didn’t go into any detail, kept it brief the way he had with his childhood friend but he had told all the same. It was nice to finally tell his biggest secret to the people he loved, like a weight lifting off his chest and allowing him to breathe again. Minako had reacted much like Yuko had, although there had been a curiosity in her demeanour, a desire to know more even as she allowed him to stop speaking and not delve any deeper.

Yuuri sometimes wondered what Minako thought of him. After all, before Yuko, before even Viktor, she had been the one to convince him to take up skating, a lonely boy with a talent for dancing who she had seen something in even back then. Yuuri hoped that she was proud of him, that she could see the way her hard taught ballet training was still ingrained into his skating even to that day and know that she was responsible.

When he was finally finished for the night he repacked his bag and slung it over his shoulder, zipping up his jacket and preparing to leave. As he headed downstairs towards the door of the studio he passed Minako who was sitting at one of the tables, laptop open and a glass of saké in front of her.

Yuuri walked over, intending to bid her goodnight and apologise for staying so long but he stopped when he say the video that was playing across the laptop screen, faint music trickling from the speakers.

It was a video of Viktor, a recording of one of his free skates from years previous. Yuuri recognised the program and the music that accompanied it was vaguely familiar, a sweet and soaring duet that tugged at the corners of his memory. He had watched Viktor skate that program in person at the Grand Prix Final, the one when Viktor had won both the gold and his reputation back from Yuuri after Yuuri’s first streak of wins earlier that year.

Minako was watching the screen intently, face close and eyes narrow in concentration. As Yuuri approached she looked around, taking in the way that he was staring at the screen.
“You were already sleeping with him then weren’t you?” she asked and Yuuri startled, finally looking away from the video to stare at her in bemusement.

“Yes.” He said hesitantly. “But how did you know?”

He hadn’t told Minako anything specific, not dates or incidents just the general shape of the story. There was no way she could have known for sure he thought, unless she had made a very lucky guess.

Minako didn’t answer, just turned back to watch the screen intently again where Viktor was holding his final pose, body straight with one hand extended as if he were reaching for something just out of his grasp. Yuuri looked as well, casting his mind back to the season when Viktor had performed the routine.

It had been around two years ago, first performed during the Grand Prix Series after Yuuri’s golds at both the Olympics and the World Championships that same year. He remembered the night after his loss the Grand Prix Final, when he had been caught up in such a complicated mixture of resentment and sadness and anger and, buried deep, the desperate desire to feel like Viktor had made him feel on their first night together, special and wanted and needed in a way he had never felt before, even if it was only for one night.

That night he had run into Viktor in the corridors of the hotel and everything had spiralled out of control from there and Yuuri had fled the room as soon as it was over. But that had been after the recording of the free skate that Minako was watching, the night after it was performed.

Minako was still right though, he had already slept with Viktor at that point. Just once, when everything between he and Viktor had finally come to a head at the banquet of the World Championships months before and changed everything.

The screen eventually went black as the video ended and Minako shut the laptop with a click, turning in her chair to face Yuuri fully.

“Why were you watching that?” Yuuri asked curiously because he couldn’t see any reason that Minako would be sitting watching Viktor’s old routines late into the night.

“I’ve been watching you skate for years now.” Minako replied in lieu of a proper answer. “Both of you, you and Viktor. And it’s certainly been…enlightening. Especially with what you just told me.”

Yuuri frowned, trying to puzzle out his old teacher’s words because he was sure that he was missing something. But the words didn’t make sense and he could make no connection between them.

“Sometimes you can be a very selfish person Yuuri.” Minako said suddenly and Yuuri took a step backwards in shock, the feeling of hurt flaring up within him. He didn’t know what he had done to prompt the words but they stung all the same, especially coming from someone he held in such high regard as Minako. She had always been harsh with her words when she thought he needed it, pushing him for his own good but that didn’t lessen any of the sting.

“Don’t get me wrong.” she continued quickly, reaching out for him in reassurance. “You’re a good person. One of the best. You care so deeply about other people and you’d never do it on purpose. But that doesn’t mean that it isn’t there. I think maybe you just get so caught up in your own head sometimes that you forget to think about anything else.”

“Minako, I don’t understand.” Yuuri blurted out because he knew that Minako had a point about spending so much time trapped in his own head but he still didn’t really know what she was saying
or why she was saying it. He didn’t think he was selfish or self-absorbed, couldn’t think of any time when that might even be remotely true. “What do you mean?”

“Yuuri, you’ve been focused on yourself for a long time.” Minako told him and her voice wasn’t harsh or accusatory but soft and a little sad. “And I don’t blame you. Viktor hurt you deeply when you were young and you never quite recovered from it. And he hurt you again now even if it was by accident and you had every right to walk away when you did.”

Reaching out Minako took one of his hands in hers, holding it tightly and looking up at Yuuri, gaze holding his and refusing to let him look away as she spoke again.

“But Yuuri, during all the years in-between. During all that time. Did it ever once occur to you that maybe you were hurting Viktor too?”

[Discussion] Katsuki Yuuri and Viktor Nikiforov

submitted by proserpineceres

{boredpsychopath-jc} · 28 minutes ago

I know this might seem super insensitive or something but the main thing that I can’t get over in the whole Katsuki/Nikiforov scandal is that Katsuki had actual??fucking??hickies??on his neck during his free skate. Like he was clearly fucking someone the night before and from what happened that day I think we can all guess who it was. And I can’t believe that we literally got the best proof ever that our ship is real and then right after something like this had to come along and fuck it all up.

{lesdienne} · 24 minutes ago

Viktuuri is still real in my heart and you can never convince me otherwise

{captainkirkk} · 21 minutes ago

I think that A) can you please stop spreading this gross speculation around, don’t you think his privacy has been violated enough?? B) it could have been anyone and now more than ever his personal life is entirely his own and everyone needs to stay the fuck out of it and C) if it was Nikiforov which it might very well have been then it makes this whole mess so much worse. I actually feel physically sick thinking about it. Because if it was and then Nikiforov’s coach accused him the next day god knows what Katsuki must have been feeling. And not just Katsuki but Nikiforov as well because we all know how he reacted after the free skate and it wasn’t anywhere
close to just guilt over a false accusation. That was genuine desperation and heartbreak. There was
definitely a lot more to that story than any of us know, or should know because it’s between them
and none of our business, and I think that just makes everything so much worse.

{riladoodles} · 18 minutes ago

I was there that day and I remember hearing Katsuki and Nikiforov wishing each other luck before
the short program (in each other’s languages too!!!) and there was definitely something going on
between them. I don’t know what but something. And I can say with 100% certainty that whatever
actually happened that lead to Nikiforov’s coach accusing Katsuki of doping Nikiforov definitely
was not trying to hurt Katsuki. Anyone who saw them the day before would know that. I have never
seen him look as happy before as he did back then.

{makkachiin} · 13 minutes ago

Yeah I agree. Idk why Nikiforov’s coach accused Katsuki (I think I read somewhere that there were
’suspicious circumstances’ but idk) but I’m pretty sure that Nikiforov either had a really fucking good
reason for going along with it or his coach did it against his will and considering his reaction after the
fs I’m inclined to believe it was the latter rather than the former

{phichitsbitch} · 12 minutes ago

I don’t even ship Viktuuri but Viktor was obviously really cut up about what happened and people
need to stop taking their anger out on him! I’ve seen a lot of Viktor hate recently and it needs to stop

{darklight} · 8 minutes ago

Definitely!!! Nikiforov didn’t spill Katsuki’s secrets to the world that was some shitty ISU employee,
he didn’t even report Katsuki to the ISU that was his coach. We may never know the full story of
what happened but I know that Nikiforov wasn’t the real villain here like a lot of people are trying to
claim

Even though Yuuri’s life had fallen back into a peaceful routine while in Hasetsu he still couldn’t
help but feel restless. Unfulfilled even as he settled back into life as he had once known it.
Objectively he knew that soon he would have to make a choice. To stay or to go. Time was rapidly slipping away and if he stayed in Hasetsu much longer he knew he wouldn’t have enough time to prepare for the skating season to come if that was what he chose to do. If he was ever going to skate again he had to choose soon and alert Celestino so that they could begin working on new routines.

And if he chose not to, if he chose to stay in Hasetsu then he would have to decide that soon too. Staying would be almost a conformation of retirement and if he missed the next season it would be unlikely that he would ever return to skating again. In one of their conversations Phichit had mentioned potentially returning to his home country of Thailand with Celestino to train if Yuuri did chose to stay in Japan and Yuuri knew that he needed to make the choice soon. Phichit had promised that if Yuuri came back to train under Celestino they would remain in Detroit and it was disrespectful to his friend to leave him waiting. Either he would go back to Phichit and Celestino to train or he would retire and stay in Japan and his coach and friend would leave Detroit and there would be no going back for him. As soon as Phichit had mentioned the possibility he had known that he needed to decide soon and give his final answer.

During his time in Hasetsu he had kept himself isolated from the outside world, far away from all forms of news that would inevitably hurt him again the way they had before. He didn’t know what the world was saying about him, whether they expected him to come back or whether they assumed he was gone for good. He was sure that there would be some fans who were rejoicing at his absence, fans who had always loathed him and would be glad to see such a famous skater meet such an inglorious end. Some would probably be glad of his return should he chose to walk that path but the negativity had always stuck out to him far more than anything else. The opinions and expectations and others had always been a pressure on his life, twisting his thoughts and dictating his moves.

If he chose to come back he would have to face the world and their opinions again, whatever that may be. The thought was terrifying and made him recoil after so many months in the comforting sanctuary of home. Some nights he missed skating, really skating not just gliding aimlessly round the rink in Ice Castle like he was doing now, with a desperate ache but some nights he couldn’t bear the thought of what he might find if he chose to leave and step out into the spotlight again.

The thoughts tormented him for days, the looming decision that he knew he would soon have to make hanging over him. It began to affect everything, even his appetite and eventually his parents began to notice. One night when he had failed to eat even his favourite Katsudon his mother had sat down beside him once all the guests had cleared out of the room for the night and finally asked what he knew had been on her mind for a while.

“What’s wrong Yuuri?” she asked him. “What can we do to help?”

Even though Yuuri knew what he wanted to say, he still found it hard to speak. His parents knew him too well and had always waited for him to come to them, to talk when he was ready. But he knew that he had also always had trouble speaking, trouble confiding in anyone even if it was his family. Especially his parents, who had never really understood skating the way that his friends did. They supported him yes but they didn’t seem to ever quite get the burning drive to win, to do better over and over again, the love he had for the sport that he had devoted his entire life to. Sometimes Yuuri thought that they would be just as happy if he had stayed at home like Mari and worked in the onsen for the rest of his life instead of leaving them all behind to chase what had once seemed like an impossible dream.

“What do you think I did the right thing?” he asked instead because he needed to know. “Going to Detroit. Skating. Maybe I should have just stayed at home.”

He hadn’t thought that he had regretted his choices before but the looming fear of the inevitable
decision was making him question that. Maybe he would have always felt a little unfulfilled, a little out of place, a little lonely, had he stayed. But even though he had been taken to some incredible highs he had also been dragged him to some incredible lows and maybe leading an unremarkable life in a little town by the sea would have made him, if not happy, then maybe at least content. It would certainly have saved him from a whole lot of heartbreak.

“Oh Yuuri.” His mother reached out, wrapping her arm around him and guiding him gently down to that his head was resting on her shoulder like she had done so many times when he was a child in need of comfort. “Look at what you’ve done. Everything you’ve achieved. No matter what you choose to do now, never think any less of that.”

“But what should I do?” Yuuri asked because he had to make a decision and yet it was so hard and so much that could be regretted whichever choice he made.

“Only you know what’s best for you Yuuri. No-one can make that decision but you.”

“But I’m asking you.” Yuuri tried again because he was tired of making his own choices and always feeling like he was choosing wrong no matter what he did. “What do you think I should do? Maybe I should just retire.”

His mother smiled and the arm around his shoulder tightened briefly, squeezing gently. The room they were in was quiet, nothing but the quiet hum of the lights and the faint creaks of movement from elsewhere in the onsen and it was strangely private and peaceful.

“I think you should do whatever makes you happy.” she told him into the quiet. “Will that make you happy Yuuri?”

Instead of answering Yuuri let the silence fill the room again because he already knew the answer but wasn’t quite ready to say it out loud yet.

“You’ll always be welcome here.” His mother continued. “You’ll always have a place here. If you want you can work at the onsen, or at the ice rink because I’m sure the Nishigori’s would be happy to have you and there are a lot of children around here who would love to learn to skate from you. You can stay here and have that if you want. Will that make you happy?”

Despite the question in her voice Yuuri stayed silent and she smiled down at him knowingly. Deep inside himself Yuuri knew that as pleasant as the life sounded it wasn’t what he truly wanted. Maybe years and years down the line Yuuri knew that as pleasant as the life sounded it wasn’t what he truly wanted. Maybe years and years down the line when his bones were old and his joints were aching and he wanted nothing more than a quiet life. But that wasn’t what he wanted now, still in his prime and with a burning desire for more. He couldn’t give up the ice and the life he had built for himself piece by agonising piece, couldn’t let it end the way it had. For months he had been agonising over the choice but it had never really been a choice and hearing the other option from his mother only reinforced that. The life she had described, not matter what else it would give him, could never make him happy.

“Do what makes you happy Yuuri.” His mother reiterated and the knowing smile was still on her face, quirking at the corners of her lips as she looked at him affectionately. “Don’t worry what anyone else thinks, don’t worry what anyone else expects. Do what makes you happy. And know that whatever you chose, your father and I will always be so, so proud of you.”
Katsuki has been MIA for months now and tbh I really hope it stays that way. I’ve always hated him ever since he started getting all cocky with Viktor

@bubblegumfirefly Same! He was always such a dick and everyone could see he hated Nikiforov and like, you didn’t have to broadcast it dude! I’m glad he’s gone

@bubblegumfirefly fucking excuse me?? What kind of bullshit is this? Show a little respect would you

@bubblegumfirefly yeah fuck off. Katsuki will definitely be coming back but hopefully Nikiforov will stay gone. No-one’s heard from him in months and it needs to stay that way

Yeah I’ve always been a Katsuki fan and all real Katsuki fans hate Nikiforov and so I fully support the hope that after his pathetic skate at worlds he’ll never show his face again

Oh my god you need to stop what is wrong with you people???

I can’t believe there are still Katsuki and Nikiforov fans arguing after what we all saw at the World Championships

Oh my god you need to stop what is wrong with you people???
@marechales Ikr! Especially the Nikiforov fans like can you imagine being deluded enough to still think that Nikiforov hates Katsuki after what happened at his FS

yumeniai @yumeniai · 11m

@amarantae especially after how passionately Nikiforov defended Katsuki to confirm that he was innocent. Like, do people really think their precious idol would want them to be so vile about Katsuki after that???

emalorene @emalorene · 11m

@yumeniai if any of the Nikiforov fans/Katsuki haters ever actually met Nikiforov I’m pretty sure he’d tell them exactly what he told that journalist and I thought that they were going to cry by the time he was done!

olimlacus @olimlacus · 9m

@emalorene Same with Katsuki fans though. I mean I know it’s not the same thing and yeah Katsuki has always seemed to hate Nikiforov but he’s also never been publicly rude about him in interviews or anything because… 1/2

olimlacus @olimlacus · 7m

he’s a professional and that would be a shitty thing to do. I don’t think he’d approve of what some of his fans are saying. 2/2

arix @arixsrage · 4m

People need to stop saying such awful stuff about both Katsuki and Nikiforov because they are actual people who can be hurt by this sort of thing and the attitude towards the rivalry (if it even if that anymore) is really toxic

Kane @kanekuinke · 3m

@arixsrage I agree, I think this stupid rivalry thing everyone always pushed at them has probably become really damaging to both of them

sakurab09 @sakurab09 · 1m

@kanekuinke Also, I’m pretty sure those two have been hurt enough as it is!
The night after his mother’s declaration Yuuri found himself lying in bed, Vicchan warm at his side. After the conversation he had finally made his choice and he was planning on calling both Phichit and Celestino the next morning to tell them that he would be returning to Detroit as soon as he could book a flight. The Grand Prix Series was rapidly approaching as summer gradually began to reach its end and he had a lot of work to do in a very short space of time if he wanted to be prepared for the next season.

But even with his decision about skating finally made, he still hadn’t chosen what to do about Viktor. Pulling out his phone Yuuri opened up the photo album, flicking quickly through to a picture he had saved almost a year ago.

Despite everything that had passed between them there were no pictures of he and Viktor together. No real photos, only official shots from competitions, stark and impersonal. Nothing physical to remind him of their time together, to prove to himself that it had been real, that it had happened.

Instead he had saved an old promotional photo after his time in Moscow, a picture from a Russian newspaper article. He hadn’t been able to read the article itself but the photograph had caught his eye. Most pictures of Viktor were of him skating or in costume, posed and frozen like a statue. Perfect but cold, the way Yuuri had seen him for years.

But the photo that had caught his eye wasn’t like that. Instead it was of Viktor with Makkachin, laughing happily as he crouched down to hug his dog, Makkachin panting happily up at him. It reminded Yuuri of the time he had spent in Moscow, the brief window into Viktor’s life when he had realised finally that he didn’t want to leave. He had saved the picture on impulse but had never been able to bring himself to delete it.

Vicchan looked up sleepily at the light coming from Yuuri’s phone, barking excitedly when he saw the picture and pressing his damp nose up into the screen, whining a little when he couldn’t get any closer. Yuuri laughed a little, bringing up a hand to rub affectionately behind Vicchan’s ears and pulling the phone away to wipe the wet marks off the screen.

“Did you see Makkachin?” he asked with a smile, zooming in on the photo so that Vicchan could see the other dog up close. “Do you like Makkachin?”

Vicchan panted happily and Yuuri continued to stroke him, moving from light scratches behind his ears to running his hands through the soft fur of his flank.

“I think you would like Makkachin.” he mused quietly, staring at the picture for a few seconds before zooming back out so that the second subject of the photo was visible again. Vicchan barked happily again and gave the hand that was holding the phone a slobbery lick which Yuuri wiped off with mock disgust.

“I think you’d like Viktor too.” he added and Vicchan huffed contently and rested his head back on Yuuri’s chest. Yuuri looked at the picture again, the way Viktor’s eyes were lit up in happiness as he laughed.
“What should I do Vicchan?” he asked even as he knew that he would receive no answer. He loved Viktor and missed him desperately but Viktor had the power to hurt him worse than he could bear and it had happened before and if he put his heart back in Viktor’s hands it could happen again. Not through malicious intent or hatred but through the mess of complexities and emotions and circumstance and everything in the world that seemed to forever be working against them, keeping them apart.

“Do I still want Viktor?” he asked and Vicchan raised his head, looking up at Yuuri with his large soulful eyes.

“Yeah, you’re right.” Yuuri replied, turning off his phone and rolling over so that he was lying down with Vicchan by his side. “I guess I already knew the answer to that.”

The next day, before he talked to Celestino, Yuuri first told his family about his decision to leave. His mother had had a small secretive smile on her face when she heard the news but she didn’t say anything, just wished him luck and offered to help him pack and book the tickets back to Detroit. His father reacted much the same but Yuuri had to look for Mari to tell her separately as she hadn’t been present in the room with his parents when the initial news had come out.

Eventually he found her sitting at the back of the onsen, a lit cigarette between her lips and gazing off into the distance, expression far away. When she heard his approach she patted the ground next to her in a signal for him to sit, exhaling in a long puff of smoke that drifted away on the breeze.

“You’re going back to skating aren’t you.” she said without preamble and Yuuri nodded, lowering himself down so that they were sitting side by side, his gaze following hers to where the sun was bright on the horizon.

Mari turned to look at him and for a long moment she said nothing, just watched him as the breeze ruffled his hair and danced across his skin, making him shiver a little. Finally she spoke again.

“You’ve grown up so much.” she told him unexpectedly and there was a little humour in her voice mixed with a nostalgia that wasn’t sad so much as lost in a memory. “What happened to my stubborn little brother who used to think that everything in the world was against him?”

Turning to look at her Yuuri saw that she was smiling, cigarette held loosely between her fingers as she watched him.

“I guess I just realised that I was more loved than I thought I was.” Yuuri replied and there was no hesitation in the words. No matter how much he wanted to return to Detroit and skating he wouldn’t ever regret the time he had spent in Hasetsu, surrounded by his friends and family. It had been so long since he had been home that he had almost forgotten but being there had reminded him and allowed him to begin to heal.

When he had been young he had thought that he had been fighting alone but the more he looked
back on his life the more he realised how untrue it was. Even if his parents had never understood his skating they had always supported him and loved him unconditionally. And Mari was the same, always there with words of support and protection against the evils of the world when he needed it.

And more than just his family. Yuko, who had been the one who understood him and his skating before even Phichit, the first to know about his history with Viktor and the one who had always been there to support him as he grew and changed. Takeshi whose gruff shows of affection were clumsy but loved all the same, the triplets who loved skating with the awe and longing that Yuuri remembered from himself in years gone by and who were his self-proclaimed biggest fans. Minako, his friend and teacher and the person who had first pushed him to skate and who always had a place for him to go when he needed it.

Celestino who had suffered all of Yuuri’s determination and frustration and swinging emotions as he helped Yuuri to grow into the skater that he was today, dealing with it all with a seemingly endless patience and support. And Phichit, his best friend who Yuuri was sure he couldn’t live without. The one who had always been there for him no matter what, who had dragged him out of his shell to give him a life outside of endless skating and who had listened and advised and understood through all the years that Yuuri needed it the most.

So many people that he loved and that he knew loved him back, who were there for him even when he thought he was alone and who he had finally realised meant that he had never been fighting alone at all. There were always people there for him, people who would protect him and support him even if the rest of the world turned against him. It had taken him a long time in the comfort of Hasetsu away from the pressure and expectation and judgement his life had been mired with for him to finally realise it but realise it he had. And with that, he could face anything.

“More loved than you thought you were.” His sister repeated and there was a deep affection in her tone, overlaid with a hint of teasing. “And not just by us it seems.”

Feeling the blush and embarrassment begin to creep up on him Yuuri hid his face in his hands, refusing to look Mari in the eye. Theoretically she could be talking about Phichit and Celestino but that was absolutely not what her tone implied and he knew full well what she was thinking.

“Does everyone know about that?” he groaned because while Yuko had told him that she had guessed and assumed the others had too he had never had conformation and had not chosen to discuss the topic outright with Mari. He was sure that she would know that his feelings for Viktor ran deeper than the hatred the media still loved to portray but that was where he had hoped the assumptions ended and he could think of nothing worse than being forced to discuss his sex life with his sister.

“Yes Yuuri, you’re not that subtle.” Mari laughed, her tone still lightly teasing. “Maybe you are to the world but not to us. And also…” she gestured to his neck, raising an eyebrow suggestively. “When you came you still had lovebites all over there. It wasn’t that hard to work out what you had been doing. And who with.”

Groaning Yuuri buried his face deeper into his hands and he could feel the heat radiating from his cheeks. Part of him prayed that his parents hadn’t noticed as well but the more rational part of him knew that they must have if it had been that obvious. Knowing that he was in love with Viktor was one thing but his parents also knowing about the particular activities he and Viktor had been engaging in was something else entirely and he wasn’t sure if he would ever be able to look either of them in the eyes again.

“Don’t worry about it Yuuri.” Mari consoled although he could still here the amusement in her tone. “Everyone was a little confused at first but we all figured that you had your reasons. And lately
everyone started noticing how much happier you were looking at competitions when you were near him and that’s all any of us care about after all.”

While it didn’t lessen any of Yuuri’s embarrassment it was still a reassurance and he finally looked up from where his face had been hidden in his hands to meet his sister’s eyes.

“What are you going to do about him?” Mari asked, the humour dropping from her voice and seriousness taking its place.

“I don’t know.” Yuuri replied because he still didn’t, not really. He would go back to skating but that was about as far as his plans extended at the moment. He knew that he still loved Viktor and still wanted Viktor but he wasn’t sure if he was ready to face him just yet. Trying to confess had been hard enough before but now, with everything that was now broken between them, it seemed almost impossible.

He knew he would talk to Viktor eventually, when he was ready. But he wasn’t ready quite yet.

“Do you still love him?” When Mari spoke the words were phrased much more like a statement than a question, as though she already knew the answer and Yuuri nodded because there was nothing else to say.

“Well, I can’t say I’m particularly happy with him at the moment.” Mari said and there was a dangerous quality that had slipped into her voice. “But the choice is yours Yuuri and I’ll support whatever you chose to do.

Mari took another drag of her cigarette, inhaling deeply before releasing the smoke in a drawn out exhale and stubbing the stump out on the ground where it sizzled to a stop, leaving a charred mark behind.

“But if he hurts you again I’ll rip his balls off.” She smiled but it was sharp and there was a definite warning in her tone, although Yuuri could tell that none of it was directed at him. “You tell him that from me.”

After he had left Mari, Yuuri went back to his room to call Celestino and explain his decision. Celestino sounded pleased when Yuuri confirmed that he was coming back and in the background he could hear a whoop of excitement that he recognised as Phichit that made him smile and clutch the phone a little tighter. He was planning on calling his friend as soon as he got the chance but he had decided to call his coach first so that they could decide what to do. While there was still just enough time to get ready for the upcoming Grand Prix Series he was cutting it dangerously close and he knew the work would be hard to get two programs ready in time.

Celestino pointed out that very fact, sounding a little worried but Yuuri didn’t let it phase him. He had made his decision and he wasn’t going to back down now.
“What do you want your theme to be this year Yuuri” Celestino asked and Yuuri could hear the scratch of pen on paper from the other end of the phone as his coach scribbled something quickly. “We can work on the choreography once you get back but I’ll start drafting up ideas in the meantime.”

Yuuri thought back to the last few months, on what he had learned and what he was going to take with him into the future and found that the words came easily.

“Well.” He told Celestino. “I have a few ideas…”

Katsuki Yuuri Announces His Intentions To Return to Figure Skating

Earlier this morning Celestino Cialdini, the coach of Japanese figure skater Kasuki Yuuri, announced that the world-renown skater was intending to return to skate the next season as planned. This announcement came amidst widespread rumours of retirement, for both Katsuki and…

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KATSUKI IS BACK YESSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS

themosthappyambivalent · 5m ago
If he had actually retired like people were saying he might I would have cried so hard

beautifuljosh · 6m ago
This is the best news I’ve heard all year

cestunepomme · 8m ago
After what happened at the World Championships I was so sure that he was going to retire and I’m so glad that he hasn’t
Returning to Detroit was hard. Much as he loved being back and skating again his time away from Celestino’s rigorous training regime surrounded by the comforts of home had taken its toll. Yuuri had still been dancing and skating on the nights where he needed a distraction but the combination of his uncertainty over his future and his mother’s excellent cooking had made the transition back into intensive fitness and skating training a shock to the system.

The only thing that made it bearable was that Phichit was right there alongside him, training during the day until they were both dripping with sweat and working hard at night. They both had college work to do, being professional athletes put a high demand on their time and summer work was a common occurrence. Phichit was in the middle of his degree while Yuuri was rapidly approaching the end of his own. He had almost completed the last of his work before his spontaneous trip home and he was determined to get his degree officially before the Grand Prix Series started.

The combined pressure of both training and work left very little time for him to think about anything else and most of the time Yuuri found himself flopping down face first onto his bed at the end of the day with a pained groan, Phichit usually mimicking him in his own bed or else just dropping down on top of Yuuri and causing him to yelp in surprise.

Celestino had no sympathy and allowed Yuuri no reprieve, telling him that it was his own fault for trying to compose a completely new set of skates for the next season on such short notice. Although it pained him Yuuri could hardly disagree and he knew that Celestino was only pushing him so hard because he cared. Yuuri’s ranking had taken a hit after the disaster of the World Championships and he couldn’t afford a loss in the coming season on top of that.

Together they worked on his new routines, adapting and perfecting them as the beginning of the season grew ever closer. Celestino had choreographed most of his short program but Yuuri worked on his free skate alone. In years gone by he had had varying degrees of creative input into his programs and Celestino was always happy to include his ideas but it was the first time that he had choreographed a program completely on his own. Celestino had offered to help but Yuuri had turned him down. It seemed important somehow, that he do it alone. That it came from him.

As well as skating and work Yuuri also resumed his sessions with his therapist. At first it had been awkward and he had been hesitant to speak but eventually he had begun to talk and once he had
started he found it hard to stop. He had never spoken to her about Viktor before but he knew that it was finally time and he let the words spill out of him in a cascade while she listened. Talking it through with her helped and Celestino encouraged him to go as often as he needed.

While he had talked about it to his therapist, Yuuri still hadn’t told Celestino the whole story, although he was sure that Celestino knew. As Yuuri’s coach he had always been aware of the rumours and he had also seen Yuuri distraught and panicked with suspicious looking bruises scattered across his neck the day that everything had gone wrong, with hundreds of missed calls from Viktor blowing up his phone before Celestino had blocked the number. It wouldn’t be too hard to work out the truth and Celestino was a smart man.

A few days after he had returned to Detroit Celestino had taken him to one side, face serious.

“I didn’t tell you this when you were in Japan because I wanted to give you time away from everything.” he said, looking around quickly to make sure that no-one else was privy to their conversation. “But Viktor called. Several times actually, after what happened.”

Yuuri sucked in a sharp intake of breath, both anticipating and dreading what was about to come. He still didn’t know how Viktor had taken everything, after Yuuri had left him and walked away. Would they still have a chance, even after everything? Or had Viktor seen Yuuri’s retreating figure and decided that it was the end, that it wasn’t worth continuing anymore.

“I told him to leave you alone but he asked me to pass on a message.” Celestino continued and Yuuri waited, tense. “He told me that he understands if you never want to see him again. But that he still wants to talk to you, if you’re willing. That he’ll wait as long as necessary. And that he’s sorry. He was very clear about that. He said that he wasn’t asking for forgiveness but he was sorry and that he needed you to know that.”

Yuuri let out the breath that he was holding, not quite sure what he was feeling. There was relief and sorrow and a whole host of emotions that were too tangled for him to name but in one tiny corner of his mind like a spark, like an ember, there was hope.

“I think that you should talk to him.” Celestino added. “Maybe not now, maybe not yet. But when you’re ready I think you should. It’ll be good for you.”

Absentmindedly Yuuri nodded, still caught up on Viktor’s words. Each new thing he heard tipped the balance of the scales further and further in the direction of the future and the decision that was simultaneously the most hopeful and the most infinitely terrifying.

“He’s announced that he’ll be skating next season too.” Celestino told him and Yuuri was brought unceremoniously back to the present because of course Viktor was, had there ever been a question about that? Viktor was a skating legend, he would never choose to end his career on the mess that was the last World Championships, Yuuri would never believe it.

“I spoke to his coach as well.” Celestino added when Yuuri didn’t say anything in response. His tone was calm but Yuuri could see the implication under his tone and he was sure that ‘spoke’ wasn’t the most accurate descriptor for the majority of that conversation. After seeing how furious Celestino had been at the accusations a few months previous, ‘shouted at’ was probably a more accurate description.

“He sent his apologies too. And said that he was looking forward to seeing you at the next Grand Prix Final.”

Yuuri had no idea how genuine the words had been considering how well his last meeting with
Yakov Feltsman had gone but he supposed that it didn’t really matter in the end. Because first, he had to get to the Grand Prix Final. And by then he promised himself, he would be ready. By then, he would make his choice.

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**[Discussion] Nikiforov/Katsuki Conspiracy Theories**

submitted by fatfreebroccoli

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{famousavenuellama} · 52 minutes ago

I’m going to put this out there straight away and say I think this was sabotage by Viktor’s evil coach. Clearly he saw that Viktor and Yuuri were in love and he decided to create the whole scandal to drive them apart.

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{drowninginthissunlight} · 50 minutes ago

I don’t know that sounds a bit ridiculous to me. I mean, both his and Nikiforov’s reputations got damaged by the false accusations (not that it was fair that Nikiforov’s did because it was his coach not him but he’s the famous one so I guess it makes sense at least). I mean, they didn’t get damaged irreparably and the ISU have already said Feltsman was within his rights to report suspicious activity and ask for it to be investigated, it wasn’t his fault that everything got spilled to the public, that was the ISU’s fault. But if it was done deliberately to drive Katsuki and Nikiforov apart it was a very risky move that probably hurt Nikiforov more than it hurt Katsuki.

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{izumikonata27} · 47 minutes ago

Agreed. Evil coach theory seems a bit far fetched.

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{thatsalliwannabe} · 46 minutes ago

Clearly Nikiforov is the evil one not his coach. He probably got his coach to accuse Katsuki to make sure someone else took the blame if it went wrong but it was clearly a way to try and sabotage Katsuki just like when he “accidentally” crashed into Katsuki two years ago. He was very good at faking being sorry then too.
Ummm no.

There’s no way Nikiforov got his coach to accuse Katsuki of doping and then faked it when he got it wrong for his own gain. I mean, he totally bombed the World Championships, even worse than Katsuki did, so it clearly wasn’t some master plan to win. And you can’t fake that level of emotion. You just can’t. It was bad enough to watch when he was running after Katsuki, once he got through the door and out the public’s eye I’m sure it was much worse.

Yup, we’re discarding the evil Nikiforov theory because it’s bullshit and he’s a cinnamon roll.

You might be discarding the evil Nikiforov theory but I’m still sticking to the ‘Katsuki planned it’ theory. There’s no way a professional and experienced coach like Feltsman would accuse someone of doping on a whim, there must have been some seriously suspicious circumstances to back it up. What was Katsuki doing to make him think that? And why didn’t he defend himself when he was initially accused? What sort of innocent person doesn’t speak up to their accuser and protest their innocence? He definitely did it on purpose.

Why, what would be the point?

Legacy. He and Nikiforov are the two top skaters right? They’re going down in history but amazing as Katsuki is, he still hasn’t been able to beat any of Nikiforov’s records. Nikiforov yes but not the world records he set and that’s what people will remember in the end. So if he couldn’t beat Nikiforov fairly he decided to try and ruin his reputation by setting him up with false rumours to make people hate him so that Nikiforov would be forced to retire in disgrace. That way Katsuki could be remembered as the golden boy and Nikiforov would be gone. Yeah Katsuki had to throw the World Championships to make people feel sorry for him but he has enough medals, missing one year wouldn’t hurt him.

Plus Nikiforov looked devastated after his free skate and ran to Katsuki but Katsuki just turned and walked away. He clearly doesn’t care about Nikiforov at all.
Definitely! And to get Nikiforov to react like that I think there must have been some emotional manipulation going on as well. I wouldn’t put it past him.

Right I’m going to call utter bullshit on this one and I don’t think I even need to explain why because it is just so completely idiotic and insulting to Katsuki and Nikiforov both.

Yeah, that theory is the worst I’ve ever heard. ‘Oh I’ll just set it up so that I’m falsely accused of a serious crime for more fame’

I don’t know, it sounds vaguely plausible.

No, it really doesn’t.

I think everyone is missing the obvious theory here.

Which is?

It was an accident obviously and they were both victims of circumstance. Something must have happened that was suspicious enough to make Nikiforov’s coach request an investigation against Katsuki (whether Nikiforov knew about this or sanctioned it or tried to stop it or what I have no idea) and it should have been completely private and all been fine once Katsuki was proven innocent. Or maybe not fine, I mean he probably would still have been upset he was accused, but at least salvageable and not the enormous shitshow it turned into. It was just one person with no morals or conscious who decided to make it public and that’s what ruined everything because then everyone
found out about Katsuki’s meds. So Katsuki gets screwed over because his information is released against his will and Nikiforov gets screwed over because I think we all know that what happened ruined him. The real villain here is the ISU for not vetting their employees properly and every person, paper and gossip site the spread information that should never have been made public in the first place.

{monkeyseenoevil} · 10 minutes ago
And we have a winner!

{risingfeenix} · 7 minutes ago
Nah, that’s definitely not what happened sorry to burst your bubble

{vangoghblock} · 4 minutes ago
I’m still going with the ‘Nikiforov Sabotage’ theory. I mean, it’s not like it hasn’t happened before

{wikipediaisreliable} · 3 minutes ago
Maybe they’re both evil!

{rawenclaw} · 1 minute ago
Or maybe they’re just normal human beings that make mistakes? Possibly?

The season started well for both Yuuri and Phichit, both of them qualifying for the Grand Prix Series in their respective countries. When the assignments came out they found that they were both due to compete at the Cup of China, to both of their delight. They had never competed against each other before but Yuuri knew it wouldn’t be a problem, there would never be any animosity between them no matter who scored higher.

As the season kicked off Yuuri found his life in Detroit finally begin to wind down. After the last few pieces of coursework were submitted and approved he finally graduated, almost a year and a
half late but, as Phichit pointed out, for an Olympic level athlete that wasn’t so bad. Yuuri had listened to him bemoaning that it would take him a full ten years to finally graduate himself with the considerable workload on top of his training. Yuuri was just glad the college courses were flexible enough to let them get degrees at all while training. A number of the skaters never did, he knew.

Yuuri had never been particularly sociable but it was still strange to finally be finished for good. While Phichit was the only person he would consider his close friend he had known others, either studying with him or in the same skating club training under one of the other coaches and it was very strange to see them all begin to move on.

Some of the skaters stayed on of course but others left, their lives gradually drawing them away to new directions and places far away. The same went for the classmates that Yuuri knew, all of them beginning to drift away from Detroit as new jobs and new lovers tempted them away.

It was very strange, to see everyone around him begin to move on with their lives. While skating Yuuri had existed mainly in a little bubble where the only future that mattered was the next skating season and then the one after that and so on and so forth until his life was measured in nothing else. But suddenly everyone around him was moving on and their plans for the future stretched out much further than just the next year.

One of the ex-skaters from the rink had invited both him and Phichit to her wedding, insisting that she understood if they were too busy to make it but that she would love to see them there. Another girl he had studied with on occasion was expecting her first baby and Phichit had showed him a multitude of photos of her looking very happy cuddled up next to her husband with her hands clasped protectively over her stomach.

Seeing everyone he knew begin to move on made Yuuri think too. It wasn’t unpleasant and he was happy for them all and hoped they were pleased with the lives they had chosen. But it made him think all the same. He might not have retired that season but he was almost twenty-four and he knew that while he might have a few more years he wouldn’t be skating forever and he still had no idea what would come after.

Every time he had pictured his future before, in those final months when Viktor’s potential retirement had finally become a reality and he had been forced to consider what might be in store, he had never once pictured a life without Viktor in it, one way or another. Viktor was too much a part of his world, too ingrained to ever imagine a future without him, whatever that future might be.

Before everything had gone wrong he remembered picturing what might happen after he confessed if everything had gone to plan, of building a relationship of something far more substantial than what they had before, something that might last. And then everything had come crashing down and yet still when he imagined his life in the future he couldn’t seem to picture living the rest of his life with Viktor absent from his world and the emptiness still hollow in his heart.

One night the thoughts wouldn’t leave him alone and he found it impossible to fall asleep, tossing and turning into the early hours of the morning. On the walls of his room the poster of Viktor stared down at him, eternally frozen as he had once been. The poster was old and worn and damaged and yet the signature still stood out clear at the bottom, as clear as the day that it had been written. Yuuri knew that he should have taken the poster down years ago, he didn’t need the reminder anymore and it had been a long time since it had fuelled him the way it used to.

He had stopped skating to beat Viktor, stopped skating for revenge a long time ago. And yet the poster still remained because it had always been there and he had never bothered to take it down because it seemed like it always would be. But looking at it now in the dead of night with the future on his mind Yuuri knew that it needed to go. He had finally let go of that particular part of the past.
and everything it entailed and it was time prove that for good.

Giving up on sleep for the moment he slipped out of bed and walked over to the far wall, sliding his fingers gently under the corners of the poster and removing it carefully from the walls, making sure not to tear any of the delicate paper. Despite wanting it finally gone from where it stood out as a stark reminder that was no longer wanted or needed he still didn’t want to destroy it completely. It was part of his history and that could be preserved even if he had finally been able to move on.

Rolling the poster up carefully he slid it into one of the drawers, shutting it with a click and returning to bed. When he looked back at the wall it looked strangely bare and empty but somehow Yuuri felt lighter than he had in years.

Sliding back into bed he curled up again and closed his eyes, trying to convince his mind to fall into the lull of sleep. The thoughts from before were still present, bouncing around his head and making rest seem impossible but gradually tiredness began to overtake him and he found himself drifting off, thoughts of the future blurring seamlessly into the incomprehensible kaleidoscope of dreams.

When he awoke the next morning Yuuri would never be able to remember what he had dreamed about that night. All he knew was that he awoke to find his hand stretched out, reaching for the other side of the bed that was strangely cold and completely empty.

Katsuki, Nikiforov and Viktuuri – Speculation vs Facts

Right, so there’s been a lot of talk about Katsuki and Nikiforov and their relationship over these past few months after what happened at the last World Championships and I think it’s time I made this post. Because there’s a lot of mix up between speculation and fact and I think everyone needs to be very clear on which is which.

Firstly, what happened did not confirm that ‘Vikturi is real’ like a lot of people are trying to claim. Did it strongly suggest it? Yes. But did it confirm it? No. So let’s take a look at the ‘evidence’ for Viktuuri and be clear about what is a fact and what is just speculation so we all stop sounding like crazy shippers who don’t care about the truth.

- Fact - Katsuki and Nikiforov have been significantly more comfortable around each other recently. This is coming from fan accounts of friendly exchanges at competitions, videos of them together (Katsuki smiling at Nikiforov at the Rostelecom Cup anyone???) which are a pretty stark comparison to how Katsuki used to look at Nikiforov. Lots of little incidents like that suggest they don’t outright hate each other like people try to claim.
- Fact - Katsuki did have hickies on his neck the day of the free skate.
- Speculation – those hickies were from Nikiforov. No, they could be from anyone.
- Fact - Katsuki borrowed Nikiforov’s costume for the Rostelecom Cup. While the official story is that his luggage got lost and he had to borrow out of necessity (which I have no reason to doubt) it does suggest a certain level of comfort with each other that he got it from Nikiforov.
It’s might not mean anything deeper, Nikiforov might just have been nice to a fellow competitor, but for Katsuki to ask him they obviously don’t completely loath each other.

- Speculation – the picture that Nikforov posted on his Instagram years ago with the jacket that looked a little bit like Katsuki’s is proof that they are in a long term relationship. No, it’s not solid proof at all and it could have been anything.
- Speculation – Nikiforov ran to Katsuki after his free skate because he was losing the love of his life. No, there’s no proof of this. Nikiforov was clearly emotional but there is no solid proof as to exactly why.
- Fact - Whatever happened at the World Championships had a profound emotional effect on both Nikiforov and Katsuki. We don’t know what it was but we could all see clearly that it happened, just look at their skating performances and what happened after. It doesn’t prove that they are secretly dating or in love as people like to claim but it proves that Nikiforov cares about Katsuki at least and their relationship definitely went far beyond the rivalry that was previously assumed.

So what were Viktor Nikiforov and Katsuki Yuuri to each other? Were they dating? Were they friends? Were they acquaintances? Were they lovers? Looking at the facts and nothing but the facts, discarding all speculation, the answer is we don’t know. And maybe now we’ll never know. But the one thing we do know is that they were something to each other. After what we’ve seen, I don’t think anyone now can try and deny that.

#Viktor Nikiforov #Katsuki Yuuri #Figure Skating

Source: carriecham

3,724 notes

As the Grand Prix Series finally began Yuuri found himself struggling. The intense practice time in Detroit had boosted his fitness back to its previous level but it wasn’t the physicality that he was struggling with. While his short program was fine, scoring high although not breaking his personal best like his previous one had, there was something lacking in his free skate. An intrinsic element that was intangible but missing all the same. It wasn’t terrible and he still scored highly enough to be satisfied but it was still frustrating.

During the Cup of China Yuuri found that he could push aside the inadequacy of his own skating to congratulate Phichit, who had won gold for the first time in his time in the Grand Prix series and was ecstatic about it. As soon as the scores had been announced Yuuri had swept Phichit into a hug and refused to let go for several minutes.

Phichit had chosen to skate to music from his favourite film ‘The King and the Skater’, songs that he had loved for years and which he had made entirely his own on the ice. Once, years ago, he had confessed to Yuuri that it was his dream to one day skate to the music in a major competition and Yuuri couldn’t be prouder of him or the gold medal he sported around his neck.
After the medal ceremony Yuuri ducked away, trying to avoid the reporters that were flocking the rink. They were relentless and seemed to take pleasure in asking invasive questions that he had no desire to answer and he had managed to avoid them as much as was possible over the course of the competition. Every time he was forced to answer question, to face the looks of glee on their faces as they asked him things that were private and personal and the world had no right to know, he felt like he was being pushed ten steps back for every one that he had taken forward. Spending time in Hasetsu had been healing but the aftereffects of the scandal and subsequent free skate were still keenly felt and working to get past it was still an ongoing process.

After the Cup of China Yuuri was scheduled to skate in the Rostelecom Cup while Phichit returned to Detroit, his part in the series over until he knew whether he qualified for the final or not.

When Yuuri got to Russia the atmosphere was tense to say the least. If Viktor’s reception at the World Championships had been chilly, Yuuri’s in Moscow was downright freezing. Regardless of fault or intent the reputation of both Viktor and the Russian skating team had been damaged by the scandal, not irreparably but enough that Yuuri could feel the tension in the air as soon as he stepped out onto the rink. There was definitely no love for him in the stadium and it threw him off considerably.

His short program went ok but by the time his free skate rolled around his nerves were at an all-time high and combined with his seeming inability to skate the routine the way he needed to he made a few major mistakes, not enough to be fatal but enough that he was dropped considerably down the score board.

When all the skaters had skated and the results were announced he realised he had scraped through to the final by the skin of his teeth. The Canadian skater that he vaguely remembered from the Grand Prix Final the year before had also made it through, as had Yuri Plisetsky, the young Russian skater who was competing in the senior division for the first time.

During the course of the competition Yuuri had been staunchly avoiding the younger boy, memories of the first and only time they had met at the forefront of his mind. The then-junior skater had threatened Yuuri and given him an ultimatum, an ultimatum that had led to the realisation of his love and almost to a confession before it all went wrong. He had no idea what the other Yuri thought of him now after everything that happened but he had no desire to find out.

For the most part, he had been successful. Due to a lot of dodging into empty rooms and down abandoned corridors he had managed to not run into either the other Yuri or his coach, someone Yuuri wished to see or speak to even less. The only time he had failed had been just after his short program when the two of them had crossed paths as Yuuri left the rink and the Russian skater prepared to take to the ice.

“You’d better fucking work this out.” The boy had hissed as he passed Yuuri, looking furious. “I want you and Viktor both at your best when I beat you in the final.
The last comment was tacked on, almost like an afterthought but Yuuri didn’t have enough time to think about it before he was forced to make his way to the kiss and cry and the Russian boy began his skate.

After that Yuuri had tried harder than ever to remain hidden and out of the spotlight and he had been almost completely successful. After his disappointing skating and only barely qualifying for the final on top of everything else he had absolutely no desire for attention.

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scarlet99 Yeah. Neither of them look happy anymore

The final of the competition that year was held in Barcelona, a nice contrast to Moscow’s chill. When Yuuri arrived with Phichit and Celestino, Phichit immediately dragged them both out sightseeing, taking endless photos of everything within eyesight. Yuuri tried to be enthusiastic but his heart just wasn’t quite in it. Instead he went to bed early, citing a big day the next day as an excuse which Celestino agreed to readily, telling him to get some sleep.

That night Yuuri slept badly and by the time the short programs rolled around the next day he was feeling less prepared than he had ever been before. It didn’t seem like he was the only one. The young Canadian skater fell prey to nerves, his program almost painful to watch and as he exited the rink Yuuri gave him a small nod of sympathy, noticing the way the boy’s eyes widened a little at the
gesture before he nodded back. Yuuri knew from bitter experience how awful competition nerves could be, how they could get under the skin and undermine everything and he understood.

Worst of all though was the fact that he barely saw Viktor the whole day. The other man was conspicuously absent from all the practices and only appeared very briefly to skate his short program and receive his scores before disappearing again. Yuuri had no idea if Viktor was avoiding him or avoiding the reporters or the crowds or just being generally, if uncharacteristically, elusive. Throughout the whole Grand Prix Series Yuuri had been building himself up to the moment that he would see Viktor again, working through his feelings time and time again until he finally felt ready to face the other man.

He had left because he needed time and he needed distance. What Viktor had set in motion, however unintentional, had caused serious repercussions and ones that had had a profound effect on Yuuri. The kind of effect that had almost driven him from skating for good. It wasn’t the kind of thing that anyone could recover from quickly and easily and Yuuri was no exception.

He had gone back to Hasetsu to heal and in doing so had gained a new perspective and confidence in himself. He had realised that he had forgiven Viktor for what had happened in their past, had realised that maybe his own view had been warped when he had looked at Viktor in the years later because of that one tiny detail. There were still things he knew he didn’t fully understand, still things they needed to talk about. A lot they needed to talk about actually because Phichit was right when he said they had been avoiding the conversation for years.

Before everything had gone wrong Yuuri had been ready to confess, no matter his fears about what the result might be. But that had been before and then everything had been destroyed in the space of a few short hours that had driven him far away. It had taken him a long time to recover and to be ready to face Viktor again but now he finally was.

Finally, after months of healing and thinking and reflection, he had made his choice. And he wanted to try again, if Viktor was willing.

The distance and the space had given him time to think without outside pressures weighing him down, had given him the ability to make his choice rationally with more thought behind it than he had ever put behind anything before. Viktor had made a mistake and that mistake had had unintended consequences for both of them and hurt Yuuri deeply but Viktor had been ready to apologise for a long time and Yuuri was finally ready to let him. And to forgive him. For so long he had been so confused and lost but he wasn’t anymore and he knew that this time he knew exactly what he was doing, exactly what he was getting himself into.

Viktor had the power to hurt him, he knew that. But Viktor also didn’t mean to hurt him, didn’t want to hurt him, and had been more than willing to apologise when he did. And it might have taken Yuuri a long time to recover but recover he had and now he was willing to take the risk, to put his heart back into Viktor’s hands again because Viktor was worth it.

Being with Viktor had made him happy and in those last few months perhaps happier than he had ever been before. And Yuuri didn’t know for sure, perhaps he would never know for sure, but he thought that maybe he had made Viktor happy too. And he wanted to keep being happy, to keep making Viktor happy if it was in his power because he had had a long time to think about it and he knew now that he didn’t want a life without Viktor. Wanted to spend time with him, properly, the way they rarely had before. Wanted to take Viktor home to meet his parents and eat Katsudon with him and take Vicchan and Makkachin out for long walks on Hasetsu beach and just be together. He wanted that still, even after everything that had happened.

He had needed the time and the distance to heal and finally be ready to face Viktor again, to finally
come to a decision but now that he had he was willing and ready to see it through. He would find Viktor after the competition was over and tell him everything, would talk things out properly the way they never had before and maybe finally they could both move on to something better.

Of course, that was assuming that Viktor still wanted that. Or that he ever had in the first place. All the worries that had plagued Yuuri before his last failed confession were still present and nothing he did could seem to dismiss them. And it had been a long time, months apart. They had spent that length of time apart before, were both used to it by now but they had never left each other on such a sour note before.

Yuuri had needed the time, he couldn’t have rushed it, not something so huge as recovery, acceptance and then forgiveness. But Viktor was a person too and if he had got tired of waiting for Yuuri to finally be ready to talk Yuuri couldn’t begrudge him that. In his message to Celestino Viktor had said he would be willing to wait as long as necessary but Yuuri would never hold Viktor to such an irrational promise. He had been hurt and hurt badly by Viktor and it had taken him a long time to fully recover, to sort out his feeling and be ready to face him again but he was aware of just how much time had passed and how just as he had had the right to walk away when he did, Viktor had every right not to let him come back.

Viktor’s elusiveness from the competition only reinforced the fear that maybe Viktor had finally given up on him. Had moved on to something better and less complicated. Less hassle and heartache. What they had been to each other before was no guarantee that Viktor would accept his proposal of trying to make things work between them as a real couple, to build something made to last. Just because Yuuri was finally willing to try didn’t mean that Viktor was obligated to.

He voiced the fears to Phichit that night, sitting in their hotel room after the short programs were finished.

“Did I leave it too long Phichit.” he asked because it was the worry at the forefront of his mind, clawing and twisting at his insides. “Viktor and I. Did I take too long?”

“So you’ve forgiven him then?” Phichit asked instead of replying and Yuuri nodded because he finally had.

It had taken him more than ten years to finally, fully and completely forgive Viktor for what had happened when they were young, or at least, more than ten years to acknowledge it to himself. And when Viktor had hurt him again at the World Championships it had been a much worse blow and broken everything in Yuuri, including his heart.

But he remembered the way that Viktor had run to him. The way that Viktor had called and called and never received an answer. The apology passed on through Celestino that must have truly been something if his coach had deemed it fit for Yuuri to hear even after everything. And all the little things, everything he had heard, everything that showed him Viktor’s true feelings more plainly than he had ever been able to see them before.

It had taken Yuuri a while, time and distance that he desperately needed, but now he had made his choice, real and solid and unchangeable.

“Yes.” he told Phichit and he could hear the surety in his words. “Yes, I’ve forgiven him.”

“Good.” Phichit said and Yuuri saw that he was smiling. “I thought you would. Eventually. If you hadn’t I would have understood but I hoped. You were so happy when you were with him and you’ve been so empty since it ended. I really think you two have a chance to be something special, if you chose to be.”
“I want to be with him.” Yuuri confirmed, seeing the pleased look on Phichit’s face at the statement. “Properly this time. And forever. But Phichit, what if it’s too late? It took me so long. Do you think I’ve messed this up?”

“I think that you both have.” Phichit said slowly, considering his words carefully. “But Yuuri, that’s what people do. And you can’t change the past. What matters now is what you do next. Do I think you waited too long? I think that you needed time but now you’ve left it long enough. I think that you love him and you’ve forgiven him and you need to tell him that now. You’re not a cruel person but if you drag this out any longer now that you’re ready to talk to him again then you will be. You’ve had your time and if what Celestino told me from what Viktor said is true he’s been waiting for you. Don’t make him wait any more.”

“One thing I don’t understand is why he bothered waiting?” Yuuri asked because Viktor had a reputation for being brash and spontaneous and he had half expected the other man to turn up in Hasetsu out of the blue after he had failed to catch up to Yuuri the first time. “He tried to contact me, then you, then Celestino. But after that he just…stopped.”

It was one of the many tiny buried fears, the little niggling doubts that told him that he had got it wrong, that he had misread the situation and of course Viktor didn’t really want him. That when he confessed Viktor would push him away because Yuuri really wasn’t worth the effort.

“He could have found me easily if he’d wanted to. Lots of people knew where I was. But he didn’t. Instead he just waited. Why?”

“Would you have wanted that, for Viktor to chase you even after you ran away?” Phichit asked and Yuuri realised that he had a point. After what had happened he had run back home to lick his wounds and heal and Viktor showing up unexpectedly would have just opened them up afresh. He hadn’t been ready to face Viktor back then and Hasetsu was his place to be safe, protected from the outside world, a sanctuary where he could think in peace and make his choice with no outside pressure pushing down on him, forcing him to choose quickly and impulsively.

He wouldn’t have wanted Viktor to chase after him so soon, not when he had retreated back home to get the time and space that he so desperately needed.

“Viktor ran after you Yuuri and you walked away. I’m not saying that was the wrong thing to do because it wasn’t but while Viktor might be many things but he absolutely isn’t stupid. He knew that you didn’t want to see him and he’s been respecting that ever since. He hurt you enough before, I don’t think he’d ever do anything to risk hurting you again.”

There was a perfect logic to Phichit’s argument that even Yuuri couldn’t deny.

“From what you’ve told me,” Phichit continued. “It seems like a lot of your relationship with Viktor has been him chasing you and you walking away. I know you had your reasons but it doesn’t make it any less true. And maybe it’s time for you to reach out to him for once. Take the first steps and I guarantee he’ll meet you in the middle.”

Phichit was right. Yuuri was the one who had been driven away and Viktor had already laid down his cards, had offered an apology, had asked for a chance to talk. Now it was down to Yuuri to make the next move. He had to be the one to reach out to Viktor before they could even begin to try and work through everything together.

“Do you think we can make this work Phichit?” Yuuri asked because that was really the crux of the matter. There was so much history between them, so much that had already gone wrong and so much that still needed to be solved and while Yuuri was finally willing to take the next step but he
had no idea if there was still the chance for a future between them after everything. Viktor might not even want him anymore and even if he did he didn’t feel as strongly as Yuuri did, no-one ever could, and he might not want to put in the time and effort and commitment that it would take to build a real relationship out of the mess they had created.

“Viktor and I. Do you think that we can work?”

“I think you’re willing to try.” Phichit replied. “And that’s worth fighting for.”

The next day at the early practice Viktor still didn’t appear, no matter how hard Yuuri looked. As he skated he kept an eye out, hoping that Viktor would show up but he never did. Eventually Yuuri cut his own practice short, leaving the ice and retreating back into the changing rooms.

He was planning to talk to Viktor after the free skate because they had both already proved that emotionally charged situations just before a performance was a truly horrific idea. After their double failure at the World Championships their positions were both in serious jeopardy and it could not have come at a worse time, with rumours of Viktor’s retirement just around the corner. They were both famous and they were both respected but they were also both old for skaters and any more damage might mean an end to their careers for good.

He just hoped that Viktor would still be willing to talk. And if he was that either he still felt something for Yuuri, whatever that might be, and was willing to try again or if he didn’t, that Yuuri would be strong enough to finally let him go.

Yuuri mused over the thought as he threw his water bottle into his bag in the changing rooms and prepared to leave but he was quickly stopped short by a figure that he hadn’t noticed approach him, startling as he turned around to be met with a familiar face.

Yakov Feltsman looked older than Yuuri remembered, the lines of his skin worn in more deeply than the last time they had been face to face. Yuuri took a step back instinctively. Memories of their last meeting were still burned into his mind, the hateful words that the man had thrown at him so viciously even if he didn’t understand the reasoning behind them. Yakov seemed to notice how Yuuri tensed, curling in on himself defensively and he took a step back, giving Yuuri space, face still unreadable.

“Katsuki.” he started then stopped, seeming to consider for a moment. “Yuuri.” he tried again and Yuuri’s could feel his eyes widen a little at the sound of his name. He was still on the defensive but Yakov didn’t seem to be trying to hurt him again and the instincts that were screaming at him to run quietened a bit at the realisation.

“Can I speak with you?” Yakov asked and Yuuri nodded hesitantly, wanting to decline but at the same time curious as to what the older man had to say. Yakov looked tired and while it could be something to do with coaching his, apparently difficult, youngest student though his senior debut, somehow Yuuri didn’t think that that was the whole story.
“I’m sorry.” Yakov began and it surprised Yuuri even though he knew that he should have been expecting it. Celestino had told him that Yakov had apologised, both publicly and privately if indirectly through Celestino. But in Yuuri’s head Yakov was still the furious man who had walked in on he and Viktor and spat words like poison and then proceeded to ruin everything.

“I misjudged you.” Yakov continued, looking sombre. “I thought…well, it doesn’t really matter what I thought. I misjudged you and I apologise for that. And I’m not asking you to forgive me. But please don’t take it out on him.”

Yuuri felt his heart clench a little at the words because that hadn’t been what he had been doing, that had never been his intention. He had stayed away because he needed to, not to be deliberately cruel, not to hurt. But Yakov’s eyes were pleading and he was frozen, the words stuck in his throat because suddenly none of them seemed like an adequate enough justification to explain.

“He tried to stop me, he was trying to protect you.” Yakov told Yuuri and there was a blunt honesty to his voice, his words undeniable. “He made a mistake I know and I’m not trying to force you to forgive him. But these last few months…what happened then…it destroyed him. So please, talk to him. I’m not asking for any more than that but please just talk to him, even if it’s for the last time. Not for me. For Vitya.

“I will.” Yuuri managed to choke out because he had been intending to anyway but he wasn’t sure if Yakov would believe him if he said it.

Yakov nodded slowly, looking relieved even if the tired lines were still engraved deep into his face. “Good.” he said quietly before turning away, leaving Yuuri alone again with his thoughts.

Later that day Yuuri waited at the side of the rink as the competition began, hoping that Viktor would appear but unsurprised when he didn’t. Viktor had hardly been seen out in public since the competition started and it seemed like he wasn’t breaking that habit now.

After waiting so long Yuuri knew that the small period of time between now and the end of the free skate when he could finally talk to Viktor was insignificant in the grand scheme of things. It had been months after all since they had last seen each other and a few more hours would change nothing. But he still remembered the way that Yakov had asked, as close to pleading as he was sure the man would ever get.

Yuuri had waited long enough because he needed the time but in doing so he had made Viktor wait too and it hadn’t truly hit him until that moment what that might really mean. Yuuri knew that Viktor cared for him, that much was evident but the way that Yakov had spoken, the way he had described Viktor…

It was time for Yuuri to finally reach out, to finally confess, to lay his heart out on the table for one last chance because he had made his choice and he had chosen Viktor and all the consequences that came with it.
It was only when Viktor’s name was called from the loudspeaker that he finally appeared, across the other side of the rink from where Yuuri was waiting, heading straight for the ice and not looking up. Yuuri wanted to call out to him but he restrained himself. After the World Championships neither of them could afford another disastrous skate and he didn’t want to distract Viktor, to stop him from going onto the ice and risk disqualification.

Yuuri hadn’t watched any of Viktor’s skating during the qualifying competitions and he drank in the sight of the other man greedily now. Phichit had been right when he had said that Viktor didn’t look well. His face was pale and drawn although he was still as beautiful as ever. But he looked sad and it made Yuuri’s chest ache because Viktor being sad had never been his intention and it hurt to see.

Viktor took up his starting position in the centre of the rink, the stadium lights glinting off the golden ropes hanging from the shoulders of his costume and highlighting the silver of his hair. Yuuri watched him with bated breath along with the rest of the stadium as they waited for the music to begin.

“Watch him.” A voice came from behind Yuuri and startled him out of his trance. He spun around to see Yuri Plisetsky standing behind him, decked out in the black and pink of his free skate costume and looking at Yuuri with a scowl on his face.

“You need to watch him. Properly. I don’t know if they were right and you already know and just don’t care or if you are actually blind and an idiot but you need to watch him. Actually watch him and pay attention for once. Because I’ll give you one more chance ok. He’s been hoping and hoping and this is the last time. So don’t fuck it up.”

Yuuri opened his mouth to respond, to ask what Yuri meant because he had been watching Viktor skate for years and he didn’t know what else he was supposed to be looking for. But then the music began, at first a few quavering notes that gradually grew, a male voice joining it as Viktor raised one hand and brought it down to rest across his face as he spun.

The music and the routine was beautiful, so beautiful and it made his heart ache because it was beautiful in its sadness. Filled with longing and love and emotions that Yuuri couldn’t even put a name to but could feel all the same. From experience he knew that to skate was to tell a story but he had never really watched the story unfolding in Viktor’s skating before, or if he had he had never really understood the purpose. Not until Yuri Plisetsky told him to look and once he did it was obvious, so obvious that he must have been blind not to notice it before.

“The music is called ‘Stay Close To Me’” Yuri said from behind him although Yuuri didn’t turn round to look, too busy watching Viktor as he exited a jump gracefully, the same desperate longing still filling his every move as he glided around the rink. “Do you understand now?”

And Yuuri did. Once before he had used the language of skating to talk to Viktor when words had failed him, had seduced him with a routine because they both knew how to speak without words, or at least Yuuri thought he did. But maybe he had been wrong.

Viktor’s routine was for him. Unquestionably and without a doubt. It was a cry into the emptiness, a plea that had fallen on deaf ears for so long. Viktor was calling out to him through his skating and through his music, showing Yuuri the true depth of his emotion in the most important language that they both shared. Keeping his distance, giving Yuuri space but still speaking to him, pleading with him, asking him to come back.

And suddenly Yuuri remembered Minako, sitting along and watching Viktor’s old programs over and over again into the night, as if she were looking for something that he had been unable to see. Something in Viktor’s skating that had been important enough for her to try and puzzle out.
She had known. Somehow she had known exactly when he had begun to sleep with Viktor just from watching him skate and with the realisation it hit Yuuri that maybe he had been missing something for years. Maybe he had been blind like Yuri had said, maybe he had been watching but had failed to really look and understand. Maybe Viktor had been skating for him for longer than he had ever realised, maybe he had been telling Yuuri something in the same way that Yuuri had once tried to communicate with him and Yuuri had been the one who had failed to listen.

If Viktor had been skating for him for perhaps years, then that meant that Viktor loved him. That Viktor loved him and had loved him for longer than Yuuri had ever realised. And if that were true then Minako was absolutely right when she had once called him unintentionally selfish.

Yuuri had been caught up in his own head for years, blinded by his hatred and the image of Viktor that existed in his mind and his own crippling self-doubt and it had affected everything. Had shaped his every move for so long that he had failed to see what was right in front of him. He had once spoken to Viktor through skating but had been blind to Viktor doing the same to him, for how long he didn’t know. But he knew that it must have been long enough.

Minako had asked him if he had ever once thought that maybe he was hurting Viktor too and Yuuri hadn’t understood because how could someone like him hurt someone like Viktor? Over all the years they had been together he had always been the lesser of the two, the disposable one, the one who would inevitably be left behind in the end. The one who had loved too much and too deeply for the feelings every to be able to be reciprocated in the same way. Or so he had thought.

But if Viktor had been skating for him for years, if Viktor had loved him for years and expected Yuuri to understand because they both spoke the language of skating and how could he not, then maybe he had been being selfish. Too caught up in his own head, never realising. Thinking about his own hurt, his own desire, his own love. Thinking but never thinking of Viktor’s because he had never realised before and suddenly everything he thought he had known was in question, thrown into a completely different light and he needed to talk to Viktor now because he needed to know, needed to hear it from the man’s own mouth not just the movements of his body and the music that was filling the stadium.

If Yuuri was right and Viktor’s skating was for him then the depth of his love took Yuuri’s breath away. It might even rival his own, as impossible as that seemed. And if it were true then it was not just Viktor’s actions that he could suddenly see in a new light but his own too. If Viktor had been confessing his love in a way that Yuuri should have understood because he had once confessed something the same way then Yuuri had been the one who was always leaving, causing pain without meaning to, constantly walking away.

If Viktor had been telling him something for years and he hadn’t been listening, if Viktor had truly been in love, maybe before even he himself realised that he was, then maybe it wasn’t both of them keeping them apart for so many years. Maybe it had been Yuuri. Maybe it had always been Yuuri.

Finally Viktor brought the routine to a close, arms crossed and hands resting on his neck, face cast towards the ceiling. Yuuri could feel the breath catch in his throat and he couldn’t breathe because the realisation that had just hit him was so huge and it changed everything and he needed to speak to Viktor, to be close to him but Viktor was already leaving the rink for the kiss and cry and he was still frozen in place.

Yuuri barely registered when Viktor’s scores were called, almost impossibly high and boosting him straight to the top of the rankings. He only broke his trance when Viktor left the kiss and cry, rising gracefully to his feet and Yuuri jerked into motion because he needed to speak to Viktor even if he hadn’t quite worked out what he was going to say.
He needed to talk to him and needed to talk to him now. Waiting had never done him any good in the past and he had only been hanging back because he thought it didn’t matter, not a few more hours. Not when he was the one with his heart on the line, not Viktor. He had been ready to offer himself back to Viktor with no expectation of reward and fully ready to accept rejection if that was what it came to and he had always thought that he was doing the right thing, that he was the only one truly at risk of being hurt.

Yuuri had known that Viktor cared for him, had known that Viktor likely looked on him with affection. But he had never, never, not even once considered that Viktor might already be as in love with him as he was in love with Viktor. Because it just didn’t make sense, that someone like Viktor would feel something that strong for someone like Yuuri. And that belief had been his downfall because if he was right, if Viktor loved him, if Viktor was in love with him, then Yuuri had been being cruel. Maybe for years. Had been hurting Viktor in ways that he didn’t even really understand yet, with no intention of doing so but doing it all the same.

Yuuri took a step, determined to go to Viktor because he needed to speak to him immediately but a firm hand came down on his shoulder, stopping him in his tracks. Yuuri turned to see Celestino standing behind him, holding him gently back as the announcer called his name from the speaker overhead.

“Yuuri. I know this is important to you. But you need to get on the ice now.” Celestino’s voice was gentle but insistent. Yuuri wanted to rebel, to protest because he needed to speak to Viktor more but Celestino was already guiding him firmly over to the entrance to the rink.

“Don’t worry.” he said, calm and placating. “I think we can all see that Viktor will still be there when you get back.”

Yuuri wanted to yell that that wasn’t the point because he had already wasted so much time on his own problems and his own fears because he hadn’t seen, he hadn’t known and the realisation changed everything but he couldn’t bring himself to. Celestino had a point, with his ranking dropped after the last World Championships he couldn’t afford to pull out now and his routine would be over in under five minutes anyway, just five minutes and he could talk to Viktor again and then maybe finally find out the whole truth that he had been missing for years.

Shakily he stepped out onto the ice, using the blades of his skates to push himself out into the centre and hearing the hush fall over the crowd. Taking up his starting position he forced himself to still, trying to calm the racing of his heart. And it was in that moment, the one peaceful moment of stillness before the first notes of the music rang out that he knew exactly what he was going to do.

As the music started Yuuri lifted his hands, bring them up close to his face before arching them over his head, eyes cast towards the ceiling where Viktor had been looking only moments previously. The music started softly, a simple piano melody that grew and grew as he moved. It had been commissioned specifically at his request, the first time he had ever done so because it was special, because it meant something and because there was a story in the music that he wanted to tell.

When he had told Celestino that his theme that year was love his coach had initially been surprised because it was so very far from what Yuuri normally chose. But he insisted because over the years he had come to understand more and more about just how much love his life was filled with and the bitterness of years past had begun to feel like a distant memory.

The song was about all the different kinds of love in his life, his family, his friends, his home. Everything and everyone who had supported and accepted him unconditionally, who had been there when he needed them the most, who had helped him to heal when he had been at his lowest and who had shaped him into the person that he had finally grown up to be.
But throughout the season there had always been something missing from his routine and Yuuri had known what it was, deep down. Because the song was about his love for Viktor too and that love had always been incomplete and unfulfilled. As real and true as it could ever be but only one half of a duet that he had thought might forever remain unfinished.

Ever since he had first realised his love he had always thought that he must love Viktor far more than Viktor ever could love him. Could never believe that he could possibly be as intrinsic to Viktor’s life as Viktor always had been to his. He had been in love and he had been ready to confess that love but even then he had never been sure that the love was reciprocated and he had always, always believed that he had fallen first and if he was lucky enough maybe Viktor would one day follow after, that the easy affection that they used to have would eventually tip from caring to love of the kind that he had been feeling for so long.

But he had been wrong. Viktor had been calling out to him for a long time, telling him something that Yuuri was still yet to confess and it was time that he finally answered in kind because he loved Viktor and he had already forgiven Viktor and he had chosen Viktor. Chosen him and everything that came with it, the bad as well as the good. He was choosing to try and make it work, choosing to fight for it because he knew in his heart that it would be worth it and that he could never forgive himself, could never live a life fulfilled if he didn’t at least try.

As he skated Yuuri felt the routine flow, perfect and complete in a way it never had been before. As he drew into the second half he pushed himself harder, ignoring the strain of his muscles from jump after jump, slightly altered from his original plan because he had an idea and he was going to see it through no matter what.

Viktor had skated for him, had shown Yuuri his love and Yuuri wanted to do the same, to speak without words because that was all he had in that moment and he needed Viktor to know, to know that his love was accepted and reciprocated. That it always had been and always would be.

As Yuuri approached the final few moves of the routine he could feel the sweat begin to drip down his face, could feel the burn of his aching muscles as they protested but he refused to pay it any heed because he still had one more thing to do and it was the most important of them all.

Throughout all his years of competition, even as he grew and improved and rose up the ranks to stand next to Viktor Nikiforov himself there was one thing that Yuuri still hadn’t mastered, a move that had been plaguing him for years because it was Viktor’s move and yet Yuuri had never landed it in competition and rarely in practice. Originally it had been the feelings of inadequacy that had grated on him. The inability to do something that by all rights he should be able to if he ever wanted to compare. Eventually the feeling faded away and he had stopped trying but the thought had always been there, present in the very back of his mind.

And now it was time to use it. Because Yuuri had never landed a quad flip in competition before and no-one had ever landed it at the end of a routine but he didn’t care because he wasn’t skating for his score or his rank or any of the things he used to care about so much. He was skating for Viktor and there was no better way to show Viktor what he felt than that. If he failed he failed but it didn’t matter because at least Viktor would finally know.

Gearing up for the jump as the music reached its final bars Yuuri tried to focus his mind, to think about the jump, to analyse the take off and the landing and all the other tiny details he needed to make it perfect but he found that his mind was blank even as his muscle memory guided him through the movement.

‘Just think about Viktor.’ A voice inside him whispered and he followed it without question, bringing the image of Viktor’s face to the forefront of his mind and focusing on the overwhelming love that he
felt, so much that he couldn’t believe that one body could contain it all.

Yuuri jumped, keeping his mind focused on what mattered the most and feeling it as his body twisted through the air, once, twice, three times and then four before his skate connected back with the ice, not shaky and unbalanced like it usually was but perfect and he could hear the gasps from the audience even over the racing of his own heart as he entered the final spin.

He had done it, had jumped and landed Viktor’s signature move, had spoken back to Viktor in the language that Viktor had been speaking to him for so long.

As Yuuri brought the routine to a close he made one last alteration, one final change to make his meaning absolutely clear. In all the times that he had skated the routine before Yuuri had ended with his arms wrapped close to his body, head cast down but as he final came to a stop he changed that because the routine was about his love, a love that he had just shown to the world and he wanted to make sure everyone knew it.

For so long he had been scared of the world, scared of the pressure and the expectation and more than anything scared of the reactions should he ever reveal a fraction of what Viktor truly meant to him. But he didn’t care anymore. Not now that he knew Viktor loved him back, not now that he knew his love was reciprocated in a way that made him feel invincible.

No-one would know that Viktor’s routine was directed at him, not unless they understood skating and the complexities of both their lives in a way that few did. Yuuri could still remember the way he had once insisted that what was between them be kept a secret, could still remember the way Viktor’s voice and eyes had gone flat at the declaration but the way that he had obeyed it anyway, hiding them from the world simply because Yuuri asked. And he was still doing it now, his song a plea that Yuuri could understand loud and clear but that would be missed by almost everyone else.

Yuuri wasn’t going to do that. Not anymore. He had treated Viktor and what they had like a dirty little secret for too long and that was just another thing to add to the list of things he had done that he had never considered might hurt before until he finally looked at them in a new light.

Now Yuuri didn’t care about the world, didn’t care about their opinions. Didn’t care about the inevitable fallout from his decision because he had chosen Viktor, had been driven away and eventually returned of his own free will because it was his choice and he had made it with no regrets and now he wanted the whole world to know.

Bringing one arm in to rest by his chest Yuuri extended the other one out to where he knew Viktor had last been standing, finger pointing and willing that the other man still be there. Reaching out to Viktor because it was long overdue and praying that he hadn’t made a mistake.

Distantly he could hear the gasps from the audience, almost drowned out by the cheering after the performance he had just given but they were just background noise to the pounding of his own heart that was still echoing loudly in his ears.

‘He’s mine.’ Yuuri thought and he could feel his heart aching but it was a good ache, painful only because he was so, so happy that one heart could never hope to contain it. ‘He’s mine and I want everyone in the world to know it.’

Looking down the length of his arm, Yuuri could see the figure standing by the side of the rink, hands covering his eyes and fingers digging deep into his silver hair.

‘Is he crying?’ Yuuri thought, feeling the anxiousness begin to rise in him again as the adrenaline began to wear off. ‘Is he mad? Did I do something wrong? What if he didn’t want people to know,
what if I got it wrong and he doesn’t feel the same, what if…’

Dropping his hands from his face Viktor began to make his way around the rink, first a few shaky steps that quickly developed into a flat-out run. In the lights from the stadium Yuuri could see the glistening trails that were streaked down his cheeks and the beads of moisture that were clinging to his eyelashes but Viktor didn’t look sad. Far from it.

Dropping his final pose instantly Yuuri broke out into a run as well, sliding ungracefully across the ice and he sprinted to where Viktor was heading, the entrance to the rink where the doorway was standing wide open and inviting. As he approached he called out because Viktor was there, Viktor was waiting for him and maybe they had both made a mess of everything but there were both there together and in that moment it was all that Yuuri cared about.

Viktor was so close, close enough that Yuuri could see every strand of his hair, every teardrop clinging to his eyelashes and he reached out, desperate to touch but Viktor got there first. Yuuri barely had time to think before a warm body was colliding with his own and suddenly lips were on his and he was falling but he didn’t care because he had been falling for years and Viktor was finally there to catch him again.

A shock of cold reverberated up his spine as his back hit the ice but his head never touched the surface, cradled protectively in Viktor’s hands. Warm lips were still pressed against his and Yuuri basked in the feeling because he had already wasted so much time and the fact that he got to have this again, got to have Viktor again, was more than he could ever have hoped for.

Finally they broke apart although Viktor kept their faces close together and Yuuri could still see the tears in his eyes even as he smiled, his breath hitching in his chest as he spoke.

“I’m sorry Yuuri.” Viktor told him, the words rushed and desperate, each one running into the next. “I’m so sorry, I’m so, so sorry, I love you and I’m sorry. I’ll say it again. I’ll say it a thousand times. I’ll say it every day from now until forever and I’ll never stop saying it.”

“It’s ok. Viktor, it’s ok.” Yuuri ran his hands through Viktor’s hair, bringing them down to cup his face and trying to wipe away some of the tears with the pad of his thumb. “I love you. I forgive you. And I’m so sorry too.”

“For what?” Viktor asked, his voice sounding choked and his hands never letting go of Yuuri.

“For all these years.” Yuuri replied because what he was trying to say and to apologize for was so huge and even he didn’t quite fully understand it but he knew it needed to be said all the same.

“No. Not you.” Viktor shook his head, his voice stubborn. “There were things I should have done. Things I should have changed.”

“No Viktor, no.” Viktor might be stubborn but Yuuri was worse and he wasn’t going to back down on this one. Viktor could shoulder the blame for the very beginning and the very end but everything that came in between Yuuri was starting to see in a completely new light and he knew exactly where the majority of the blame fell and bore it willingly because he had spent a lot of years feeling hurt by Viktor but he had also spent a lot of years hurting Viktor and he had never once apologised for it because he had never known. But now he did, or at least he was starting to.

“It was me. All this time. All these years. It was always me.”

Reaching up he pulled Viktor into a hug, burying his face into the other man’s shoulder and clinging on tightly, feeling Viktor do the same to him. Yuuri could feel the cold of the ice biting into his skin,
could hear the thunderous noise from the audience as they all reacted to what they had just seen but he didn’t care because he wanted to stay in that moment forever.

After a few long minutes they eventually broke apart and Viktor pulled away slightly so that their faces were separated and Yuuri could look at him properly for the first time. He still looked unfairly attractive even with his hair dishevelled and his eyes still glistening, his costume shining under the glare of the lights but Yuuri wouldn’t have cared if he was the ugliest man on earth because it was Viktor and he was here and he was Yuuri’s.

“We need to talk about this.” Viktor said, hands still curled protectively around the back of Yuuri’s head but beginning to sit up and pull away. “We really need to talk about this.”

“We do.” Yuuri agreed because even though everything had suddenly become much clearer there was still a lot that had been left unsaid, still a lot that needed to be talked through before they could even begin to understand the full story and decide what to do next. “We need to talk properly. About everything. I think that it’s been overdue for years.”

Viktor laughed although the sound was a little watery and he smiled at Yuuri, helping him to sit up so that their faces were level, still sitting on the ice and uncaring of what was going on around them.

“I think you’re right.” he agreed. “And I still have a lot to apologise for.”

“So do I.”

Yuuri knew that they had a very long road ahead of them and that they had only taken the first tiny step. There was a lot they still needed to discuss, problems to talk through, issues to solve, decisions to make. He had never doubted Yuko when she had told him that it would be hard but he wasn’t scared because Viktor was with him and they had taken that first step together and would continue along the path side by side wherever it might lead them.

“We’ll talk.” Viktor confirmed, finally getting to his feet and offering Yuuri a hand to pull himself up with too. “As soon as this is over we’ll find somewhere private and we’ll finally talk this out. We certainly have a lot to talk about. But first you need to go to the kiss and cry.”

Yuuri could feel a laugh begin to bubble its way out of his throat because in the chaos of everything that had happened he had completely forgotten about the competition or the scores or the judges or everything that now seemed so totally irrelevant.

“Your skating was beyond anything I’ve ever seen.” Viktor told him and his words were full of love and awe and completely genuine. “Beautiful. Record-breaking.”

Yuuri reached out and took his hand, not wanting to let go even for a minute and Viktor clasped his fingers tightly, gently pulling Yuuri off the ice when he made no attempt to move.

“Don’t you want to know who won?” Viktor asked and Yuuri did laugh that time because for so many years that had been all he thought about, all he was focused on above and beyond anything else.

“I don’t care.” he said and the words felt like the last link in the chain snapping after so many years and finally setting him free. “I don’t care who won.”

Viktor pulled him close, their fingers still laced together and Yuuri could see the light in his eyes, bright and shining like the light of a star, drawing him into their orbit. He went willingly and Viktor wrapped his arms around him again, holding him close to his chest, so close that Yuuri could hear the beat of Viktor’s heart, perfectly in time with his own as Viktor spoke again.
“Neither do I.”

the-never-yielding-queen @the-never-yielding-queen · 31m
WHAT THE FUCK WHAT THE FUCK WHAT THE FUCK JUST HAPPENED

history-maker-vikturi @history-maker-vikturi · 27m
OMG OMG OMG OMG YOU WILL NOT BELIEVE WHAT I JUST SAW

Peachyforov @peachyforov · 25m
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

Lifeisirrelevent @lifeisirrelevent · 23m
I THINK I HAVE DIED AND ASCENDED TO HEAVEN

kutterfly @kutterfly · 20m
AND THE AWARD FOR THE MOST TOTALLY UNEXPECTED ACTION OF THE YEAR GOES TO YUURI FUCKING KATSUKI

Fusselmoni @fusselmoni · 19m
I thought they hated each other what the actual hell????

Greetingsfriend @greetingsfriend · 16m
VIKTUURI IS REAL I REPEAT VIKTUURI IS REAL

imgonnahityouwithmypointeshoe @imgonnahityouwithmypointeshoe · 15m
I came here to watch a skating competition and instead I get a front seat to romance movie level drama and I am living

Cerys @cerysbehindthecamera · 11m
This is the picture that will break the internet pic.twitter.com/fCGfzbqab

sabribsarts @sabribsarts · 11m
Everyone thought Katsuki and Nikiforov were ultimate enemies but boy were we wrong

mihi234 @mihi234 · 9m
This is the happiest I’ve seen Vitya in literally ever I don’t even care that it’s effing Katsuki that’s doing it I just care that he’s finally smiling again

victuristyle @victuristyle · 7m
Skating Fandom – ‘nothing can be more dramatic than the doping scandal from the last World Championships’ Katsuki Yuuri – ‘challenge accepted’

Artemis @deadlychildartemis · 4m
Katsuki skated to ‘Yuri on Ice’ which is an original composition about his theme of ‘love’ and he ended his routine with a quad flip and then pointed at Nikiforov I’M GOING TO CRY

Alice @alice-ace-of-spades · 3m
Katsuki finally landed a quad flip and what a way to do it!!!!

icryalittle @icryalittle · 1m
Will I ever be over Nikiforov and Katsuki literally running for each other and kissing on live TV? No. Not I will not.

Petitebaguette @petitebaguette · 1m
oh my god who would have guessed back when Nikiforov and Katsuki first stood on the podium together that this would be the result
Star crossed fucking lovers oh my god I can’t believe this

tovesaiko @tovesaiko · 1m
ok so are they gonna like, get married and retire now and finally give someone else a chance to win gold?

yuuriwithviktor @yuuriwithviktor · 1m
I have never seen two people look happier than Viktor Nikiforov and Yuuri Katsuki do right now

phoenixerus @phoenixerus · 1m
So now we’ve finally got conformation and solid proof that Katsuki Yuuri and Viktor Nikiforov are in love and that one of the best sporting rivalries of all time has turned into one of the best love stories I only have one thing left to say…

phoenixerus @phoenixerus · 1m
MOTHER. FUCKING. PLOT. TWIST.

To Be Continued…

Chapter End Notes

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT PART 2 OF THE RIVALS SERIES

This is not where the story ends and I promise you will see the full resolution before it does. Because obviously Viktor and Yuuri need to have a serious talk about everything and their relationship can’t progress until they do. However, the Big Talk can’t happen when you only know half the story. So before you can know how the series finally ends, first you need to hear Viktor’s side and have some important questions answered about his thoughts and actions throughout the course of the fic.

So I invite you to come with me back to the beginning for the next fic in the series ‘Of Bright Stars and Burning Hearts’. It will be Viktor’s side of the story and will extend beyond where this fic ends to cover what happens immediately after and into the future.

The first chapter will be posted on the 26th of March.

See you next level!
Rey xx

Link to my [tumblr](#)

P.s I couldn't answer comments last chapter but will hopefully be back to answering for this chapter

Other announcements:

Russian translation of the fic can now be found [here](#) and [here](#)

Useful links can be found [here](#) including explanations for Viktor’s actions in chapter 13, song lists and the timeline

There have been some beautiful fanmixes made
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)

And an amazing video
[here](#)

There is also some stunning fanart
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)
[here](#)

(Apologies for not gushing over the amazing stuff as usual. End note character count is screwing me over!)

Music Used:
Viktor's Junior FS - O Mio Babbino Caro - Sung by Renee Fleming
Viktor’s FS that Minako watches- Sun and Moon from Miss Saigon

Viktor’s FS – Stammi Vicino – YOI soundtrack
Works inspired by this one:

- *Until My Feet Bleed and My Heart Aches* by Reggio
- [Podfic] *Until My Feet Bleed and My Heart Aches* by LambieLamb, loquacious fish (belgianblue), a quiet life, a lonely life, a loving life by unexpectedtrash
- *5 times Katsuki Yuuri jerked off to Victor Nikiforov in denial* + 1 time he still did it with acceptance by softvanillavoca
- *conversation means both of you are listening* by unexpectedtrash
- *All things must die (except you and I)* by Fiorelily

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!