Everyone has a guilty pleasure.

For Yuuri, it just happens to be romance movies starring famous heartthrob Victor Nikiforov.

(And, honestly, on the spectrum of guilty pleasures, he figures that his is on the far, far more innocent side.)

spanish

I really wanted to write a multi-chap for this fandom and also an AU so here we are. This will be rated explicit in later chapters if I continue it. I have no clue where this idea came from or if it works at all so please leave a comment if you like it *laughs nervously and hides
in closet after hitting post button*

P.S. If you've read some of my previous fics, you might notice there's a difference in this one. I decided to start spelling Victor with a 'c' instead of a 'k' bc basically everybody else does haha.

P.S.S. I just started a YOI sideblog! Follow me at actualyuuri.tumblr.com or at my main blog (which is primarily Doctor Who) at braveten.tumblr.com! Shameless self promo!
The Surprise

“Yuuri, I have an idea.”

Those words, when coming from Phichit, always land Yuuri in bad situations.

(Always. This will be no exception.)

Phichit is grinning at him brightly as he stands by the edge of the ice rink in Detroit, his phone in his hands, held horizontally for an ideal shot of the ice. He’s watching Yuuri expectantly. “Okay, perform a routine.”

“What routine? Why are you recording me?”

“Don’t question it,” Phichit says, grinning even wider now. “Just skate for me. Anything. Something with a lot of jumps. Maybe your most recent long program?”

Yuuri folds his arms across his chest, eyeing the camera nervously. “But can’t you tell me why?”

“Just do it. Please?” His voice is dripping with desperation.

Yuuri has no idea what is going on with him.

But he decides to indulge his friend, because, in his experience, indulging Phichit is better than arguing with him. Especially when he has that sort of dedication in his eyes. So Yuuri makes his way to the middle of the ice, giving the camera one last suspicious stare-down.

He performs Yuri on Ice, a long program that had recently placed him second at the Grand Prix Final. Instead of thinking about Phichit, he focuses on the movements, making sure to land every jump and to pay close attention to the minuscule details of the step sequences. He’s not sure why he’s skating right now, not sure what Phichit’s idea is, but it probably won’t be anything good.

Phichit is clapping his hands by the end of it, the phone now out of sight. “That was great! Perfect. Thank you.”

“What was it for?” Yuuri asks again, slightly annoyed.

“You’ll see. It’s a surprise.”

Yuuri sits down to place guards on his skates. “I hate when you use that word.”

Phichit just grins.

~

He forgets about Phichit’s surprise for a while. Yuuri starts training for the next season of figure skating, loses himself in new routines and music and the strict coaching of Celestino. He has grown used to living in Detroit, used to the people and the busy way of life.

All of that changes with a phone call.
A simple phone call.

(Not a phone call to him, but to Phichit.)

(Which makes it worse.)

Because Phichit picks up the phone when they’re having lunch one day, presses it close to his ear and offers a casual hello. Then, his eyes widen, his jaw drops, and a hand flies to cover his mouth. Yuuri asks quickly what’s wrong, (What’s going on? Had a family member died? Is everything alright?) but Phichit just stares at him.

“Yes. Okay. Let me get a pen and paper. Hang on.”

He scrambles to find something to write with, and Yuuri pulls over a waiter and practically yanks the pen out of their shirt pocket, only thinking to apologize a minute later. Phichit is scribbling something down rapidly on a napkin, nodding and occasionally making a noise of agreement.

“And you want him when? Oh… seriously? Okay, no, that’s fine.”

Yuuri blinks.

Phichit clears his throat. “Oh, he’ll freak out. He’s a fan. We both are, actually. Thank you so much for calling.”

The moment he hangs up the phone, Yuuri is ready to strangle him. “What is happening? Were you talking about me? Is this about that video you took?”

Phichit grins. “We’re going to book a flight to Los Angeles.”

(Well.)

(That isn’t what he’d been expecting.)

“Los Angeles?” Yuuri asks, shaking his head. “Why would we…?”

Phichit bites his lip, thinking for a moment, then blurts, “Okay, so yes, it does have to do with that video. I saw an ad online for a job in Los Angeles, they were looking for a figure skater, and they wanted video submissions. So I signed you up. And that’s what the video was for. I submitted it in your name.”

“Phichit, I’m not an actor,” Yuuri tells him, trying to keep the disappointment out of his voice. Obviously, Phichit had just been trying to be kind, but doesn’t he know that Yuuri has stage fright? Plus he’s already training for next year’s Grand Prix. Surely he wouldn’t have time for some sort of side job.

“I know. It’s not an acting job.”

Yuuri frowns. “Then what is it? A Broadway show or something? Look, whatever it is, thank you for thinking of me, but I’m not interested.”

“I bet I can make you interested,” Phichit says, and there’s a teasing, mischievous edge to his voice.

Yuuri shifts in his seat, licking his lips and waiting expectantly.

“Victor Nikiforov.”
Oh.

Yuuri freezes.

Phichit is still smiling.

It’s embarrassing, really, how much that name grabs his attention.

Everyone has guilty pleasures. Yuuri figures that romance movies are on the far more innocent side of the guilty pleasure spectrum. He loves a Victor Nikiforov movie, and Phichit knows it. And right now he’s practically preening.

“What about Victor Nikiforov?” Yuuri interrogates, and he tries to keep his voice calm.

(And fails. He’s panicking, and Phichit knows it.)

“They’re making a movie about figure skating. With Victor Nikiforov. And they need somebody to train him. So they asked for submissions of people doing routines. They want the movie to be as realistic as possible. He’s going to do all of his own stunts. Well, skating.”

“You… You submitted…” Yuuri starts, because this can’t be real, because Phichit just doesn’t realize how cruel of a joke this is, doesn’t realize how much he’s breaking Yuuri’s heart right now.

Phichit knows how much he loves Victor Nikiforov. Knows that there are posters on his bedroom walls, knows that he’s watched every last one of his movies and can quote them line for line. Knows that he knows everything about him, has seen every interview, read every trivia fact.

“And they just called to ask you to come to Hollywood to, I don’t really know. Audition, I guess? But you won’t be on camera, you’d just be training Victor, so… I don’t know what they’ll have you do. But they want us there in a week. Well, they want you there, but I’m obviously coming, too.”

Yuuri comprehended about three of those words. His mind has gone haywire, his heart thumping in his chest. A waiter comes by and sets food in front of them, but he can hardly even see it. "The Victor Nikiforov?”

“The one and only.”

“Phichit… You seriously… I can’t believe…” Yuuri starts, staring at his friend.

(He’s not sure what he’d done to deserve a friend like Phichit. Nothing, probably.)

Phichit reaches across the table and grabs his hands. “Listen, you don’t have the job yet, but if you did get it you wouldn’t have time to compete in the Grand Prix this year. But I really think you could get this, Yuuri. And it would probably pay well. After all, it’s a Nikiforov movie.”

Victor Nikiforov is one of the most popular actors of all time—his movies pull in millions of dollars at the box office. He’d moved to L.A. from St. Petersburg five years ago, and his Russian accent can scientifically make people implode. At least, that’s what Yuuri thinks of him. And thousands of other people. In fact, he has been voted ‘Sexiest Man of the Year’ two years in a row now.

“I can’t believe you did that for me,” Yuuri answers quietly, trying to stop himself from crying. “Phichit…”

“We’re going to California,” Phichit tells him excitedly. “You’ll do great. They’ll pick you, I’m sure of it. After all, you’re one of the best figure skaters in the world.”
Yuuri sniffs, pursing his lips. “Did you audition, too?”

“Nah. I’m afraid my Nikiforov crush isn’t nearly as big as yours. I think JJ did, though. I don’t know who else. You’ll beat all of them. Or, at least you’ll maybe glimpse Nikiforov while trying. It’s sort of a win-win scenario.”

~

Yuuri is nervous during the entire plane trip.

He’d packed his skating gear along with some clothes. They’re planning on spending a week there, so that they can sightsee whether Yuuri gets the job or not. Though, in reality, if he doesn’t get this job, he figures he’ll be in no mood for posing with the Hollywood sign.

Phichit has been trying to calm him down since the flight started, but eventually he gives up, turning on his phone and showing Yuuri the screen. “I downloaded a Nikiforov movie. Want to watch it with me?”

“Which one is it?”

“Stay Close to Me,” Phichit answers, then pouts at him. “C’mon, I know it’s your favorite.”

Yuuri sighs, defeated, and leans closer to Phichit, placing one of the earbuds in his ears and staring down at the tiny phone screen. The moment Victor appears on the screen he feels his heart freeze in his chest. He had long hair in this movie, but recently he’d cut it. Yuuri isn’t sure which style he prefers. He’s just as ridiculously attractive either way.

“I can’t believe I might see him,” Yuuri mutters. “If he’s even there yet—if they’re still casting, he might not be around.”

“We could find his address.”

Yuuri pauses the movie and gives him a look.

“I’m kidding,” Phichit assures him. “Sort of.” Yuuri glares at him again. “Okay, I’m kidding, stalking celebrities is definitely not funny.” A pause. “But if we stumble upon his house by accident…”

~

“Wow, it’s pretty,” Yuuri notes, glancing around at the large building. There are windows above them, letting in skylight, and there’s more people around them than Yuuri has ever seen. Apart from the slight agoraphobia, he loves California already.

“We’re still in the airport,” Phichit reminds him, laughing. “It’ll be even prettier outside.”

The weather is gorgeous, the sun shining high in the sky with only a few clouds blocking the view. There are people everywhere, milling about on every street. Phichit runs to every shop, every sign,
taking photos and forcing Yuuri to pose alongside him. He loses four Instagram followers due to the spam, much to his disappointment.

They spot the Hollywood sign in the distance and Phichit looks as though he’s just found a treasure chest at the bottom of the sea. “We have to get a photo! Let’s get closer!”

Yuuri allows himself to be pulled across Los Angeles. He spots countless posters of Victor, they’re practically pasted on every wall in the city. Old movies, new movies, upcoming movies. Yuuri wonders how he has the time to even act in all of them.

“Stop staring at him and get over here,” Phichit commands, though he’s smiling.

Yuuri tears his eyes away from the giant billboard and smiles back at Phichit, raising his phone to take a photo of him in front of a random star on the walk of fame.

They find their hotel room an hour or so later. It’s the cheapest one they could find and their room is small, complimented by some mold growing in one corner, but they deal with it nevertheless. “Don’t put your suitcase on your bed,” Phichit warns. “That’s how you bring bedbugs home.”

“Bedbugs?” Yuuri asks, scrunching up his nose. “I don’t even want to sleep in here now, thanks.”

“Just imagine Victor Nikiforov is sleeping with you,” Phichit provides. Then, he puts on his best Russian accent (which, in Yuuri’s opinion, hardly deserves the adjective ‘best’ because, really, it’s terrible). “Yuuri, I will protect you from the bed bugs with my muscular legs.”

“Shut up.”

Phichit grins. “Never. Now, get some sleep. We have to go to the studio tomorrow.”

~

Yuuri wakes up to the blinding sight of sunshine.

He squints and sits up, yawning. Then he hears a noise.

“Phichit?”

Phichit is still asleep, curled up into a tiny ball underneath the sheets. Yuuri glances around for the source of the noise, which he is starting to realize sounds like elevator music, and sees Phichit’s phone is lighting up. He leans over the edge of the bed to pick it up off of the floor.

An alarm.

It’s noon.

He was supposed to head to the studio building at eleven.

“Phichit!”

Phichit glances up, finally, rubbing at his eyes with his palms. “Huh?”

“Your alarm was too quiet,” Yuuri blurts, standing up and sprinting over to his suitcase. He throws it
on the bed—Phichit makes a comment about bedbugs—and grabs clothes before sprinting into the bathroom. “Oh god, we’re going to be so late. We’re already so late.”

(Late. To possibly the most important meeting of his life.)

Phichit is panicking, too, then, getting dressed and brushing his teeth in record time. Yuuri puts on his shoes and sprints out of the door with Phichit hot on his trail, clutching Yuuri’s skates with one arm.

“Do you know the way?” Yuuri pants, looking around for cars before sprinting across the busy street. There’s no time to get a taxi. There’s no time for anything.


“Yeah, this way!”

By the time they get there, Yuuri is exhausted. He’s hyperventilating, hands on his knees. Phichit shoves open the studio doors and places his hands palm-down on the front desk. “Hi, sorry we’re late. This is Katsuki Yuuri, we’re here for the figure skating trainer opportunity with Victor Nikiforov.”

The woman behind the desk looks uninterested. “Oh, alright. I’ll see if they’ll still take you.”

“Tell them we’re very, very sorry,” Yuuri pleads, looking around the reception area.

It’s covered in framed posters of different movies, most of which containing Victor. There are a hundred pairs of blue eyes staring at Yuuri, keeping him still where he stands. It’s absolutely horrifying. There’s a hand on his arm and he glances over at Phichit, who is giving him a reassuring look.

(It does nothing to reassure him. Despite its intent.)

The lady behind the desk glances up from her computer, settling back against her chair. “They might be able to take you in half an hour if you two are willing to wait.”

That half hour is the longest half hour of Yuuri’s life.

There are a few other individuals in the lobby. Yuuri figures they’re skaters, too, all auditioning to be Victor’s trainer. Some are younger than him and some are older, all looking impatient and nervous. He has seen some at competitions before, he thinks.

“I wonder if JJ is here,” Phichit whispers.

Yuuri bites his lip, stares down at the skates resting in his lap. He wasn’t sure why he brought them in the first place—none of the other candidates seemed to have them. And besides, it’s not as though there’s going to be an ice skating rink in the middle of a movie studio. Instead of sharing these thoughts with Phichit, though, he just runs his thumb along the side of the blade.

One at a time, each candidate enters the room.

They each leave looking heartbroken.

(Yuuri feels his confidence lessening with every passing second.)

“Katsuki Yuuri?”
He glances up. Phichit squeezes his arm. “Good luck. You’ll do great.”

A woman with long, dark hair had been sent to retrieve him. She smiles brightly at him. “Hi, I’m Sara.”

“It’s nice to meet you,” Yuuri answers breathlessly. He tries to keep his posture casual while walking but realizes, suddenly, that he has completely forgotten how to walk. Or talk. Or breathe. Since when was breathing so difficult?

“Are you nervous?” Sara asks, smiling. “I heard that you’re a big Nikiforov fan from your friend.”

(So this was the person that Phichit had been on the phone with.)

(A big fan doesn’t accurate describe the extent of his obsession, but he’s not about to tell that to Sara. Or anyone else for that matter.)

“Oh, sort of,” Yuuri admits.

Sara shrugs. “I’ve seen your routines online. You did well at the Grand Prix Final, and we’re looking for someone with a lot of experience. As your friend may have told you, we want Victor and the other actors to perform all of the routines themselves. You’re currently one of our top candidates.”

Yuuri swallows. For some reason, her words are only making him more nervous. “Okay.”

She looks unimpressed by that answer, as though she’d been expecting some sort of thank you. Yuuri is about to provide one when they arrive at a door and she swings it open, letting him step inside first. “Good luck,” Sara tells him.

Then she’s gone.

And he turns to look in the room.

And there’s someone sitting there.

(Someone familiar.)

“You must be Yuuri!”

Yuuri can’t move. His legs quite literally will not work. His breath is caught in his throat. His world is falling apart. He’s seen that face on the television screen more times than he can remember—he’s ranted endlessly about those eyes to Phichit.

(And that smile. That hair.)


He’s wearing a red and white jacket and blue jeans, bangs falling casually in front of his eyes. His legs are stretched out in front of him, feet resting on a coffee table and his back pressed into a black couch that does not look nearly expensive enough to have a man of his stature sitting on it.

Yuuri feels an urge to move him, to find him a throne. A golden one. With rose petals and servants to feed him grapes. Because it’s him.

“It’s great to meet you,” Victor Nikiforov says, and his Russian accent is…
Yuuri takes in a breath. Breathing is important. He has to remember to breathe. Definitely remember to breathe. “Um, yes. I mean, it’s great to meet you too.”

The man stands up, extends his hand. “I’m Victor Nikiforov.”

“I know.”

He grins. “Ah, so you’ve heard of me?”

Yuuri doesn’t know what to do. He just nods.

(Heard of him? Did worshipping posters of him count as having heard of him? Did watching every last one of his IMDb credits count as having heard of him? Did knowing his date and place of birth, his entire life story, and every accomplishment count as having heard of him?)

“And you’re a competitive skater, I presume?” Victor glances down at the skates that are hanging from Yuuri’s hand by the laces. “I like your skating. Very nice. I watched the routine you submitted. What was the name of the song?”

“Yuri on Ice,” Yuuri answers automatically. His mouth is acting without his mind’s permission. His entire body is currently on autopilot, having been abandoned by its captain. And it’s sinking. Like the Titanic.


Yuuri feels his cheeks heating. Had Victor Nikiforov genuinely just called him pretty? And why was Victor laughing, now?

Oh. He still had his hand extended. How long had that been there for?

Yuuri shakes it with far too tight of a grasp. Victor raises an eyebrow at him. He’s messing this audition up already but nobody had told him it would be with the famous actor himself. This was really, really very unfair. He had had no time for mental preparation, no time to figure out how he’d answer any tough questions.

“How long have you been skating for?” Victor asks. “And have a seat. Would you like some water?”

“Oh, sure.”

Yuuri watches as Victor moves to the other side of the room and fetches two water bottles from a mini fridge. He hands one to Yuuri and it’s cold to the touch. He takes a large gulp of it, running a hand through his hair.

“I’ve been skating since I was five, I think,” Yuuri answers. “I made it to the Grand Prix last year for the first time.”

“And what did you place?”

Yuuri bites his lip. He had been so close to the gold, but JJ had beaten him just by a couple of points. “Second.”

Victor’s eyebrows shoot up. “Very impressive. I’m afraid I don’t know much about figure skating. But we’re making a movie about it, and Yakov, the director, wants it to be as realistic as possible. So
we’re looking for someone to teach me the basics. Obviously, I don’t need to be able to place second at a Grand Prix Final, but I will need a teacher.”

“I… I could teach you,” Yuuri answers.

(He’d do anything for Victor. Which is probably unhealthy considering he’s only truly known him for about three minutes.)

“Well, that’s why you’re here.”

“Oh. Right.”

Yuuri is sitting on a chair adjacent to Victor, and Victor leans forward to get closer to him, sitting on the very edge of the couch. “So tell me about yourself, Katsuki Yuuri. If you are selected, I’ll need to know everything about you. After all, Yakov left this decision to the actors. He’ll approve my choice for a teacher.”

He doesn’t know what to say. “Well, I’m Japanese.”

“How many languages do you speak?” Victor asks.

“Japanese and English.”

He frowns. “No Russian? Hmm.”

Yuuri stumbles. “I—I could learn. I’m a quick learner.”

“No, no, you don’t need to speak Russian,” Victor assures him, looking both surprised and amused. “Though I like the eagerness. Do you live in Japan now?”

“Detroit. I’ve been skating there for the past couple of years.”


Yuuri knows. “The Lilac Fairy.” Victor looks confused. “That was the name of the movie.”

(Why, why on Earth had he said that?)

“You’re right,” Victor answers. “So you are a fan? Sara told me so, but I didn’t want to assume. She over-exaggerates things sometimes.”

“I am,” Yuuri admits. “I mean, I like your movies. I’m not… I just… Yes. I’m a fan.”

Victor is leaning so far forward, now, that Yuuri wonders if he’s about to fall off of the couch. He’s making strong eye contact, it makes Yuuri’s knees feel like rubber. Yuuri takes another sip of the water, glancing around at the room. It looks like some sort of dressing room, there’s a mirror on one wall and a small makeup table. But it’s nothing extraordinary.

“And why would you want this position, Yuuri?”

A better question would be why wouldn’t he? “I think it’d be exciting. And fun. And different.”

Victor purses his lips, studying him. Yuuri feels like he’s under a microscope, feels like every movement is being analyzed, tested to see if he’s good enough. It’s a nerve-wracking feeling. “Exciting, fun, and different. Alright, you can go now.”
Yuuri blinks. “What?”

“I have to interview ten or so more skaters. Sara will call you later to tell you if you’ve been selected or not. How long are you in the area for?”

“A week.”

“Alright. Nice meeting you.”

Victor waves.

Yuuri stares.

(That was it?)

The rest of his time in the studio is a blur. At some point, he stands up, leaves the room, finds Phichit. He ignores Phichit’s endless inquiries about how the interview had gone, instead just corrals him out of the door, head pounding.

Eventually, he spills the details.

“It sounds like it went well!” Phichit tells him excitedly. “It must’ve if he asked you all of those things.”

“When I told him why I wanted the job, he said ‘you can go now.’ That doesn’t make it sound like it went well, Phichit. He was probably bored out of his mind. He’s Victor Nikiforov, after all.”

Phichit rolls his eyes. “You say that name like he’s a god, and I know he is to you, but really, he’s just a guy.”

Just a guy.

Just a guy.

“That’s… You know that’s not true. Half of the world would sell their souls just to own a used tissue of his,” Yuuri complains. “And I just had an entire conversation with him and all I could say is that being his teacher would be fun.”

“I think you’re wrong. I think he loved you. We’ll just have to wait and see.”

~

They rent a car and visit Disneyland, Universal Studios—they even make a short trip to San Diego.

It’s the most fun Yuuri has ever had, but also the most stressful period of his life.

Then there’s a phone call.

“Hello?” Phichit asks, because it’s still his phone number on the forms. “Hi, yes, this is Phichit Chulanont, I’m his friend. No, Yuuri isn’t around at the moment, can I take a message for him?”

Yuuri whacks him on the arm, glaring at him. “I’m right here,” he mouths silently. Phichit just smirks
at him.

“Oh, okay. Yes, that’d be... Alright. Where should we meet you? And when? Oh, tomorrow would be fine, we’re in town. Yes, he brought skates. Yes. No, I’m not sure. Okay. Let me just write down that address, please.”

He grabs paper and scribbles something down. Yuuri swallows, his throat dry and his lips chapped, desperately waiting for Phichit to hang up the phone. The moment he does, he’s latched onto his friend by the shoulders. “First of all, why did you tell them I wasn’t here?”

“I figured it made you seem more hard to get if I pick up the phone for you. And I really wanted to hear what they’d say.”

“Okay, never mind, I don’t care. What did she say? Was it Sara?”

Phichit shrugs. “They’re not interested in you. They just wanted to meet to see if you’d be interested in an acting role not involving Victor. Some other figure skating television series.”

Yuuri sinks.

The hotel room bed is like quicksand, but he doesn’t struggle. Just allows it to slowly drown him. He lets out a breath—slow, gentle.

He feels his heart break in his chest, feels every piece separate. It’s painless, emotionless. He stares at Phichit, wondering how he’ll ever recover from this blow. It had been bad enough being second best at the Grand Prix, but now...? Compared to this?

“I’m kidding! Yakov wants to do a test session with you and Victor. To determine chemistry or something, I don’t know. Another actor, too. Somebody named Yuri Plisetsky?”

Yuuri presses his palm against his forehead. “I hate you.”

“No you don’t,” Phichit promises, pulling him in for a hug. “Yuuri, you might get this job! You might be Victor Nikiforov’s coach! Oh my god, can you imagine?” Once again, he puts on his best Russian accent. “Oh, Yuuri, I’m having trouble with my quad toe loop. Could you guide me with your strong hands?”

“Phichit,” Yuuri groans, but he can’t stop smiling, can’t stop hugging him. “Thank you so much for everything.”

“No problem. Besides, if you do get this job, guess who’s out of the picture for the Grand Prix this year? I’ll be a shoo-in for the podium.”

Yuuri raises an eyebrow. “So there were ulterior motives at work here?”

“Maybe. But mostly I just wanted to see you fangirl over Victor Nikiforov.”

“It worked,” Yuuri jokes, looking down at his hands. “I’m surprised I didn’t pass out today.”


“Phichit!”

Phichit winks at him.
That night, Yuuri sets five alarms. At the loudest possible volume.

In the morning, when they’re blaring and they can hardly hear themselves think as they scramble to turn them off, Phichit yells, “I think they’re going to kick us out of this hotel!”

They get dressed on time. Yuuri considers what to wear for at least an hour, switching from one shirt to another and then another. He figures he’ll be skating—they’re meeting at a rink, after all—so he ends up in a blue t-shirt and black track pants. He isn’t about to wear his glasses, he doesn’t particularly like the way he looks in them, but Phichit reminds him that being blind might not make a good first impression.

They hurry out of the hotel room, insisting on being early this time, and catch a taxi. Yuuri bounces his leg up and down the entire trip.

Phichit stills his leg with a hand. Yuuri starts bouncing it again unconsciously a minute later, and Phichit gives up.

“Do you think he’ll be there?” Yuuri whispers.

“They said they’re going to test your chemistry with the actors, so probably, yes.”

Yuuri drums his fingers against his leg. Brushes a hand through his hair. “Does my hair look okay?”

“Victor will approve.”

He doesn’t even have the mental energy to laugh, much less offer a smile. Instead he just continues to stare straight ahead at the taxi driver, simultaneously wishing he’d drive slower and faster. “What if I mess up?”

“They don’t know anything about skating. They won’t even know.”

“If I face-plant on the ice, I think they’ll figure out that that’s not supposed to happen.”

Phichit touches his arm. “Listen, just be yourself. I’m sure Victor and the other actors will love you. Sara sounds like she loves you over the phone. The others will, too.”

“So you’re Katsuki Yuuri? A competitive figure skater?”

(Turns out not everybody loves him.)

Yuri Plisetsky, a young actor who has been in a few movies with Victor in the past, is eyeing him suspiciously. “What? Don’t you talk? Or do you only speak Japanese? Because that would make things hard.”

Yuuri blinks. “Um, I speak English.”
“Where is Victor?” the blond actor complains, folding his arms across his chest and glaring at Sara. “He was supposed to be early, too.”

Sara smiles sweetly at him. “He’ll be here. He’s picking up coffee, I think.”

“Coffee. Gross.”

Yuuri had heard that Yuri Plisetsky was a diva, but…

“Oh, here he is,” Phichit says, pointing at a taxi pulling up outside the rink. It’s an indoor public one, but Yuuri figures they were either closed today or Sara had reserved it for them. The area is bigger than anywhere Yuuri has ever skated, and it’s beautiful—the building has a modern design to it, large windows letting in light from all angles.

Victor steps out of the car wearing the same red jacket from the day before. He looks perfect. So perfect that Yuuri almost feels guilty for looking at him, for breathing the same air as him.

“Yuuri!” Victor greets happily. “And Yuri. And Sara, and who are you?” He looks at Phichit last.

Phichit is smiling brightly. “I’m Phichit, Yuuri’s friend.”

“Youuiri’s friend,” Victor repeats, as if considering the words. “Fantastic! Now, Yakov should be here in a few minutes. So should the others.”

“The others?” Phichit asks, and it takes all of Yuuri’s power not to nudge him in the arm, because how dare he ask Victor Nikiforov a question?

“Other skaters,” the Russian actor explains simply. “You didn’t think it’d be just you, did it?”

Yuuri gapes. “Um, no,” he lies.

Phichit looks shocked as well. He doesn’t say anything.

“How many finalists are there from your little surveys, Victor?” Yuri P. asks, raising a suspicious eyebrow. “You should’ve let me had a say in this. They have to teach me to skate, too, you know.”

“You aren’t the best judge of character,” Victor informs him politely. “And there are five finalists, including Yuuri here.” Yuuri feels his cheeks heating, he ducks his head and hopes that nobody notices.

Another taxi pulls up. Then another. People are piling out—Yakov and four skaters.

Yakov is intimidating. He lines all of the skaters up and examines each one, gaze flickering up and down. Phichit is off to the side, offering Yuuri a lighthearted thumbs up. Jean-Jacques Leroy is there, who had beaten Yuuri in the Grand Prix last year, and Yuuri offers him a friendly smile. They’d never been companionable, really, but it was still nice seeing a familiar face.

“You. Out.” Yakov points to one of the skaters.

The skater leaves, looking as though he’s about to cry. Yuuri swallows. Victor glances at Yakov, looking slightly confused but not questioning his methods. There’s only four skaters left, now.

“You sure picked an interesting bunch,” the director says to Victor, loud enough for everyone to hear.

“Best of the best,” Victor answers proudly. “You should let me choose things more often. Our
movies would turn out better.”

Yakov growls at him. Victor backs off, but he’s still smiling a bit. He winks at Yuuri and Yuuri feels himself blushing again. Yakov clears his throat. “Alright, this is how this is going to work. Each of you skates with Yuri Plisetsky,” he gestures towards the blond actor, “then Victor. They’ll review you later. See which of you was the best teacher, had the best dynamic. This position will be long-term, throughout the entire production of the movie, so it’s important that you… get along.”

At that last phrase, he glances at Yuri Plisetsky, raising an eyebrow, as if warning him. Yuri rolls his eyes.

“You start,” he says, pointing at JJ.

JJ grins and sits down on a bench to strap on his skates. Then, a moment later, he’s on the ice with Yuri.

The skaters go one at a time. Some try to teach them basic jumps, others try to teach them basic movements that are fundamental for step sequences. Yuri and Victor aren’t bad skaters by default, really—they can make their way around the ice with ease, albeit a few fumbles. But it’s still an odd dynamic for figure skaters to be coaching pupils on such basic steps.

“You,” Yakov says, pointing at Yuuri. “Your turn.”

Yuuri swallows, making his way onto the ice to meet Yuri Plisetsky.

“Alright, teach me how to skate, Katsuki,” Yuri says, folding his arms across his chest and not moving. Yuuri watches him, unsure of what to say. “There’s really only room for one Yuri around here, so I don’t know how we’d accept you in the first place. But let’s see what you’ve got.”

He attempts to teach Yuuri how to do a basic jump. Nothing flashy, just getting off of the ice and landing back on without falling. Surprisingly, he picks up quickly. He’s still fumbling it most of the time by the end of the session, but for such a short window of learning, it’s not bad progress at all.

Then, he’s called away by Yakov. Victor is leaning against the half wall of the rink, watching him with a sparkle in his eyes. Yuuri feels his stomach turning as he approaches the famous actor. He feels more confident on the ice, though. It’s his home turf. It’s where he goes when he’s nervous. If there’s anywhere he can confront Victor Nikiforov, it’s here.

(That aforementioned confidence flies out the window when Victor smiles at him.)

(And how does he stand again? How does he skate? How does he breathe?)

“Ready to teach me, Yuuri?” Victor asks.

Victor is even more advanced than Yuri P., so Yuuri tries to teach him a basic salchow. He picks it up quickly, grinning wildly when he gets it right for the first time. The landing is incorrect, and if Yuuri is being honest the jump itself hadn’t been performed correctly in the first place, but he doesn’t point that out. “This is fun,” Victor comments. “I’m very glad I decided to do this movie. You must be very passionate about skating.”

Yuuri smiles, glancing down at Victor’s skates. They don’t look like they fit right. “Yeah, sort of.”

“If you were to teach me, perhaps you could share that passion,” Victor muses. “Help me get into character.”
He nods, perhaps a little too eagerly. “Yeah, I’d love to. What… What exactly is your character?”

“A novice skater working his way through the ranks,” Victor answers. “It’s a romance. Most of my movies are. I’m typecast, I suppose.”

(Yuuri knows.)

(But, luckily, he doesn’t say that.)

(And Victor looks dejected, in a way. His smile is sad, the words reserved. Was he upset about being typecast? Surely he wouldn’t do those sort of movies if he didn’t enjoy them?)

Yakov calls Yuuri away a minute later. Yuuri swallows thickly as he steps off of the ice, placing the guards on his skates and making his way to Phichit. “Oh my god, Yuuri, you should’ve seen the way he was looking at you.”

“What?” Yuuri asks, gaping.

“He kept staring at you. Like, when you were skating and couldn’t see him.”

Yuuri laughs. “That tends to be how people learn, Phichit.”

“Mmm. I don’t think he was focusing on learning. Those were bedroom eyes.”

“Be quiet,” Yuuri tells him, bumping his friend on the shoulder. “I think it went okay. They’re not complete amateurs, they’ve definitely skated before.”

Yakov lines the skaters up again a minute later. Victor is standing behind the director, eyes focused on Yuuri. Yuuri swallows, turning around to look behind him, but the gaze cannot be mistaken. Victor Nikiforov is staring directly at him. Yuri Plisetsky seems to notice, too, because he frowns at Victor, tugging on his sleeve to get him to pay attention to him.

(Victor is captivating in the worst possible way.)

(There’s several people around Yuuri, but he can only seem to pay attention to one. It’s akin to watching one of his movies—all eyes are just drawn to him, simply, securely. Yuuri supposes that’s why he’s such a successful actor.)

“You all did well,” Yakov says, but his tone doesn’t sound genuine. “I’m going to talk things over with these two and get back to all of you in the morning.”

The skaters depart one at a time, getting into different taxis or walking in different directions. When Yuuri turns around, he can still feel Victor’s gaze on him like a sort of second skin, and it’s heavy, thick, inescapable.

Then there’s someone clearing their throat behind him. He turns around to see Yuri Plisetsky standing there, arms folded across his chest. “Listen, like I said earlier, there can only be one Yuri around here, you get that? So I just don’t want you to get your hopes up.”

Before Yuuri can reply, the teenager is gone.

“What a jerk,” Phichit mutters, shaking his head. “Don’t listen to him. Here’s a taxi for us.”

Yuri’s words stick with Yuuri, play over and over again in his mind. Surely Yuri had some sort of a say in who coached him, so obviously Yuuri wouldn’t get the job now. He sinks into the seat, ignoring Phichit’s words of advice and comfort. They fly in one ear and out the other. He wasn’t
going to get the job just because of his stupid name?

Unfair.

~

There’s a phone call in the morning.

They’re both asleep.

Yuuri hears the ringing and groans, rolling onto his side before realizing what’s happening. “Phichit! Your phone!” he yells, scrambling against the covers that are trapping him against the bed.

Phichit rolls over, yawning. “What?”

“Your phone is ringing! Answer it, hurry!”

He wakes up immediately, grabbing his phone off of the pillow beside him and pressing it against his ear. “Hello?”

Yuuri sits across from Phichit, eyes wide, watching him closely, watching every micro-expression. Watching every movement.

Phichit’s face drops.


He runs into the bathroom.

Slams the door.

Fumbles with the lock.

(The tears come before his mind can process the emotions.)

(And it hurts. Everything hurts.)

Phichit has hung up the phone. He’s outside the door, now, begging for Yuuri to unlock it. “Yuuri, Yuuri, it’s okay. It’s just because of Yuri Plisetsky, probably. He’s stupid, okay? It wasn’t your fault.”

Yuuri can’t breathe, hadn’t even realized how badly he had wanted this job until this moment. He’d thought, since they’d called him to come on the ice with them, that he’d gotten it. Phichit had told him Victor had been watching him. Yakov hadn’t been mean to him one time.

He hates Yuri Plisetsky. Hates him with a passion.

“Please open the door,” Phichit is begging. “Come on, Yuuri. We’ll still have fun in California. Screw Victor Nikiforov. Screw him. He’s not the hottest actor out there, anyway. We’ll get you to train Sebastian Stan or something. That’d be even better.”

Yuuri tries to wipe away his tears, but it’s to no avail. Instead he just splashes water on his face from
the sink, sighing. He wishes Phichit would go away. He wishes he was back in Japan. Wishes Phichit had never told him about this stupid position in the first place, despite his friend’s good intentions.

“Come on, say it with me. Screw Victor Nikiforov. Screw him.”

“I’m not gonna say that,” Yuuri answers, and his voice comes out more distraught than he’d intended, the words more defeated.

Phichit doesn’t give up. “Come on, it’ll feel good. Oh, how about this? Screw Yuri Plisetsky.”

“It’s not his fault he doesn’t like me,” Yuuri complains.

“Of course it is! That doesn’t even make sense! Everybody likes you! They’re just stuck up movie actors. Never meet your heroes, that’s a saying, isn’t it?”

Phichit is desperate. Yuuri prays he’ll give up.

Yuuri leans against the creaky wooden door, wishing it would collapse on top of him and crush him so he could get rid of the pounding in his head. “It’s fine, Phichit. Don’t worry about me. You go and sightsee or something, just leave me here.”

“I’m not leaving you here,” Phichit protests. “You’ll get over it. Over him. He’s just another Hollywood prick, we should’ve known better. They all are. Divas. All of them.”

(But Victor had been so kind.)

(So kind, so endearing. His words had made Yuuri feel special, had made him feel certain he would be selected. On the ice, it had felt as though they were the only two people in the entire rink. And yet, here they are.)

(Victor is an actor, after all.)

(He acted.)

Yuuri cries harder. Can’t help it. He’d always cried easily.

~

Their flight is on Sunday.

It’s currently Thursday. Or is it Friday? Yuuri isn’t really sure anymore.

“Yuuri, come to the pool with me,” Phichit is begging, tugging on his arm.

Yuuri doesn’t move, remains face-down on the bed. “Sorry, I don’t know if I feel like it. Go without me.”

He feels guilty for ruining Phichit’s vacation, feels even more guilty knowing that Phichit is trying to act like he doesn’t care. He’s been in a slump for the past three days, every image of Victor on social media or on a billboard making his heart hurt. His image is inescapable.
“Okay, Yuuri, say what we practiced.”

Yuuri groans in complaint.

“Come on!” Phichit pleads.

“Fine. Screw Victor Nikiforov.”

Phichit is still looking at him expectantly. Waiting for the rest.

“He’s a stuck up actor prick. And so is Yuri Plisetsky.”

“Great!” Phichit praises, clapping him on the back. “Doesn’t that make you feel better? Now let’s go.”

“Go where?” Yuuri asks, sitting up. The world is dizzy. He can’t remember the last time he’d left this hotel room bed. “The pool? I look terrible.”

“You look great. Let’s go find Victor Nikiforov’s house and teepee it. Ooh, or we’ll throw eggs at Yuri Plisetsky’s car. Do you think he has a car? Or does he take taxis everywhere? Is he even old enough to drive?”

Yuuri smiles up at him and Phichit looks proud of eliciting the response. “I’m going to shower. But we are not vandalizing any actor’s property.”

“Alright,” Phichit answers, helping him up. “Shower and get dressed. Then we’ll have fun, I promise. We’ll do whatever you want to do. No vandalism. Unless I can convince you otherwise.”

He smiles at Phichit as he grabs randomly from a pile of clothes, stepping into the bathroom and turning on the hot water. The shower is broken and the water comes out in random spurts, and it’s hardly even warm enough to be considered hot, but it feels good nevertheless.

When he turns off the water, he hears voices.

Phichit’s voice. And then…

“Hmm. Well I’m not sure if his schedule is still open,” Phichit is saying, and there’s a sort of excitement to his voice that somebody who didn’t know him well wouldn’t pick up on. But there’s something else there, too.

(Excitement and passive aggression? An unusual combination.)

Yuuri freezes, wrapping a towel around his waist.

“Yuuri,” Phichit calls, “somebody is here to see you.”

“Hello, Yuuri,” Victor Nikiforov adds.

Yuuri clutches the towel tighter. “Um, give me a minute.”

“Take all the time you need,” Victor answers, the words light, humorous. As though he knows something Yuuri doesn’t.

He puts on his underwear, jeans, and socks, then realizes he’d forgotten to bring in a shirt. “Um, Phichit, could you hand me a shirt?”
Phichit hums, and Yuuri hears him rumbling through a suitcase. “Which shirt do you want?”

“I don’t care. Anything.”

“You can come out and get it if you want, Yuuri. No need to be embarrassed because of me,” Victor tells him. And there’s still that sly edge to his voice and it’s driving Yuuri crazy to try and decipher it. How does he do that?

Yuuri swallows thickly. “Um, that’s okay, thanks.”

Phichit opens the door a crack and shoves the shirt through. Yuuri tosses it over his head then checks his hair, combing through it quickly before emerging from the bathroom, hands deep in his pockets.

Victor looks like a god.

(‘Screw Victor Nikiforov’ was starting to take on a different meaning in Yuuri’s mind.)

“It’s great to see you again,” Victor is saying, adjusting his shirt. His shirt is white, thin. His chest is muscular, his arms are built, his hair is styled to perfection. Yuuri feels small. Feels inadequate. Feels like he’s not worthy to even look at the other man.

Phichit is by his side in an instant. “Do you mind if I take a moment to speak to my client in private, Victor?”

(His client?)

“No, of course not,” Victor answers, and he winks at Yuuri again.

Winks.

Winks.

Yuuri keeps staring. Isn’t sure he can stop. Phichit drags him into the bathroom, there’s no other private space in the hotel room. The mirror is still coated in steam. “How did he find our room?” Yuuri asks.

“That’s your first question?”

“I don’t… What is happening?”

Phichit sighs. “He says they changed their minds. He wants you for the job.”

Yuuri isn’t sure what to say at first. Then, he shakes his head, composing himself. He won’t fumble it this time. He can’t mess this up. “Why did I hear you say earlier that my schedule might be busy now? I’ll still take the job.”

“I want you to play hard to get,” Phichit explains. “We’re not about to let Hollywood walk all over us. And I’m your manager now, by the way. Sorry—that was a spontaneous decision.”

“The walls are thin,” Victor calls. “You may want to speak quieter for your private meeting.”

Yuuri wants to die. He covers his face with his hands, shaking his head. “Phichit…”

“Okay, conference over,” Phichit announces loudly, bringing Yuuri back into the main room. “He’ll take the job, but we have some conditions.”
Victor raises an eyebrow. “Conditions?”

“Yuuri’s job is safe until the production of the movie is over. No more mind tricks, alright? And he wants a high salary. And his own trailer.”

The Russian actor thinks for a moment, then nods. “Yes, yes, and yes.”

(Phichit and Yuuri look at each other, surprised.)

“And… And he wants a cameo role in the movie. And he wants one for me, too!”

“Done.”

Phichit thinks on his feet. “And, I don’t know, a starting bonus of a thousand dollars? Just to settle the deal?”

Victor frowns. “Well, you’ll have to talk to Yakov about that.”

He backs off immediately. “Oh, okay, never mind that last part. But, um, you agree to the rest of the conditions?”

“Certainly,” Victor answers, smiling at both of them.

“It had better be a nice trailer!” Phichit adds.

Yuuri shoves his shoulder, giving him a death stare. If Phichit keeps pushing Victor, it’s more than possible that he’ll simply walk out of the room. At the same time, though, he respects his friend’s tenacity.

“One with a television, and a nice couch, and a king-sized bed,” Phichit informs Victor firmly. “Alright?”

“Alright.”

“Good!” Phichit rests his hands on his hips, glancing proudly at Yuuri. “Now what else needs to be settled?”

“Nothing,” Victor tells them. “You’ll move into a nicer hotel room on Monday. You’ll teach us how to skate for two months, then we film for four. For the filming you’ll have a trailer. I’ve seen the script, and there’s a lot of skating scenes, so most likely you’ll be there all four months. Post production will take the longest, but neither of us will be around for most of that.”

Yuuri is tempted to pinch himself, unsure as to whether or not this is truly happening.

It’s Phichit who speaks first. “Sounds good. And I’m allowed to visit?”

“Of course,” Victor answers warmly.

“And how many skaters will I be teaching?” Yuuri asks. “How many skaters are in the script?”

“Hmm. There’s me, Yuri, Mila, she’s playing the love interest, Christophe. We each have routines throughout the movie. That should be about it, apart from a few other scenes, probably. The minor, background roles will most likely be filled by actual figure skaters, so you won’t have to do much work there. Yakov will work out a schedule for you.”

Yuuri nods. “Okay. And why did you change your mind about the trainer?”
Victor looks surprised by the question. “What?”

“Well, I didn’t have the part, and now you’re showing up to our hotel room in the middle of the day and offering me a job. And why is it you here instead of Sara or Yakov? Doesn’t all of this seem a little unprofessional?” Yuuri asks, straightening his posture.

Phichit is surprised. Victor is surprised. (Yuuri is the most surprised.)

“Well,” Victor starts, “Yakov doesn’t exactly know that I’m here.”

“What?” Yuuri asks, shaking his head. “What do you mean he doesn’t know that you’re here?”

“They haven’t told Yakov’s first choice that he has gotten the job yet. And he won’t get the job. It’s going to be you. Yuri Plisetsky doesn’t like you—don’t take it personally—but I do.”

They stare at him.

The room is silent.

“So you’re saying that Yuuri doesn’t even have the job yet?” Phichit asks slowly. “You absolute piece of….”

“No, he does,” Victor assures him quickly. “Just not officially. Yakov doesn’t know. But Yakov will listen to me, he doesn’t really have much of a choice, and I say that I want you as my coach.”

Yuuri bites his lip, taking in the information. “And why me, anyway?”


“Kind of, yeah.”

“I liked your passion,” Victor tells him. “I liked your drive. The movie needs something to brighten up the script. Can I be honest with you, Yuuri?”

Yuuri can’t take his eyes off of him. He’s stunning. His hair is styled perfectly, the white t-shirt would look plain on anyone else but on him it might as well be a name brand. Everything about him screams perfection. It’s almost frustrating.

Yuuri nods.

“My movies don’t surprise anyone anymore. But when I saw you, I thought maybe we could liven them up a bit. Yakov doesn’t see the problem, he only sees the numbers. Big numbers. But I see the audiences. I see their reactions. And you…”

He stands up and gets closer to Yuuri. Phichit backs away from the two of them, shocked. Victor touches his chin with one hand.

His thumb runs across Yuuri’s bottom lip.

Yuuri watches, shocked, unmoving, afraid of breaking the spell.

“You are just what we need.”

Every bone in his body begs him to move, but he doesn’t. He’s frozen. But he maintains eye contact,
blue eyes staring straight through his brown, examining him, still trying to get a feel for him.

Yuuri stands his ground.

Victor leaves a minute later. He says something about calling him in the morning, but all Yuuri can feel is the ghost of the other man’s finger on his lips. He reaches up and touches his lip, wondering how he can bring the sensation back. Wondering how Victor Nikiforov had unraveled him with a single touch.

“Okay, tell me you felt that,” Phichit begs, sitting down on the hotel room bed and staring at Yuuri wide-eyed.

Yuuri stumbles to find words, still unsure as to whether or not the events of the past few minutes actually happened. “Felt what?”

“The unresolved sexual tension in the air. Oh my god. He looked like he was going to make out with you then and there, with me watching!”

Yuuri rolls his eyes. “Phichit, he was not about to make out with me.”

(Or was he? What was going through his head?)

“He would’ve if I hadn’t been there. I’m very sorry, Yuuri. I just stopped you from potentially having sex with Victor Nikiforov.”

“Phichit.”
A Night Out

Chapter Summary

Yuuri begins training the skaters and Victor has a burning question.

Chapter Notes

Shoutout to DukeBlobFish who made this incredibly cute art based off of the first chapter!
Let me know what you think of this chapter!! I am fueled by kudos and comments <3

P.S. This was addressed in a comment on this chapter so I wanted to put a warning!! I know that it's impossible for Victor/Yurio/everybody else to have mastered jumps this quickly. I don't mean to offend any skaters. The progression of their skills is quick primarily bc of plot purposes.

“Yakov?”

Yakov is sitting at his desk, phone pressed against his ear as he yells at someone in frustrated Russian. Victor sits down across from him, raising an eyebrow. The other man’s violent hand motions make his request obvious, but Victor doesn’t leave.

He pulls the phone away from his ear and glares at him. “Vitya, I’m busy.”

“This is important.”

Yakov rolls his eyes. “I’ll call you back. Give me two minutes.”

“Ten minutes!” Victor calls, hoping the person on the other end of the line hears him.

The director hangs up the phone and stares at him. “Alright, what is it?”

“You haven’t given that skater the training job yet, have you?” Victor asks, propping his feet up on the coffee table in front of him. Yakov’s office is nice, the furniture a rich mahogany. There’s a desk with two chairs across from it, one of which is occupied by Victor, a bookshelf stacked to the brim with files instead of books, and a large window looking out over Los Angeles.

Yakov frowns. “No, not yet. Why?”

“I want Katsuki Yuuri.”

“Who the hell is Katsuki Yuuri?” Then, he points at Victor’s feet.

Victor sighs and lowers his feet from the table, knowing it will make Yakov happier. And right now, he needs Yakov to be happier. “One of the other candidates. Japanese skater, second place at the Grand Prix, was late to the first interview?”
“Oh, right. But we agreed on the other one—what was his name? Frank or something? I don’t know. Yuri liked him the best. And you know how hard it is to please Yuri. Even harder than it is to please you.”

“But he hardly even talked to us,” Victor complains. “And I want Yuuri. I’ll get Yuri Plisetsky to agree, don’t worry about him.”

Yakov sighs, leaning back in his chair. “Victor, why do you want us to change the trainer? I was going to call the other guy today—does it really matter?”

“Of course it matters. The trainer is vital to how the film turns out.”

There’s a knock on the door. Yuri Plisetsky enters, wearing a black sweatshirt with a tiger embroidered on it. He looks angry. Or perhaps it’s just his natural expression. “What is going on in here? Are you two discussing something without me?”

“Victor wants to change the trainer,” Yakov tells him, obviously looking for somebody to join his side. “He wants Katsuki Yuuri. The Japanese skater.”

“Why?” Yuri asks.

Then there’s a pause.

Yuri groans loudly, pressing his hand to his forehead. “Oh my god, Victor. Are you kidding me?”

“What?” Yakov and Victor ask at the same time, staring at him.

“He has a crush on him,” Yuri claims. “We are not hiring somebody just because Victor got a crush on them. That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Why would you assume that I have a—”

“Because you were giving him the same look you give the girls in all of your movies. You couldn’t stop staring at him. It all makes sense now. No, Yakov, you can’t hire this guy just because Victor thinks he’s cute or something.”

Yakov raises an eyebrow, waiting for Victor’s response.

Victor watches as Yuri sits down in the chair beside him, folding his arms across his chest and waiting as well. “I want Katsuki Yuuri. Not because I have a crush on him, but because I think he’ll make the movie better. And Yakov, who paid for this nice desk?” he asks, tapping the mahogany with his index finger.

Yakov purses his lips, unamused. “I did.”

“Okay, but how?”

“With my money.”

“But from what?”

“From my movies.”

“Starring whom?”

“You.”
“Me!” Victor agrees, grinning. “I could threaten to quit.”

Yakov pinches the bridge of his nose. “Vitya, we both know you’re not going to quit.”

“I’ll support you if we can switch trailers for the movie,” Yuri offers suddenly. “I want the bigger one.”

“Deal!” Victor answers.

Yakov shakes his head. “Alright, alright. We’ll hire the Japanese skater.”

Victor smiles and stands up, leaning forward to clap Yakov on the shoulder. “That’s my favorite director. Thanks, Yakov. Thanks, Yuri.”

“I just got the biggest trailer on set,” Yuri responds dreamily. “And all I have to do is take skating lessons from Victor's crush instead of some other boring dude. I just lucked out.”

“Oh, one more thing. I think you need a nickname. Otherwise this is going to get very confusing very quickly.”

“What are you… Why not give Katsuki a nickname?” Yuri asks, annoyed.

“Because the name is cute on him.”

“Aha! You do have a crush!”

Victor ignores him. “You’ll be Yurio from now on. Suits you.”

“Yurio? Seriously?”

~

“I can’t believe you’re going to leave me alone with Yuri Plisetsky and Victor Nikiforov,” Yuuri complains to Phichit, nervously glancing around the airport, eyes landing on Phichit’s luggage. “You could stay here.”

“Celestino would have my head,” Phichit tells him. “Otherwise you know I’d stay. But I expect you to FaceTime me every day, alright? I want the day-to-day progression of you and Victor’s stunning romance. I don’t want to hear about it in the tabloids like everybody else.”

“There is no romance, but I will FaceTime you.”

Phichit looks over his shoulder, sees the other passengers boarding the flight. “Alright, I need to go. Don’t become a Hollywood diva, okay? And when you’re famous, remember me. And don’t let Nikiforov forget about our cameos!”

Yuuri laughs. “Are you sure you don’t want to write a list of things I need to remember?”

“Oh, you’ll do great, Yuuri.” Phichit hugs him, then, face pressing against his shoulder. Yuuri returns the embrace, lingering for a moment.

And then Phichit is gone.
And Yuuri is taking a taxi to the hotel room that Sara had, supposedly, booked for him. It’s not too far away from the damp motel they’d been staying at previously, and it’s close to the indoor skating rink that he had auditioned at a few days ago. Some more details had been worked out with Yakov, and he’d be training the actors there for approximately two months. Six sessions a week. Different skaters each day.

The hotel room is… not a room.

Rooms.

It’s huge. Ridiculously huge.

He starts in the, foyer, kitchen, living room? All three combined into one. There’s a large fridge, a stove, sink, television surrounded by couches and artwork, and a bedroom off to the left. The bathroom is en suite, complete with a large shower with sliding glass doors and a full-length mirror that Yuuri figures he’ll never use. Even the soap is fancy, lemon-scented.

Yuuri pulls out his phone to text Phichit photos. Phichit replies immediately with many, many emojis.

There’s a card on the kitchen counter. Yuuri frowns and picks it up, unfolding it. The font is neat, the text elegantly woven together. From far away, one might assume that it was typed, but it’s completely handwritten in black pen.

There’s a phone number, then the letter ‘V’.

Yuuri stares at the card for a full minute.

(This was Victor Nikiforov’s phone number?)

(It couldn’t be.)

He turns over the card. There’s nothing else on it. Not a trace.

Unsure of what to do now, he texts Phichit. There’s a note with a phone number on it. I think it’s Victor’s.

You have Victor’s phone number?? Send it to me!

Send it to you? Yuuri replies, confused.

Do you know how much people would pay for that? I know at least four dozen people personally who would sell their souls.

Yuuri rolls his eyes and sets the phone down, drumming his fingers against the kitchen counter. There’s a desk in the corner of the bedroom and he sits down at it, examining a large stack of papers that had been left there.

A script, and then some separate packets. Upon further examination, he sees that each packet details one skating routine in the movie. There’s countless ones, some thicker than others. The thickest ones have Victor’s name written at the top.

He fingers through the main script, curious. Working Title: History Maker.

There’s several characters. Victor’s is a young skater trying to make his way in the world of figure
skating, starting from the bottom and desperately attempting to qualify for the Grand Prix Final. Then there’s Yuri Plisetsky’s character, who is a young skater and Victor’s biggest rival. And then…

Mila’s character.

They fall in love slowly. She keeps bumping into Victor at different events, and their chemistry is, according to the script, *undeniable*. They support each other in their individual ambitions, all while trying to build a relationship.

It’s a classic Nikiforov movie, Yuuri thinks.

(So why is reading it making him uncomfortable?)

Sighing, he sets aside the script for later and focuses on the routines. Victor has three in the movie, Yuri Plisetsky has two, Mila has two, Christophe has one, and then some other characters have one.

And then there’s a pair skate.

At the very end of the movie—a pair skate between Mila and Victor.

He forces his eyes away from the page, shoves that packet to the side. It’s on top of the script. After a moment, he pulls the script out and places it on top of the pair skate. He doesn’t want to see it.

Some of the routines are complete, and some will just have bits and pieces filmed. All of Victor’s routines are full length, and so is the pair skate. There’s music worked out for most of them, but a few are still rough on the details. Yuuri knows that neither the script nor the routines are finalized yet, and Yakov had just told him to start by teaching the actors the basics.

But how is he supposed to teach over four actors to skate full-blown routines? In only two months?

Yuuri bites his lip, opening the first packet. Victor’s first routine in the movie. He figures that for today, he may as well get studying. See what he’s up against.

~

“Aren’t you excited to learn how to skate?” Victor asks Yurio. Victor is driving them both to the rink, because according to Yurio, taxis are gross.

Yurio shrugs. “I don’t know. It looks hard.”

“But it’s new. We’ve never done a movie with skating before. In fact, it has been a while since we’ve done a movie together at all. What, two years?”

“Something like that.”

When he parks, Victor looks out, eyes scanning the perimeter of the building. Yuuri isn’t there. Must be inside already. They leave the car and grab their individual duffel bags, Victor walking ahead and pushing open the large doors to the rink.

The owners had agreed to let them use it for private training for four hours every day, except Sunday. Yakov was compensating them one way or another—Victor wasn’t sure of the details.
Katsuki Yuuri is on the ice.

Skating.

Victor sees Yurio open his mouth to speak and he clamps his hand over it, making the blond actor dart out his tongue to lick Victor’s palm. Victor doesn’t pull his hand away—keeps his eyes focused on Yuuri and moves closer.

(He’s captivating.)

He’s wearing earbuds and he glides across the ice as though he was made to be there. The movements are familiar—Victor realizes that it’s the same routine he’d seen in his audition video. He drifts to one side of the ice, arms extended, and then jumps up, the sound of his blade catching the ice echoing about the large room.

“Are we just going to stand here and watch him all day?” Yurio complains.

“He’s beautiful.”

Yurio rolls his eyes and steps forward. Victor chases after him. “Katsuki!” he calls.

Yuuri doesn’t look up, just keeps skating, turned away from them. Another jump. Victor gasps, enthralled.

When he turns around, he sees Yurio and stops, tugging his earbuds out of his ears. “Oh, sorry. I didn’t hear you guys come in.”

Victor smiles brightly at him, approaching the ice. “No, don’t apologize. That routine was lovely.”

Yuuri blushes, ducks his head.

He is adorable.


“Okay, so today it’s just us three,” Yuuri says, skating over to them with ease. “Yakov gave me the schedule for the next two months. I’m guessing he gave it to you guys, too. Tomorrow it’s me and Mila and Yuri, I think.”

“He’s called Yurio now,” Victor informs him.

“I am not!”

“You are.”

Yuuri frowns, glancing between them. “Yurio? Alright. Well, anyway, today I thought we could start with some basic jumps. I know that we started you on a salchow, Victor. We can teach that to Yuri—I mean Yurio—too, and then see where we get. Does that sound good?”

Victor thinks that anything Yuuri says would sound good. A pack of rabid raccoons? Cruel and unusual punishments? Ketchup and pasta?

“Yeah, teach me the salchow,” Yurio says.

“We’re going to need to get you guys fitted skates,” Yuuri muses as Victor and Yurio sit down and unzip their bags. “I’ll talk to Yakov about that. For now, those will do.”
Victor puts on his skates and Yurio does the same. They have endless amounts of safety gear, courtesy of Yakov and Sara, and Victor feels a bit ridiculous as he puts on the countless pads. Knee pads, elbow pads…

Yuuri leans against the half-wall of the rink, looking slightly nervous. It occurs to Victor for the first time that Yuuri probably has no idea what he’s doing, other than the skating part. He has never worked on a movie before, most likely has never been to Los Angeles before.

“How have you been to California before?” Victor asks.

Yuuri shakes his head. “No. It’s very pretty, though.”

(He’s not sure he could be more in love with Katsuki Yuuri.)

“Yeah, it is,” Victor agrees.

Yurio stands up, ruining the moment. “Now what the heck is a salchow?”

“Um, it’s pronounced sort of like ‘sal-cow.’ And I’ll show you. It’s a jump. I guess I’ll explain the basics of skating first?”

Yuuri proceeds to explain how scoring works in competitive figure skating, then how the jumps work. Victor hangs on his every word, trying to pay attention to the information rather than his eyes, which are gorgeous and brown and have little specks of gold in them if one looks close…

“Victor?”

Victor snaps back into reality. “Yes?”

“Do you want to go practice the salchow like we did before while I help Yurio start it?”

“That’s not my name,” Yurio quietly protests in the background.

Victor would much, much rather have hands-on practice with Yuuri. But he doesn’t protest. “Okay.”

Three hours later, they’re both doing basic salchows. They still fumble from time to time, but overall, it’s not bad. And Yuuri tells them that it’s actually incredible progress for such a short period of time.

“Victor, when you push off,” Yuuri is telling him, standing distractingly close on the ice, “try doing it like this.”

He pushes off in a different manner than Victor had, and it looks smoother, nicer, much more lovely. Victor wonders why he hadn’t watched competitive figure skating in the past. A certain Japanese skater definitely would have caught his attention. “Okay.”

Victor attempts it, and Yuuri politely shakes his head. “Um, here, let me… Get into position like you’re about to start it.”

Victor does, and has trouble keeping his skates still on the ice, but manages. Yuuri leans closer, bending down slightly, and straightens one of his legs. Victor watches, his breath catching in his throat. The feeling of Yuuri’s hands on his legs is… He swallows thickly. “Now?”

“Now try,” Yuuri agrees, backing away.

“Much better,” the skater confirms. “Now try it again without my help.”

~

By the end of the session, Yuuri can tell that Victor is drained.

Yurio is, too, even if he won’t admit it. There’s sweat on his forehead and at some point Yuuri had suggested he tie his hair back. They both winced at the blond actor’s explosion of outrage.

“You both did great,” Yuuri tells them, trying to keep his eyes from focusing on Victor. He’s gorgeous on and off the ice, and during the entire session Yuuri had been fighting an odd urge to touch his hair. It looked soft and silky, he wanted to know for sure. It was a distracting thought, really.

“Professionals in no time,” Yurio comments snidely.

Victor licks his lips. “Would you like a ride back to your hotel, Yuuri?”

“Oh, you drive?”

(He inwardly grimaces at the question. Why would he assume that Victor didn’t drive places, just because he was a celebrity? Why would he presume to know anything about Hollywood?)

Victor shrugs. “Sure, sometimes. I gave Yurio a ride here. I’d be happy to take you back.”

“If you wouldn’t mind,” Yuuri answers, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Not at all.”

~

The hotel is about fifteen minutes out of their way with Los Angeles traffic. Yurio realizes that, too, but for whatever reason, he doesn’t say anything for once.

The car ride is awkwardly silent at first. Yurio sits shotgun and Yuuri is in the back, gazing out of the window, eyes focused. “I left my phone number in your hotel room, Yuuri,” Victor tells him, because they hadn’t addressed that, and because he wants to say something.


“If you need anything, call me. I don’t live too far away. Only about a half hour.”

Yuuri smiles at him—he sees it in his rearview mirror. “Thanks.”

(He doesn’t mention that, really, he’d kept a careful eye on his phone yesterday. Waited for a call. He didn’t know what Yuuri would call for, or if he’d call at all, but Victor had hoped.)

“The hotel is lovely. Sara really didn’t need to book a place like that for me,” Yuuri says.

“Phichit said that you wanted a nice place to say,” Victor points out.

Yuuri laughs. “She did that because of Phichit?”
I did that because of Phichit, Victor thinks. He had insisted on Yuuri staying at a nice place. Yes, Phichit had only mentioned the trailer, but Victor had figured that his stay at the hotel should also be luxurious. “Sure. We listened to all of his requests.”

“Well, it’s very nice, and I definitely appreciate it. I just hope I do okay with teaching you guys.”

“You’ll do great,” Victor says.

They drop Yuuri off at the hotel and he lingers with the car door open for a moment, as if wanting to say something but unable to find the words. Victor smiles at him, and Yuuri smiles back, his cheeks tinting pink as he slings his backpack over his shoulder. “See you?”

“See you,” Victor confirms.

He shuts the car door and Victor pulls away.

“This is ridiculous,” Yurio says as soon as they’re alone.

Victor glances over at him. “What’s ridiculous?”

“You and him. I didn’t know you could coat the words ‘see you’ in so much gross yearning. I don’t know how I’m going to film this movie with the both of you around me.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Victor lies, thinking about Yuuri’s eyes again. They’re gorgeous, filled with so much light. And when he laughed, little lines would form around the corners…

“Victor. Focus on the road.”

“Oh, sorry.”

～

Yuuri opens his phone to see three new texts from Phichit. He showers, then collapses on the hotel bed, exhausted. After a while, he answers the texts, then turns onto his back, staring up at the ceiling.

Teaching skating was more exhausting than just skating.

Especially teaching skating to Victor. That was just…

He remembers leaning down to help him with his salchow, remembers the look in Victor’s eyes. It had been purely for practice, of course, to get him to perfect his take-off. Purely for practice.

(Purely for practice.)

Yuuri rolls off of the bed and makes his way to the kitchen, feet dragging behind him. He picks up the notecard with Victor’s phone number on it and brings it back to the bedroom, setting it down on the desk and staring at it. Hard. As though it had offended him.

He opens a new text field and enters the number, presses his thumb to start the text. But he doesn’t type anything. Doesn’t know what to say. He thinks for several minutes, types and then deletes, considers asking Phichit but knowing that a request for advice would get him way in over his head.
Hi Victor, this is Yuuri. I just thought I’d text you so you’d have my number, too.

He stares at the words on the screen for a full sixty seconds, scanning for typos. It’s fine, but it feels too serious. He adds a smiley emoji to the end to lighten it up. Then stares again. Another sixty seconds passes. His phone’s battery is slowly draining. His eyelids are slowly growing heavier.

He hits send, then turns his phone upside down and sets it on the nightstand. The covers of the bed are soft, but they’re nothing compared to the layers of blankets on the inside. They’re silky, smooth, and Yuuri never wants to leave the bed again. He gets underneath the covers and sighs, leaning over to turn off the lamp.

(His phone buzzes.)

(He sucks in a breath before grabbing it.)

**Good idea! I can send you everyone else’s contact info, if you want.**

Yuuri agrees over text, relieved that Victor doesn’t think he’s a complete whack job for texting him. He settles into the sheets as Victor sends him different contacts—Yurio, Mila, Christophe, Sara.

**Goodnight, Yuuri.**

Yuuri stares at the text.

(Is it real?)

(Maybe the phone has a glitch?)

He goes to the home screen, then back to the messaging app. Then remembers he has read receipts turned on and hurries to reply. But what does he say? What the hell is he supposed to say to that?

No, no, he’s overreacting. It’s normal to say goodnight. Normal to end a conversation. Because they had been having a conversation, so of course Victor would say something. So why is Yuuri’s heart about to beat out of his chest?

**Goodnight!**

He sends it before he has time to regret it. There’s no reply, but Victor has read receipts turned off, so Yuuri has no way of knowing if he had already read it. But, then, how would he reply? Surely he wouldn’t?

Yuuri turns his phone off and presses his face into his pillow. Sleep takes hold of him in an instant.

~

Victor is bored on Wednesday.

He doesn’t have a skating session with Yuuri, and though he’d only had two in the past, it feels as though there’s something missing in his life. It takes him a while to realize it’s not the skating that’s missing. It’s the skater.

He reads their texts from the night before. A limited conversation, but a conversation all the same. He
remembers the feeling he’d gotten when he’d read Yuuri’s first text, the excitement coursing through him.

(There’s something mystical about having Yuuri’s phone number.)

(A sort of power.)

(Like, yes, he’d gotten Yuuri’s number. Katsuki Yuuri had texted him.)

Yurio isn’t around, he’s with Yuuri, which only annoys Victor further. So Victor decides to scroll through social media, responding to tweets and glancing through the photos he’d been tagged in on Instagram. When he looks at the clock again, he realizes only five minutes have passed. How, how is he going to live like this?

He checks the schedule Yakov had written up. He has training with Yuuri tomorrow, luckily. With Christophe, though. That should be interesting. He hadn’t worked with Christophe in a few years, and he was a nice guy, but he could be a bit overbearing.

And then training on Friday with Mila. And then nothing Saturday or Sunday.

Nothing.

(What is he going to do for two whole days? What had he done before he’d met Yuuri? Less than a week ago? Nothing interesting, probably.)

“Makkachin, I’m bored,” he complains to the dog, who has no pity for him. Makkachin is perfectly comfortable staying inside and having a lazy day. “Do you want to go for a walk?”

The dog’s ears perk up at the beloved ‘w’ word. Victor smiles. It’s difficult for him to go on walks without being recognized, but if he could cover his hair and face, it wasn’t so bad. There was one snapback hat that he was particularly fond of.

It had been nightmarish when he had long hair. At least now it’s simpler.

~

On Thursday, Victor gets to the rink early. Yuuri is already there, to Victor’s surprise. He’s skating again, a different routine than the one Victor had seen before, and Victor is content to lean against the nearest wall, watching him. He wishes he could be invisible, wishes Yuuri wouldn’t eventually notice him.

Every movement is purposeful, carries emotion. There’s no music, yet Victor can hear the rhythm, can hear the soft sounds.

As though his body is crafting music.

He notices Victor in the middle of a step sequence—stumbles a bit and flubs the landing. His skate slips and then he’s no longer visible.

“Yuuri!” Victor shouts, running towards the ice. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine, sorry—you just scared me,” he explains, looking more embarrassed than injured,
thankfully. He stands up and brushes the flakes of ice off of his knees.

“Sorry.”

“No, not your fault.”

There’s a pause. Victor laughs. Yuuri laughs, too, running a hand through his hair.

“You’re here early,” Yuuri points out.

“So are you.”

Yuuri just shrugs. “Skating sort of relaxes me.”

“And you needed to relax?”

He shakes his head. “Well… Not really, but it’s nice to, isn’t it?”

Victor hums in agreement. “What were you doing just now?”

“Oh, a short program. It’s—in figure skating, there’s a short program and then a long program in competitions. That one that you saw me do in the video was a long program.”

Victor already knew that, but nods anyway. “It was pretty.”

Yuuri ducks his head, looking down at his skates. “Oh, thanks.”

Victor wants to ask him something. He’d been planning this question all last night. Rehearsed it to Makkachin a thousand times. He’s ready. He knows he is.


“Hello, Victor!” Christophe announces happily. “And you must be my coach.”

“Hi, I’m Yuuri,” Yuuri introduces himself, smiling brightly.

Christophe’s gaze rakes him.

(It’s practically assault.)

Yuuri shifts his weight from one foot to the other.

But luckily Christophe looks away, moving to Victor and wrapping him in a too-tight. “Victor, it has been too long. When was the last time we worked together?”

“I don’t know,” Victor answers, hugging him back before pulling away.

“Maybe it was in Stay Close to Me?” Yuuri suggests.

“Oh, that was it,” Victor confirms.

How did Yuuri know that, anyway?

“Years ago,” Christophe muses. “Your hair is short, now. I like it.”

When they’re on the ice, Yuuri starts with Christophe while letting Victor practice on the other side
of the rink.

(Victor doesn’t do much practicing.)

He sees Christophe’s hands wander. At one point, they lower way, way too far. Yuuri stares, turning bright red and moving away from him a polite amount. He starts babbling, something about skating, Victor can’t hear most of it, words spilling out at a thousand miles per hour. Christophe looks amused.

Victor skates over there before he knows what he’s doing. “How’s it going?”

“Well,” Yuuri answers, at the same time Christophe says “Wonderful.”

“Yuuri, I’m having some trouble with my salchow again,” Victor tells him.

Yuuri glances at him, frowning. “Oh. Just give me one minute, I’ll come over there. Is it the take-off?”

No. “Yes.”

He’s relieved the moment Yuuri moves away from Christophe. Hated the way Christophe looked at him, like he was some sort of pretty chew-toy. He knows that Christophe means well, probably, but…

Victor still has his unanswered question. Still needs to ask it in the first place.

“You don’t have any sessions on Sunday, do you?”

Yuuri shakes his head. “No, Yakov gave me Sundays off.”

“Do you have plans, then?”

“Well, I don’t exactly know anybody around here, so…” Yuuri purses his lips, watching him closely, curiously.

Victor’s heart skips a beat. “I could take you sightseeing. If you wanted, of course. But I know all the best spots.”

(He really doesn’t know all the best spots, but he’s willing to do some research.)

Please say yes.

(Please, please say yes.)

Victor isn’t breathing. Isn’t moving.

“That’d be fun.”

He breathes. Exhales slowly. “O-Okay.”

They stare at each other for a moment.

They both start laughing at the same time, and Yuuri’s laugh is so melodic and beautiful and Victor can’t even stand it, can’t stand being this close to him and not kissing him, not pressing him down against the ice and making him laugh more.
“Yuuri, come here,” Christophe says.

Yuuri looks at Victor apologetically before skating away.

~

After the session, Victor gives him a ride home again.

It’s weird, having somebody sit shotgun in his car besides Yurio or Makkachin. Despite his millions of Instagram followers, Victor doesn’t exactly have that many close friends. He had friends, of course, but not ones he’d drive around with.

It’s weirder that it’s Yuuri.

He doesn’t know that much about the Japanese skater, but from what he’s seen so far, he’s incredibly interesting. Every detail he reveals about his life Victor holds onto like a present, stores in his memory bank of facts-about-Yuuri. And now, as he looks out at Los Angeles as they drive to the hotel, Victor has a thousand questions to ask him. But instead of asking them, he simply spares glances at him at traffic lights or stop signs.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” Yuuri tells him when he opens the car door. “Thanks for the ride.”

“Of course. Bye, Yuuri.”

Victor drives back to his estate, not bothering to turn on the radio. When he opens the garage door and pulls in, Makkachin is waiting inside the door, barking and jumping on him when he enters.

“Makkachin, he said yes! We’re going to go sightseeing on Sunday. Where should I take him?”

Makkachin barks again. Victor rubs him on the head and then collapses on his couch, smiling up at the ceiling. “So many options. Can you believe he said yes, Makkachin? He said yes.”

His dog is surprisingly supportive. Then, Victor realizes he’s just hungry for his dinner, so he swings his legs over the sides of the couch and heads to the pantry.

“I’m going out with Katsuki Yuuri. You can have extra dinner tonight.”

~

“Why do you look dead?”

Yuuri looks up at his phone, sees Phichit’s image and yawns again. “I’m tired.”

“From skating or from something else?” For a second, Yuuri is confused, then he sees Phichit raise his eyebrows suggestively.

“Back to this?”

“What has been happening? I want a detail-by-detail analysis of everything that has happened. Don’t leave anything out, I’ll be able to tell.”

Yuuri starts smiling—can’t help it—and buries his face in a pillow.
“I know that look. What happened?”

He looks at the screen again. Can’t take it any longer. “Victor asked me to go sightseeing with him on Sunday.”

“What?!” Phichit shouts, eyes widening. “You’re serious?”

“Yeah. I don’t have training sessions on Sundays.”

“Oh my god, Yuuri. That is so exciting. What the hell are you going to wear? You brought like, no clothes. I told you you should’ve brought more. And where are you two going to go? Has he told you? Oooh—is it a surprise? Wait, what if he drives you around L.A.? What if he takes you bowling?”

“Bowling? Why bowling?”

“I don’t know!” Phichit complains, making a dramatic hand motion. “The possibilities are endless.”

“How’s Detroit?” Yuuri asks, because although he’s having fun in California so far, part of him does miss Michigan.

“Same old, same old. Celestino misses you.”

Yuuri smiles. “I miss everybody already. Keep training hard for me.”

“I will. I’ve got my eye on the gold, Katsuki.”

Yuuri laughs and says goodbye before hanging up the phone. Tomorrow he has a session with Mila and Victor, and he hasn’t met Mila before. He’s a bit nervous. Meeting Christophe had gone well, except…

(Okay, so maybe not well, but it hadn’t gone horribly.)

~

He goes to the rink early, wondering if Victor will be early, too.

He had met the rink owner, Yuuko, a couple of times now, and had grown fond of her. She doesn’t mind if he comes in before or after their time slot—there usually aren’t too many people there, anyway, and he’s not obnoxious or loud. Just skates.

Yuuri tucks his earbuds in his ears and puts on his skates, shutting his eyes as he drifts in mindless figure eights. Not doing a routine, not doing any jumps, just skating.

After a while, there’s a voice nearby. He pulls out an earbud and turns around, halting his skates. A redhead woman is smiling brightly at him, waving her hands. “Hello!”

He’s seen Mila several times before. She and Victor had done two movies together in the past. Yuuri had seen both of them an endless amount of times. But seeing her in real life, now? There’s something weird. Something weird that hadn’t been there when he’d seen Victor or Yurio or Christophe for the first time.
“Hi,” he greets anyway, introducing himself and helping her strap on her skates, tying them tight.

Victor enters a minute later, and does he look disappointed that Mila is already there or is Yuuri’s imagination becoming overactive? Most likely the latter. “Hello Yuuri, Mila.”

Mila stands up, then almost falls because she’s standing on skates, but falls onto Victor, giving him a hug. “Victor, I’ve missed you! How are you? What have you been doing? Oh, I loved your Instagram post the other day, the one with Makkachin? Sooo cute.”

Victor smiles at her. “I’ve been doing well, how about you? It’s about time that we make another movie together.”

“I agree completely,” Mila says. “And I’m so excited about this one! Figure skating. Thrilling. And have you read the script? Ohh, wait, am I allowed to talk about it? Yuuri, do you have the script?”

Yuuri nods.

“We’re doing a pair skate, Victor!” she says happily. “Isn’t that great? I’m excited to learn. I skated when I was very young, but I don’t think I’ll be very good.”

“That’s okay,” Yuuri tells her. “We’ll start with the basics. Victor has already learned some simple jumps, so we’ll try to catch you up.”

Mila is nice.

But Yuuri keeps her at arm’s length. He doesn’t know why. He’s nice to her, sure, and she’s nice to him, but there’s something off. It’s the same feeling he’d gotten earlier when he’d been flipping through the routine packets and seen their pair skate.

(He ignores the feeling.)

“That was great!” he praises her, clapping his hands together.

Mila grins at him. “Really? You’re a wonderful teacher, Yuuri.” She hugs him. Yuuri hugs back. Over her shoulder he sees Victor looking slightly uncomfortable, or is that just Yuuri’s imagination again? He’s no longer sure.

When the session is over, Victor offers to drive Yuuri home for the third time. “Victor, really, if it’s out of your way, you don’t have to give me a ride. I’m fine in a taxi,” Yuuri insists.

“I don’t mind at all. It’s not that far out of the way.”

(Victor isn’t a good driver.)

Yuuri hasn’t told him that yet. He figures Yurio knows, too, because when he’s driving with Victor he always grabs onto one of those handles that are found above every seat. But Yuuri doesn’t know how to mention the fact politely. He drives a black, custom Mercedes-Benz that roars every time he steps on the gas.

“You’d really rather take a taxi?” Victor asks, and he’s pouting a bit, and Yuuri feels his heart collapse in his chest.

“Well, no.”

The actor grins. “Then let’s go.”
They say goodbye to Mila and then get in Victor’s car. Yuuri licks his lips as he turns his head to look out the window. He’s still not quite used to the views of Los Angeles, isn’t sure he’ll ever get used to it. It’s pretty and busy and the weather is always perfect, it hasn’t rained since he got here and it’s a perfect mixture of dry and humid.

“Are we still on for Sunday?” Victor asks as he stares ahead at the road, one hand on the wheel.

Yuuri swallows, nodding. “Yeah, sure. Do you know… Do you know where we’ll go?”

“I have a few ideas,” he answers. “There’s a lot to see around here, and all you’ve really seen is Yakov’s studio and LAX.”

He shrugs. “Phichit showed me around a little bit when we first got here, but we didn’t see much of Los Angeles. We looked at the Hollywood sign and the Walk of Fame.”

“Did you see my star?”

“Yeah, we did. Phichit took a picture with it. It’s on his Instagram.”

“Oh, you’ll have to show me sometime.”

They arrive at the hotel and Yuuri grabs his backpack before leaving the car, offering Victor a parting smile that he returns in earnest. Yuuri says hello to the receptionist, who, as per usual, grumpily glares at him. Then he reads over a bit more of the routines, Christophe’s, this time.

Tomorrow, Saturday, he works with Christophe and Yurio. Not Victor.

So the next time he’ll see Victor is Sunday. He leans back in the desk chair and wonders how two days can feel like such a long time. He hardly even knows him, and yet here he is, dreading the time they have to spend apart. Yuuri picks up his phone and pulls up Instagram, finding the photo of Phichit in front of Victor’s star. He’s posing ridiculously, his hand on his heart and the other dramatically on his forehead, as though he’s about to pass out.

He copies the link and moves to his text messages. Pastes the link in the text field below Victor’s name. Hits send.

Takes in a breath.

Waits.

He was probably still driving. And hopefully he wouldn’t text while driving.

Yuuri takes a shower, and when he comes back he has a new message.

Where’s your photo with it?

It takes him a moment to realize what he’s asking. He laughs to himself and sits down on the bed, raking his fingers through his wet, unruly hair. I didn’t take one. :(  

We’ll fix that.

Yuuri thinks for a second. Wonders how seriously Victor will take a joke. Sometimes it’s difficult to be sarcastic over text. Isn’t it a bit egotistical to take me to your own star on a sightseeing trip?

Probably.
He rolls his eyes and grins as he types a response. *I'll go if you take a picture with Yurio’s star doing the same pose Phichit did with yours.*

**Deal.**

Yuuri flips through the skating routines again, yawning. The skating he was doing here was nothing compared to what he did in Detroit, yet it seemed to exhaust him far, far more. He fumbles to get underneath the sheets, wondering how smoothly tomorrow’s session will go.

~

Victor doesn’t do much on Saturday.

He plays with Makkachin, pets Makkachin, takes Makkachin on four separate walks. Browses through social media. Texts people. Considers going to the pool but ends up changing his mind.

Really, he thinks of Yuuri.

(It’s sort of pathetic.)

“Where should I take him tomorrow?” he asks aloud to Makkachin, pulling out his phone and searching through the map. “How about to the Walk of Fame, then Sunset Boulevard, that’s a classic, and then… Oh! He’s Japanese, would he like Little Tokyo? Or would he hate it? He’d probably hate it. I can ask him. And we can go to dinner. That’d be nice.”

Makkachin doesn’t look like he cares. But he looks friendly all the same.

~

Sunday morning, he wakes up before his alarm clock.

He texts Yuuri.

**I could pick you up at two?**

Yuuri’s reply is quick. **That’d be great.**

He regrets the text already. Two? What was he supposed to do until two? Victor makes his way to the closet and glances around. And what was he supposed to wear? What would Yuuri like?

Victor picks up his phone again and dials a familiar contact. “Yurio?”

“What, Victor? I’m still sleeping.”

“I’m taking Yuuri sightseeing today.”

Yurio groans into the phone. “Well, congratulations? Did you just call me to brag about your not-even-an-accomplishment?”

Victor smiles, sorting through five shirts that are completely identical. “No, I’m just not sure what to wear.”
Yurio hangs up the phone.

Victor frowns at the home screen. Had he really just hung up on him? How rude.

~

Two o’clock can’t come quickly enough. He had eventually decided upon black jeans and a white t-shirt. Because this was casual, right? After another mental debate with himself, he wears an Oxford over top of it, tucks it into the jeans. Still casual. And it might get cold if they’re out late. Which hopefully they will be.

When he’s outside of the hotel, he texts Yuuri. Yuuri responds instantly saying he’s on his way out.

He looks…

Unreal. As in, this man could not possibly be real, as in Victor must have never woken up this morning, as in this is a hallucination, or a dream, or a figment of his imagination, or…

“Hi,” Yuuri greets as he opens up the car door. He doesn’t have a backpack, and Victor is confused for a second before remembering that they’re not going skating. There’s something different about seeing Yuuri without a backpack. He loves it.

He’s wearing a long-sleeved blue shirt—not exactly appropriate for the weather but it looks so good on him that Victor doesn’t particularly care—and jeans. His shoes are white—Vans, maybe? Victor isn’t sure. But the entire outfit just…

“Um, Victor?”

“Oh, right. Hi.”

Yuuri looks slightly confused, but he’s smiling a bit. “Where are we off to?”

“We’re starting with the Walk of Fame, since for whatever reason you chose not to get a photo with my star. I’m offended, by the way.” He’s joking, but he just hopes Yuuri can tell.

“I took a photo with Tom Cruise’s.”

Something about that sentence punches him in the gut. “Did you?”

Yuuri hums. “And Russell Crowe’s. And Winona Ryder’s.”

Victor just nods slowly, turning a corner.

They make more small talk before they reach the walk of fame, and when they do, Victor grabs a hat from the backseat and places it on his head. “Can you see my hair?” he asks Yuuri.

Yuuri frowns. “Why are you…? Oh. You really have to do that?”

“Yeah. As long as we’re not obvious, it should be fine.”

“But the hair gives you away,” Yuuri teases. “You can still see it. Hang on, let me…” He leans over to Victor’s seat and pushes some of his bangs farther into the hat. “Turn,” he commands, and Victor turns. Yuuri adjusts it until it’s perfect. “Okay, now you should be fine.”

~
“Here it is!” Victor announces proudly a minute later, looking down at his star. “Now pose.”

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Yuuri complains as he kneels down beside the star, smiling at Victor’s camera. “You’re such a diva.”

“Absolutely,” Victor agrees, probably a bit too happy to see Yuuri posing there. Probably happier than when he’d actually gotten the star. The accomplishment is fifty times better with Yuuri beside it.

“Now let’s find Yurio’s.”

They do, and Victor copies the fangirl-about-to-pass-out pose that Phichit had done in his photo. Yuuri laughs as he snaps the photo, and Victor realizes that he wants to hear Yuuri laugh more, and that that will be his primary goal for the rest of the afternoon.

They visit several more stars and Victor tells stories about different celebrities, which ones are genuinely nice and which ones are secretly mean, and Yuuri listens carefully, his eyes set on Victor’s own. He almost feels bad for talking so much, but he’s starting to get the impression that the younger man doesn’t mind listening.

At least, he thinks so.

“Now where should we go?” Yuuri asks, and he’s loosened up a bit, bumping Victor’s shoulder and grinning up at him as they walk.

Victor smiles back, unsure of how he’d managed to meet such a perfect person. He’s everything Victor could ever want, and here he was, by his side, walking through Los Angeles as though they were a normal couple.

(Not that they’re a couple. Absolutely not. Not yet. Yet? No. Not at all.)

“I didn’t know if you’d want to or not, because I don’t know if this is a stupid idea, but we could drive to Little Tokyo. Maybe you could show me some culture, huh?” Victor suggests, a little nervous as he licks his lips and waits for Yuuri to respond.

Yuuri thinks for a minute. “Little Tokyo? Seriously? Victor, why would I want to go somewhere that just reflects where I’ve already lived?”

Victor freezes.

His heart drops in his chest.

Oh god, he had known that that had been a bad suggestion. He’d known that it would be stupid. Why, why on Earth had he said that? And why hadn’t Makkachin filtered out that suggestion in the first place? Everything was going horribly, now. What were they going to do for the rest of the night? Should he just take Yuuri home? Surely he wanted to go home.

“I’m just kidding,” Yuuri says. “That sounds like fun.”

Oh.

Oh.

Victor breathes. “I thought you were serious.”

“Nah. I’d love to see it.” He looks up at Victor and looks concerned, then, grabbing his arm and squeezing it. “Are you okay? Sorry, I was just trying to make a joke.”
“No, no, you just caught me off-guard. I didn’t know you could be a tease,” Victor tells him, and Yuuri laughs. Success. Situation defused.

Yuuri shrugs. “Do we have to drive there?”

“Yes, but it’ll be worth it.”

~

When they get to Little Tokyo, Yuuri looks around, amazed. Victor just looks at the skater. He’s far more captivating than any tourist attractions.

“Wow, it’s big!” he comments.

Really, it isn’t that big. But Victor doesn’t point that out.

They look at public sculptures, and Yuuri poses underneath some sort of watchtower. Victor happily snaps photos and Yuuri says something about sending them to Phichit before they move off to the next spot.

It’s a bit ridiculous, how happy Yuuri makes him.

Everything he does makes Victor’s heart hurt in the best possible way.

He smiles at every shopkeeper, tugs on Victor’s arm when he wants him to hurry to see something, gazes admiringly at every piece of art. And if Victor doesn’t understand something, or there’s something written in Japanese, he’ll explain it to him politely. Victor finds himself asking many, many more questions than necessary. He loves hearing Yuuri talk, especially about things that he’s passionate about.

(Speaking of passion.)

“Victor, they have katsudon!” he announces happily. “My mother makes the best katsudon. You’ll have to try it sometime. But let’s try this!”

“What’s katsudon?” he asks, letting Yuuri tug him towards the restaurant.

“Pork cutlet, rice, egg, vegetables. You’ll love it, I promise. Come on!”

He does love it. It’s delicious, impossibly delicious, and he wonders why he’d never bothered to come to Little Tokyo before now. “This is great!”

“Mmm, it is,” Yuuri agrees, devouring his entire bowl in record time. “I always eat it after competitions.”

~

When it’s dark out, they head to Sunset Boulevard. It’s filled with people, but it’s dark out, so Victor keeps his hat on but doesn’t have to walk around with his head ducked completely. Yuuri walks so close to him on the tiny, crowded path that their arms brush against each other, and Victor loves it.

They enter different shops, and at one point Yuuri finds a stack of DVD containers with Victor’s face on the front of each one. “I think the shop owner is a fan of you,” he tells Victor, flipping through the different movies.

“Or nobody bought these and they’ve been sitting here for years.”
Yuuri rolls his eyes, admiring one particular cover. Victor is staring at Mila longingly from across an office room. *Stay Close to Me* is written across the bottom in a large, cursive print.

Victor laughs at the cover. “Oh, I remember posing for that cover. Mila kept laughing.”

There’s something in Yuuri’s eyes as he stares at the cover, something Victor doesn’t know how to read. He turns over the object and reads the summary on the back. “I’ve seen this one,” he tells Victor.

“Have you?” Victor asks, and he doesn’t want to admit that it fills him with a weird pride that Yuuri has seen some of his movies, but it does. He remembers when they’d first met, Yuuri had known the name of a movie he’d filmed in Detroit when even *he* couldn’t remember.

Yuuri sets down the cover and turns around, moving to the other side of the shop. There’s several large posters on a rack, one of Little Tokyo, one of Sunset Boulevard, one of Mulholland Drive, many of the La Brea Tar Pits, a few of the Hollywood sign. Yuuri curiously sorts through them, and then his eyes widen.

“What?” Victor asks, confused.

He pulls up a poster from the back. It’s a giant one of Victor. “Wow. You ought to sign it.”

Victor laughs. “Should I?”

Yuuri glances around the store. “It would sort of be funny. Does that count as vandalism?”

“I’m increasing the worth of it, I don’t think it counts as vandalism.”

The skater laughs as Victor takes a pen out of his pocket and, after one more quick look-around, leans over and signs the poster, making the name as clear as possible. He adds a little heart and Yuuri laughs harder, a hand clamping over his mouth. “I can’t believe you just did that.”

“Now let’s get out of here,” Victor urges, and they run out of the store.

They walk around a little longer, not going anywhere in particular. It has gotten colder out and Victor is glad they’re both wearing long sleeves. “I’m having a really good time,” Yuuri tells him, and Victor’s breath catches in his throat and he walks a little bit slower and moves a little bit closer and…

(He’s in love with Yuuri, isn’t he?)

He glances down at him and sees the younger man smiling at him. Victor smiles back. A stupidly large one. Stupid and ridiculous and probably in love. When had that happened?

“So am I,” Victor tells him, because it’s true, and because he really never wants to be apart from Yuuri again. “Do you want to get dinner? I know we already ate not too long ago, but…”

Yuuri shrugs. “I’m still hungry.”

“So am I,” Victor says again. “Let’s find somewhere good.”

Their arms are still bumping against each other.

At some point, their fingers touch. Yuuri doesn’t move his hand away, so Victor laces their fingers. It feels like the natural thing to do.
They don’t talk about it. Victor can’t breathe. Doesn’t remember how to function. Forgets that they’re looking for a dinner location.

(Because Katsuki Yuuri is holding his hand. And his fingers are warm and Victor never wants this to stop, is willing to go to dinner fifty more times if it means this night never ends. Yuuri is holding his hand. Victor hadn’t mentally prepared for this moment. Isn’t sure what to do, what to say.)

(Yuuri is holding his hand.)

There’s a spot down the block with a crowd outside it. A long line of people with a stereotypical red velvet rope. “Let’s go there,” Victor suggests.

“Um, see that line?” Yuuri reminds him, laughing. “I mean, I’m willing to wait if you are, but we could probably find somewhere without a line.”

“If there’s a line, that means the food is good. Besides, we don’t have to wait.”

Yuuri frowns. “What do you mean?”

They approach the restaurant, and the line is ridiculously long. It’s not too fancy, surprisingly, but it does have white tablecloths and a beautiful interior. The lights are dim and waiters and waitresses are rushing around in every direction. Victor enters the doors and approaches the hostess, who smiles brightly at them, albeit a bit pitiful. He realizes with annoyance that, at some point, Yuuri had let go of his hand. Probably so that they could enter the restaurant doors.

“Hi, do you two have a reservation?” the hostess asks.

Victor shakes his head. “No, but we’d like a table for two, please.”

“Sorry, you’ll need a reservation, or you can go wait in line.”

Yuuri shrugs. “Okay, no problem, we might just go somewhere else. Come on, Victor.”

Then the woman freezes. “Did you just call him Victor? Are you…?”

Victor smiles. “Yes, I am.”

Yuuri glances between them, jaw dropping.

“Oh, you can have a table, sir,” the woman hurries to say, grabbing some menus. “There’s a table being cleared right now, you can follow me.”

Victor watches Yuuri’s features light up with amazement as they follow the hostess to a table. Victor reaches up and takes off his hat, placing it on the seat beside him. They even got a table with a booth, he notes proudly.

They’re given menus and then the hostess hurries away, getting in an excited conversation with the nearest waiter.

“I can’t believe that just happened,” Yuuri says. “The people outside probably hate us.”

“So?” Victor responds, glancing around the room. It’s a nice place. He examines the food on the table closest to them, and it looks stunning. He’d wanted to take Yuuri someplace nice, and this would do just fine.

Yuuri sighs, leaning back against the booth. “Victor, I feel bad.”
“Don’t! They’ll only have to wait, like, an extra two minutes. Besides, I didn’t even say anything. Not my fault I’m so stunningly attractive.”

He laughs. Success, Victor thinks. “I guess you’re right.”

They stare at each other.

Yuuri fumbles. “Not that you’re stunningly attractive! Well, not that you’re not. I’m just… I don’t… I meant you’re right about it not being your fault. Because you didn’t say anything. To the hostess. Just now.”

“Oh, so I’m not attractive,” Victor drawls, trying to make his voice sound as genuinely distraught as possible.

Yuuri gapes. “I didn’t say that. I didn’t mean that. You’re just, I mean, I’m not…”

“It’s okay, Yuuri. You don’t have to say it. I know you think I’m hideous. That’s fine.”

“I never said that.”

“I bet you think that I’m an awful person, too.”

“Victor,” Yuuri whines, horrified.

“Okay, okay, I’ll stop,” Victor promises.

“Thank you.”

~

The waitress comes to take their drink orders, looking nervous. “I love your movies, by the way,” she blurts before leaving.

Victor raises an eyebrow, turning back to Yuuri.

“She looked like she was going to pass out,” Yuuri says quietly.

“That happens a lot.”

Yuuri laughs, shaking his head. “You’re so…”

Surreal. Attractive. Funny. Kind. Attractive. Oh, one of those adjectives had been thrown in there twice, hadn’t it? Yuuri backtracks. He was just… everything. All at once. So complex, so intricate. There were so many sides to the usually two-dimensional Victor Nikiforov that was seen on screens.

Victor leans forward, meeting Yuuri’s eyes. They’re sparkling with amusement. “I’m so what?” he interrogates.

“I don’t know. Not what I expected.”

“And what did you expect?” Victor asks.

Yuuri’s phone goes off and he leans over to check it. “Oh, it’s Phichit.”

“What does he have to say?”

Are you on your date with Victor?
Yuuri swallows, glancing back up at Victor. “Nothing, just asking what I’m up to.” He picks up the phone and replies. **Yes, we’re at dinner.** He hits send, then fumbles to correct it. **I mean, it’s not a date, but we are at dinner.**

**Caught you.** Phichit answers. **Be safe. Condoms and such.**

Yuuri stares at the phone in disbelief. Had Phichit really just…?

“Sorry,” Yuuri apologizes to Victor suddenly, shoving his phone deep into his pocket where it can, hopefully, never be seen by the man sitting across from him.

“Don’t be,” Victor answers, sipping his water. “How long have you and Phichit known each other?”

“I met him when I first moved to Detroit,” he answers. “I didn’t really know anybody, but we started rooming together.”

Victor looks interested, eyebrows drawing together. “And why did you move in the first place?”

“I thought it’d be good to be with other competitive skaters,” Yuuri explains. “There weren’t that many with me in Japan. Plus, I got coached by Celestino in Detroit, which is good. He’s a good coach.”

“Do you travel a lot for skating?”

Yuuri remembers that Victor still doesn’t know all that much about the sport. “Yeah, different competitions and such. The last Grand Prix was in Barcelona.”

“And you placed second?”

It’s a sore spot. He nods regretfully.

“That’s impressive,” Victor notes. “So I’m having dinner with the second best figure skater in the world.”

“If Yakov had hired JJ, you could be having dinner with the best figure skater in the world,” Yuuri points out.

“Ah, ah, you didn’t let me finish. I’m having dinner with the second best figure skater in the world and one of the most interesting people I’ve ever met. JJ doesn’t have that on you.”

Yuuri feels his cheeks heating, shifts in his seat. “I’m really not that interesting.”

“I disagree.”

“You’re interesting,” Yuuri tells him, because it’s true, because there’s so many things about Victor he doesn’t know and he wants to learn all of it, wants to know every nuance of his personality, of his life.

Victor shrugs. “Not particularly. I’m no award-winning figure skater.”

“No, you’re just an award-winning movie actor. Whose movies make tons of money in the box office. Like, ridiculous amounts of money.”

“Touché. But you have gold medals.”

“But you also have gold medals.”
Victor leans back in his seat. “It would appear we’ve tied, then.”

The waitress comes back and take their orders.

Yuuri insists on paying, but Victor doesn’t let him. Doesn’t even take the idea into consideration. When they leave the restaurant, there’s still a line, and people are staring at them. Some are looking at Victor in disbelief, and others simply look like they want to kill them for cutting the line in the first place.

Victor starts to put his hat back on, and Yuuri gets up on his tippy toes to help him fix his hair. Victor watches him as he focuses on his task, biting his lower lip and sweeping his bangs underneath the snapback to get it perfect. “You should do my hair on the movie set,” Victor jokes.

Yuuri laughs, work perfected, and stands back to admire it. “That would go horribly. I bet you have a whole team of people.”

“More than Mila.”

“Really?” He tries to imagine Victor sitting in a chair, surrounded by staff working on his hair, his makeup, all so that he can be filmed kissing Mila in the middle of a corn field or something. It’s a little ridiculous to think about.

Victor nods. “Yurio is the worst, though. He hates the makeup. I remember one time, they wanted to do eyeliner on him for one scene, because the lighting was weird, and… Well, I thought the roof was going to blow.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah.”

They make it back to the car and Yuuri stands outside the passenger’s door for a moment too long, lingering awkwardly. He wants to do basically anything but go back to the lonely hotel room. It’s nice, sure, but there’s not much to do there. And besides, all he really wants to do is spend more time with Victor.

But it’s late, and Victor probably wants to go home, and he doesn’t want to push his luck.

“Thanks for showing me around,” Yuuri tells him, breaking the companionable silence. The traffic isn’t bad tonight, the ride is smooth, and Yuuri is content to look out on the beautiful lights surrounding the city.

“No problem. I hope you got a taste of the Californian culture.”

“I think I did. It’s very different from Detroit, and from Haesetsu.”

“Haesetsu?” Victor inquires.

Yuuri leans his head against the window. “That’s where I lived in Japan. It’s sort of small.”

“I’d like to see it, one day.”

Yuuri turns, stares at him. “Yeah?” He tries to imagine Victor coming with him to Japan, imagines him trying the hot springs and eating more katsudon and seeing Ice Castle and them skating there together. It’s almost too much to handle, even in a fantasy. But surely Victor was just talking.

“Yeah,” Victor confirms. “I bet it’s beautiful.”
“It’s nice, I suppose. But like I said, it’s small. Not too much to do there.”

Victor glances over at him, and Yuuri meets his eyes. “If you came from there, then I’m sure it’s lovely.”

Yuuri loves Victor’s eyes. They’re blue, light blue. He’d always wondered, when watching movies and interviews, if it was the lighting that made them look so incredible. But now, sitting in the dim car with the night sky looming above them, they’re brighter than the streetlights, brighter than the stars.

And his hair is pretty as ever, sticking out from underneath the hat that he’s still wearing. Unruly tufts falling in front of his eyes despite Yuuri’s hard work to keep them hidden away. Yuuri realizes that Victor is still looking at him, and he tries to process the actor’s words, tries to process what’s currently happening.

(But instead he processes the road.)

“Victor! Red light!”

Victor’s head swirls and he slams on the breaks, stopping just in time for the light. Yuuri’s hand presses against his heart, taking in a deep breath. Victor’s face is flushed, expression apologetic. “Sorry about that.”

Yuuri laughs, can’t help it. “That’s okay.”

“Imagine that headline. Victor Nikiforov died looking at Japanese skater Katsuki Yuuri instead of the road.”

“What a way to die,” Yuuri muses, heart rate finally starting to slow down.

Victor sighs as they finally pull up to the hotel, running a hand through his hair. “Well, this is it.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow at the rink?”

“Yeah.”

Yuuri doesn’t leave the car.

Victor doesn’t move.

“I guess… I guess I’d better go.”

Victor blinks. “Right. And I should… I mean, my dog is home alone.”

“You should probably go feed him. Or walk him.”

“Right.”

Yuuri wishes he knew what to say. He opens the car door and steps out, licking his lips. A car honks at them, waiting for Victor to move out of the tiny strip of road in front of the hotel. Victor jumps, startled, and Yuuri laughs, shutting the door and waving as the car pulls away.

Tomorrow he has a session with Victor, Mila, and Yurio. But tonight he just stares at the ceiling and smiles, unable to stop. Because he’d held hands with Victor Nikiforov. And had dinner with Victor Nikiforov. And almost made Victor Nikiforov die.
(Well, that last part wasn’t exactly a good thing. So why was it making him smile so much?)

~

There’s twenty-three text messages from Phichit when he wakes up.

**Call me.**

**Yuuri, call me.**

**Yuuri, you need to call me.**

**Oh my god.**

Yuuri frowns and dials his friend’s number immediately. Was Phichit okay? Had something happened? He listens to the ringing. It only plays once, then there’s a voice on the end of the line.

“Yuuri! I’ve been trying to get in contact with you for ages!”

“Is everything alright?”

“No—yes! I don’t know! Look at the news!”

Yuuri lazily reaches for his glasses on the nightstand and slips them onto his face, pulling up the news on his phone. “What? I don’t see anything.”

“Keep looking. You’ll find it.”

“Oh.”

*Victor Nikiforov spotted holding hands with Japanese figure skater Katsuki Yuuri.*
Chapter Summary

Victor and Yuuri deal with the fact that photos of them have flooded the news, and Yuuri begins to choreograph the pair skate.

Chapter Notes

This fic has over three hundred comments. What. The. Heck. I cannot believe it. When I first started writing out this concept I remember thinking "literally nobody is going to read this lol w/e" but omg every comment has made me so happy?? I am #blessed thank you so much to everybody who has left kudos / left a comment I cannot say that enough!!

I hope you all enjoy & please leave a comment to let me know what you think <3

ALSO! Tumblr user dead-eyes-dead-eyes did some adorableee art based off of the last chapter that you should absolutely check out
And here's Victor and Yuuri's v cute selfie at Victor's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame made by the incredible meikoshinozaki

Victor can’t sleep on Sunday night.

He turns off his phone, but that doesn’t help.

All he can think about are the events of that afternoon, the feeling of Yuuri’s hand in his, the look in his eyes as he’d stared out the car window. There was something about experiencing the beauty of Los Angeles through someone else’s eyes—Victor had grown jaded to it. But now that he had Yuuri to explore it with in a whole new light, it felt as though Victor had just moved here for the second time. It leaves him feeling warm, he burrows farther into the covers and clutches Makkachin against his chest.

He has a skating session with Yuuri tomorrow. Alone. Though he wishes it were right now. Because although skating is exhausting, he’d skate for the rest of his life if it meant spending time with Yuuri. He’d vandalize one of his own Oscars in order to spend more time with Yuuri.

Eventually, somehow, he falls asleep.

~

In the morning, he dresses in black track pants and a grey t-shirt. He parts his hair several times to make sure it’s perfect. Checks himself out in the mirror before leaving the bathroom. (Just making sure.)

There are about ten texts on his phone from Yakov. He doesn’t answer them, doesn’t bother to even
read the message previews. Surely they can wait until after he has skated with Yuuri. So he makes some coffee and sits down at the kitchen table, reading yesterday’s newspaper and skimming the articles, not quite delving into any stories.

Then he leaves for the rink.

(The moment he gets there, something is wrong.)

(Very wrong.)

Yuuri is there. But he’s not skating like he normally is when Victor shows up. Instead he’s just standing inside the entrance, staring at the door as though he had been waiting for him. And he’s pale. Paler than usual. Drained.

“Is everything alright?”

Yuuri blinks. “What?”

“You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

He bites his lower lip. Hard. “You don’t… You haven’t…?”

Victor sets his duffel bag down on the ground and approaches him, placing a hand on his shoulder. “Yuuri, what’s wrong? Are you sick?” He presses his other hand to Yuuri’s forehead. It’s cold. “You feel cold. Is that just the rink, or…”

“Have you checked your phone?”

“What? I must’ve… Oh, well, I guess not since yesterday. Did you text me?” Victor stares, realization sweeping over his features. “Oh, you texted me, didn’t you? Yuuri, I’m so sorry, I wasn’t thinking, I just…”

Victor pulls out his phone and moves to the text messages. No messages from Yuuri. He glances up at the skater, confused.

Yuuri is still staring at him, only looking more horrified, now, his posture stiff. “No other text messages?”

“Well, Yakov said something, let me—oh.”

“Yeah.”

Victor stares at the headlines Yakov had been sending him. Victor Nikiforov spotted holding hands with Japanese figure skater Katsuki Yuuri. There’s a photo of them walking Sunset Boulevard together, Yuuri pointing their joined hands at a sight in the distance while Victor’s eyes are focused entirely on the man beside him.

Right.

In retrospect, it might not have been the best idea to hold hands with Yuuri wearing nothing but a hat in the middle of Los Angeles. On the other hand, he figures it is one of the best decisions he has ever made.

(It’s funny how those two things tie together, isn’t it?)

“Are you mad?” Yuuri asks quietly, and he looks different, shoulders drawn together as though he’s
trying to appear as small as possible. He’s wringing his fingers together, his teeth still nibbling on his lower lip, the motions incessant, restless.

“Why would I be mad?”

Yuuri shrugs. “Because… Because we’re in the news. That’s me, in the news, with you. All over the news, actually. Phichit saw it this morning.”

“So?”

“So I… We… You don’t… You don’t care?”

Victor doesn’t understand what Yuuri is thinking. His eyes are huge, searching Victor’s with a sort of desperation that Victor wants to stamp out like a flame. “Do you care?”

“I mean, no,” Yuuri says honestly. “It doesn’t really matter to me, but I’m not the celebrity here.”

“That makes it a bigger deal for you, though. It means the press will be paying more attention to you. They already paid attention to me.”

“I don’t mind.”

Victor smiles, squeezing Yuuri’s shoulder. “Then I don’t mind. Besides, we were just holding hands.”

“Right!” Yuuri agrees quickly. “Just holding hands.”

“It’s not like we were… Yeah. It really isn’t a big deal.”

“Of course.”

“Right.”

There’s an awkward silence.

Victor laughs, first, then Yuuri laughs too, and ducks his head, cheeks tinting pink. “I was worried you’d be upset. I thought maybe your image would be ruined or something.”

“Oh, definitely. You’ve completely tainted my oh-so-well-developed image, Yuuri. What will I ever do? Will my reputation ever recover?”

“Shut up,” Yuuri jokes quietly as he nudges Victor on the shoulder, looking happier now, relieved.

Victor sits down and starts to untie his sneakers.

“Oh, Sara bought you fitted skates,” the skater tells him, pulling them out of his bag. He hands the new shoes to Victor, who accepts them carefully, admiring them.

“The blades are golden,” he points out, running his thumb across the edge.

“Yakov says they’re the same ones you’ll be wearing in the movie, so he thinks you should practice in them. Sara got some for everybody else, too.”

The gold blades contrast against the black material. Victor tries them on, and they fit perfectly. He ties them up, but Yuuri shakes his head, kneeling in front of him. “You’re going to want to tie these tighter, especially since they’re new to you,” Yuuri explains, redoing the laces. Victor pulls his hands
away and lets the younger man do the work. “Too tight?”

“No, they’re fine,” Victor answers, swallowing. There’s something about having Yuuri so close to him… And something about being alone in the rink with him for the first time…

“Should we get started?”

“Mmm.”

Yuuri helps him start a few more basic jumps, but mainly they work on perfecting—or sharpening, at least—his basics. The posture. The arm motions. Victor had began with the raw jumps, but it was time to start making them look pretty. Every time Yuuri readjusts his movements, Victor’s breath catches a little, and it’s ridiculous, really, because Yuuri is just trying to help him, but…

“Maybe you should just play my character in the movie,” Victor muses when the session is over, taking off his new skates. They had fit well. “That’d save a lot of time and effort.”

Yuuri laughs. “But nobody would watch it.”

“I’d watch it.”

“You’d watch a—”

Victor’s phone goes off. He answers it, leaning back against the lockers behind him, Yuuri sitting down beside him to remove his own skates. “Hello?”

“Victor, have you seen the news?” Yurio asks, and he sounds… Concerned?

(Impossible.)

“Yeah, Yuuri showed me,” Victor answers, then glances over at Yuuri and winks at him. He blushes immediately. Success.

Yurio sounds shocked. “And you… You two aren’t going to do anything about it?”

“What would we do? Go back in time? I was in a movie like that, once, but that was just science fiction.”

“I don’t know. But everybody thinks you’re dating now. Is that true?”

He finds himself staring at Yuuri, now, who is looking at his own phone, enthralled by something on Instagram. “We’re… No. That was just… Platonic.” The skater looks up at that, but then his eyes are gone again. Victor wishes he could read his mind.

Because he hates using the ‘p’ word. But, really, had it been anything more?

(He knows he wants it to be more. But he’s not going to jump to the conclusion that Yuuri wants it to be more, too.)

“Platonic,” Yurio repeats.

“Yes.”

“Platonic?”
“Mhmm.”

Yurio groans into the phone. “You’re impossible. Well, if you don’t care, and if Katsuki doesn’t care, then it’s whatever I guess. Yakov wants to talk to you, though. He gave up on trying to contact you and contacted me instead.”

“I haven’t read his texts yet, but there are many,” Victor notes with a sigh. “Bye, Yurio.”

“Bye. Good luck.”

(Had Yurio just wished him good luck? He decides not to comment on it.)

“Thanks.”

He opens Yakov’s texts, then, and winces at the extensive use of caps lock. “I should probably call Yakov before he finds me and murders me,” he tells Yuuri.

Yuuri nods silently, still looking at his phone.

“Listen, Yakov, I know that you’re probably mad—”

“Victor, what the hell were you thinking?”

His voice is so loud that Victor knows Yuuri can hear it through the phone, so he stands up and walks away, pressing it closer to his ear. “Listen, I figured you’d be mad, but—”

“I’m not mad.”

Victor pauses. “What?”

“It’s genius.”

“I… You’re… What?”

Yakov laughs, it’s hearty, low. “Everybody is asking me why one of my actors is hanging out with a world famous figure skater. The anticipation for this movie is going to be ginormous. I can already see the box office results. Right now, I want you to dodge any questions. Keep the relationship mysterious.”

Victor gapes. “You… You’re not mad at me?”

“I was mad at first. You’re an idiot for going out in public and holding hands with him only wearing a hat. But then I saw the headlines, the news, the comments. Everybody is on edge, wants to know what’s going to happen, wants to know what Victor Nikiforov is up to.”

“Oh. Right. So you want me to spend more time with Yuuri, or…?”

“No. Not at all. I want you to keep your head down. Keep the mystery up, make them work for it. Have you got that?”

“Yes, I’ve got it.”

Yakov hangs up without saying goodbye. Victor sighs and shoves his phone into his pocket, running a hand through his hair. “Victor?” a voice asks from behind him.

He spins around on his heels. Yuuri has that look again from before—scared, small. Victor comes to
sit down beside him. “Yakov isn’t mad.”

“Oh?”

“He thinks that this will build anticipation for the movie, called me a genius. I’m surprised he didn’t rip my head off.”

Yuuri laughs at that, pulling his legs up onto the bench so that he’s sitting cross-legged. “I still can’t believe we’re in the tabloids together. That’s so odd.”

“Isn’t it?” Victor agrees, because he can’t say he has ever ended up in the tabloids with somebody helping him prepare for a movie role before. (Not that Yuuri is just another in a long line. He’s anything but, really.) “Anyway, Yakov just told me to stay out of the public eye. Keep low. You’ll do the same?”

Yuuri nods. “Sure.”

Victor stands up and grabs his duffel bag, watching as Yuuri swings his backpack over his shoulder. They leave the rink and get into Victor’s car, and Victor glances around the parking lot. It looks as though there’s more cars than usual, which is odd considering it’s normally just them and Yuuko. He ignores the fact and turns his attention back to Yuuri. “Want to grab dinner someplace?”

“Didn’t you say about ten seconds ago that Yakov wanted you to stay out of the public eye?”

“Has anyone ever told you that you’re very intelligent, Yuuri?”

Yuuri laughs, shaking his head. “We could… Order a pizza? Or something? And I could answer the door?”

“At the hotel or my house?”

“Either way,” he answers, shrugging. “That is… If you want to.”

“The hotel might be better, my house is a mess,” Victor admits.

They drive to the hotel, making small talk throughout the entire trip. It isn’t busy outside of the building, but Victor keeps the hood of a white jacket he’d found in his car up anyway, successfully covering his hair and most of his face, albeit looking a bit suspicious. Yuuri guides them inside, smiling at the grumpy receptionist.

“I’ve never seen her smile,” he whispers to Victor when they’re approaching the elevator.

“Never?”

“Not once.”

Victor smiles, taking off his hood when they’re alone. “I bet I could make her smile.”

“No way,” Yuuri challenges. “How are you supposed to do that if you can’t even show your face in the lobby?”

“I’ll do it when nobody’s around,” he promises.

“Want to bet?”

Victor rocks back on his heels. “Ten dollars.”
“Deal.”
~
There’s something weird about seeing Victor in Yuuri’s hotel room.
He had grown used to the place being lonely and boring, though it was beautiful and luxurious. But now there’s somebody reclining on the couch, flipping through television channels so quickly that Yuuri isn’t sure he knows what he’s skipping. Yuuri orders the pizza—using Victor’s credit card, at his insistence—and sits down on a chair facing the television.

“Here, I can make room,” Victor offers, moving his legs so that there’s a space on the couch.

Yuuri smiles and sits beside him, looking at the screen. It’s displaying static, on a channel beyond the end of the list. “Did the television do something to offend you?”

“Nothing good on,” Victor complains.

“That’s a dilemma,” he notes with amusement, watching Victor scroll backwards through the channels, now.

Then, he turns off the television and sets the remote down on the coffee table, turning to Yuuri and laying down on the arm of the couch. “I guess we’ll just have to talk.”

Yuuri copies his pose, their feet inches away from touching. “What about?”

“I don’t know. What’s your favorite color?”

“Blue,” Yuuri answers. “Yours?”

“You do wear a lot of blue,” Victor muses. “I don’t really have one. Different shades of every color.”

Yuuri smiles at him. “Favorite animal?”

“Dogs.”

“Same here.”

“Do you have a dog?” Victor asks.

That’s a sore spot. He tries not to let it show. “Um, I did. He died.”

Victor instantly looks apologetic, eyebrows drawing together in concern. “Oh, Yuuri, I’m so sorry.”

“That’s okay, it was a long time ago.” Really, though, the pain is still fresh. He clears his throat, intending to change the subject.

(Not to mention the fact that he had sort of named his dog, Vicchan, after Victor. But it was a good name, so who could blame him?)

The doorbell rings, and Victor jumps up to answer it, but Yuuri stills him with a hand on his arm. Victor understands after a moment and nods, leaning back. Yuuri can feel the other man’s gaze on him as he walks towards the door.

He hands the pizza delivery man a tip and sets the pizzas down on the kitchen counter. Victor is
beside him in an instant, staring at the food. “Do you have plates in here?”

Yuuri grabs plates for both of them and takes a slice of cheese—Victor goes for pepperoni. “I feel like two pizzas are too much for just the two of us.”

“One for each of us!” Victor says. “It’s the perfect amount. If you don’t want the leftovers, we can bring them to the rink tomorrow and let Yurio have some. He loves pepperoni.”

Then, Victor has his plate in his hands and is walking around the suite, exploring it. “This place is nice.”

“Haven’t you been in here before? You know, when you left the card?”

He shakes his head. “No, I gave that to Sara.” Victor makes his way to the bedroom and glances around appreciatively. “I like the view.”

There’s a large window on the far wall and Yuuri looks outside, nodding. “Yeah, Sara really outdid herself with this suite. It’s lovely.”

“What are these?” Victor asks, gesturing towards the desk. He sits down at the chair and examines the stacks of paper packets. “Oh, the script. And the routines. Have you read the whole script?”

“Most of it, yeah.”

(Victor looks like he’s going to say something else, but then he pushes the script to the side. Yuuri only dwells on the expression for an instant, not sure what it means.)

“Ooh, my name,” he says instead, opening one of the routine packets. “I haven’t even seen these yet. Yakov is hiding things from me.”

Yuuri takes another bite of the pizza—it’s way better than any pizza in Detroit—and sits down cross-legged on the bed, facing Victor.

Victor sets down that packet and picks up another. “This one is thick. Oh, the pair skate. Interesting.” He starts going through each page of it, examining the details about music and choreography and costumes. “I have to lift her up. Hmm.”

Yuuri smiles. “That’s usually how pair skates work.”

“Oh, is it? I suppose that makes sense. Well, I’ve carried Mila in movies before, I suppose, but on ice? That’ll be more difficult.”

“We’ll figure it out. I’ll help.”

Victor turns around in the chair to face him, folding his arms across his chest, his pizza slice forgotten on the desk. “I could lift you up to practice.”

“Only if I get all of the pads that you usually wear. More, actually. And a helmet. The kind that NASCAR drivers wear.”

The actor pouts and grabs his plate, taking another bite.

A silence settles between them as Victor turns back to look at the routines once again. Yuuri shifts on the bed, his plate now empty. “Why do you always do romantic movies?”

Victor doesn’t turn around. He sounds dejected. “Not much of a choice.”
“And you don’t like them?”

“I do,” he answers, shrugging. “But I would like a bit more variety. They’re all the same. Man meets woman, they have problems at first, but then they fall in love. Or some variety of that. This movie is the same, the man and the woman just happen to be on ice.”

“You said you wanted it to be more,” Yuuri reminds him, thinking back to the motel, to Phichit standing nearby as Victor had leaned in close…

You are just what we need.

He remembers Victor’s thumb touching his lip. Yuuri reaches up his hand and touches it, trying to recollect the sensation. The moment Victor’s chair turns again, he jerks his hand away. “I do. And I think it can be more. If the movie reflects more on the routines than the romance, it’d be more interesting, in my opinion. But, of course, the movie won’t sell without the romance.”

“You could sell a movie without romance,” Yuuri points out. “People would go see you in anything. You could read from a phone book for two and a half hours.”

Victor laughs. “Yakov disagrees. Romance sells. Stay Close to Me was the cheesiest romantic movie I’ve ever been in, and also the most successful.”

That was Yuuri’s favorite movie. And also one of the top ten highest grossing movies of all time.

(He’s a little offended.)

“I didn’t think it was cheesy,” Yuuri protests, glancing down at his hands in his lap. “I remember seeing that one.”

“It was nice, I suppose,” Victor muses. “What did you like about it?”

That movie had been flawless, captivating from the first line to the end credits. The acting was incredible, from Victor, Mila, and the other costars, and the cinematography had been incredible. Admittedly, yes, there were some slightly stereotypical lines, but when Victor delivered them, they felt real, passionate. The most famous scene was a kiss in a dark office room, New York a silhouette behind them, and it still gives Yuuri butterflies to watch.

Yuuri could write a ten page essay about how good that movie was. Instead, though, he just stands up and walks towards the kitchen to grab another slice of pizza. “I don’t know. It was an interesting plot.”

“Was the male lead attractive?”

He’s glad he’s not in the same room as Victor for that question, because he feels himself smiling and his cheeks flushing. Yuuri puts another slice on his plate and leans against the kitchen counter, raising his voice so that Victor can hear him from the other room. “He was alright. Some random guy. Never even heard of him.”

“Hmm. He might be offended if he heard you say that.”

“Good thing he didn’t.”

“Good thing,” Victor agrees.

Yuuri enters the bedroom again and leans against the doorway, seeing Victor turned in the desk
chair, looking at him. “Want to watch something?” the skater suggests.

“There was nothing good on television,” Victor reminds him.

“The hotel has movies On Demand. Did you check those?”

Victor stands up and follows Yuuri back to the couch. Yuuri takes the remote this time, pulling up the list of movies available to watch. Some cost money, others are free. “Ooh, look what we’ve got,” Yuuri teases. He clicks on *The Lilac Fairy*, which has Victor’s face on the cover, and Victor groans.

“Nope. Not that.”

“What, you don’t like to watch your own movies? I would think you’d love to.”

Victor rolls his eyes—though he’s smiling a bit, Yuuri can tell. “I’m not *that* egotistical. I’m hurt that you’d think that, Yuuri. Why don’t we pull up YouTube and watch some of your routines?”

“No way.” He keeps flipping and finds a few more of Victor’s movies, joking about the covers and making Victor bury his head in a pillow with embarrassment. Eventually, though, they settle on a random, antiquated drama. Yuuri gets up and grabs a blanket from the bed, laying it over his own lap—and then over both of their laps, as per Victor’s request.

They settle into the couch cushions, and Yuuri sits cross-legged while Victor props his feet up on the coffee table in front of them. The movie is black and white with obnoxiously large subtitles that, apparently, can’t be turned off, but Yuuri gets invested in the plot nevertheless.

Underneath the blanket, Victor’s fingers brush against his, and Yuuri’s heart stops in his chest. His attention that had previously been dedicated to the movie is immediately repositioned onto Victor—the proximity of him, the feeling of his fingers against Yuuri’s own. After a moment, he risks a glance, and Victor glances back at him, offering a small smile.

(It melts Yuuri’s heart. Makes his knees weak.)

Yuuri takes his hand in his own. Victor smiles bigger, then, and turns his attention back to the movie. Their fingers fit perfectly, as though they were made for one another, and Yuuri leans a bit closer to him, tugging the blanket higher on his torso with his free hand. He doesn’t pay attention to the rest of the movie. Can’t focus on the plot, the actors, can only think about the man beside him.

But surely Victor was just being friendly.

(Right?)

(He had to be, certainly?)

(Because this was Victor.)

(Victor Nikiforov.)

(He has been starting to forget that, recently. Starting to forget the posters that had lined his bedroom walls, the late nights with him forcing Phichit to watch Nikiforov movie after Nikiforov movie. When he’d first met Victor, the stardom had been all Yuuri could see, but now he’s starting to see something else.)

(Someone else.)

By the time the credits are rolling, their shoulders are touching. Victor had brought his legs off of the
table at some point, and their knees are poking each other, their hands still joined. Yuuri swallows thickly, neither of them moving to grab the remote. “I should… I forgot to put the pizza away.”

Victor swallows, too, and nods. “Right. That’s important.”

Yuuri stands up and places the pizza boxes in the fridge, ignoring the slight trembling of his own fingers, wishing he had better self-control. “That was a good movie,” he says, though he would be hard-pressed to remember the name of the film at this point.

“I liked it,” Victor answers. “I thought the plot was a bit unrealistic, though.”

“How come?”

“Well, they had no reason to fall in love with each other. It felt more like a plot device than a real relationship. No build-up, no chemistry.”

Yuuri isn’t sure how to respond, partially because he hadn’t payed attention to the majority of the movie, and partially because Victor is talking to him about relationships. “That’s true,” he answers lamely.

“Wow, it’s almost dinner time,” Victor notes. “I really should get back to Makkachin, he needs to be let out.”

He tries to hide his disappointment. “Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“See you tomorrow.” Victor stands up to leave, then pauses. “Yuuri, what do you do in here all day?”

Yuuri pauses, eyebrows shooting up. “What do you mean?”

“In the hotel. For twenty hours a day, when you’re not at the rink.”

He shrugs. “I just… Hang out, I guess.”

Victor licks his lips, appears to be contemplating something. The sight is incredibly distracting. Yuuri is standing by the kitchen counter, and realizes how out of place he must look just standing there, so he leans against the counter, placing a palm down on it.

(Not casual at all. But at least he tries.)

“Would you like me to come over more often?” Victor asks.

Oh.

“Well… I mean, if you wanted to.”

“What do you want?”

Yuuri wants **him**. Wants him to stay here, wants to talk to him, wants to keep eating pizza and watching movies and holding hands and smiling at him. Wants everything relating to Victor. “That… That would be nice.”

“Yeah?” Victor asks, a little breathlessly, and a grin spreads across his face, crinkles forming beside his eyes.

“Yeah,” Yuuri confirms, running a hand through his hair. “I mean, when you can. Or— I mean,
when you want. Like, maybe after practice again sometime? Or… Or even before?”

Victor nods quickly. “Sure, right. Maybe… Tomorrow before practice? I have to pick up Yurio, but I could either bring him here, too, or we could leave early to pick him up together…”

“Either way. Either way would be fine.”

“Okay.”

They stand there, looking at each other for a moment, and Yuuri starts laughing. Victor starts laughing too. To any outsider, they’d probably look insane, cracking up over nothing. “We really need to stop doing that,” Yuuri notes.

“It does seem to happen a lot. Anyway, I’ll see you tomorrow, Yuuri. I’ll talk to Yurio and text you.”

Victor was going to text him.

(It’s such a casual statement, such an offhand remark.)

Yuuri feels butterflies fill his stomach, feels warmth spread all the way to his toes. “Okay. Sounds good.”

“Bye,” Victor says before leaving.

When Victor is gone, Yuuri sits back down on the couch and smiles manically, burrowing into the blanket and hugging a pillow to his chest. He’d held hands with Victor, not once, but twice. Twice. And Victor was going to start coming over to the hotel more often. It was surreal.

~

“Yurio? Would you like to come to Yuuri’s hotel suite tomorrow?”

“What?”

Victor holds the phone between his ear and shoulder as he feeds Makkachin, spooning food into a bowl. “I’m going to visit him before we skate. You could either come with us or we could go pick you up afterwards.”

Yurio sounds a bit confused. “So I have the choice between third-wheeling on your date or… Not?”

“Not a date,” Victor reminds him. “We’re just going to, well, I don’t know. We watched a movie today.”

“Watched a movie,” Yurio repeats with a layer of sarcasm. “I think I’ll pass, leave you two alone. That way you’ll be less touchy-feely at the rink, get it out of your systems.”

“No clue what you’re talking about, but suit yourself. See you tomorrow.”

“See you, Victor.”

~
At Yuuri’s hotel room, they just sit and talk for two hours. About nothing important, nothing significant, just talking. Victor can’t get enough of it.

“We should probably go,” Yuuri says at some point, yawning and grabbing his backpack from the corner of the kitchen. “We’re still picking up Yurio, right?”

“Mhmm. And he’ll know if we’re a minute late.”

They get into the car and make it to Yurio’s flat. The moment the blond actor sees Yuuri sitting in shotgun, he raises an eyebrow. “That’s usually my spot.” But Yurio sits in the back anyway.

“Sorry,” Yuuri answers. “I could move if you—”

“That’s fine.”

~

By the time they make it to the rink, there’s several people standing outside. Men and women with cameras hanging from their necks, others with notepads or microphones.

“Are those…?” Yurio starts, sounding surprised.

“Yes, they are,” Victor sighs, parking.

Yuuri frowns, turning around to look at Yurio, then turning to Victor. “What? Who are they?”

“Paparazzi,” Yurio groans. “How did they find our rink?”

“They must’ve seen Yuuri and I leave yesterday,” Victor complains, pinching the bridge of his nose, remembering the extra cars that had been there.

The parking lot is mostly empty, and the paparazzi are already staring at the car curiously. A few people have run to their own cars, as if ready to follow them. “What do we do?” Yuuri asks, shifting in his seat. “Should we go somewhere else?”

“I’ll text Yakov,” Yurio suggests.

They all wait a moment, Yuuri nervously toying with the straps of his backpack. Victor wants nothing more than to take his hand, but that was sort of what had gotten them into this scenario in the first place. A few reporters have already started walking across the large parking lot towards their car, cameras raised, and Victor keeps his head low, gesturing for Yuuri to do the same.

“Yakov wants us to go inside, but not talk to any paps.”

“Well, alright,” Victor says, rubbing the back of his neck. “He doesn’t care if they see us?” Yurio shakes his head, shrugging.

The lights of the camera flashes are bright. Obnoxious. Isn’t it already bright enough outside? Yuuri winces at one camera that is practically shoved in his face.

“Victor, why were you holding hands with Katsuki Yuuri last Sunday?”

“Yuri, is this for an upcoming production or is it purely recreational?”

“Yuuri, what are you doing in California? What is the status of your relationship with Victor Nikiforov?”
“Victor, will you give a statement?”

Another, another, another, another.

They ignore them. Yuuri almost starts talking, but Victor gives him a meaningful look. When they enter the doors, Yuuri finds Yuuko to retrieve the door keys. Victor keeps the crowd at bay by shutting the doors, saying something about this being a private session, and the building being closed. Yurio aggressively swats out those who had already gotten inside and refuse to leave.

The doors are locked, and all three of them collapse on the benches inside, alone. “Are we going to have to deal with that every day now?” Yuuri asks.

“They’ll give up eventually,” Victor tells him.

“Let’s get started, then,” Yuuri sighs, unzipping his backpack and pulling out his skates.

~

“No, Victor, not like that!” Yuuri says, out of breath from laughing.

“What do you mean not like that?” Victor teases, skating closer to him. “What if I do it like this?” He grabs Yuuri by his sides and swings them around in a circle, causing Yuuri to yelp and grab onto Victor’s arms to remain balanced.

Yuuri’s cheeks are flushed as he looks up at Victor through dark eyelashes, their bodies only inches apart. “Okay, now you’re just messing around.”

“Maybe,” Victor agrees, loving the feeling of Yuuri leaning against him. Victor admires the height difference between them, admires the way that he could easily wrap Yuuri up in his arms and rest his chin on top of his head. It’s perfect.

“You get distracted easily,” Yuuri scolds.

“That’s my teacher’s fault for being distracting.”

“I’m going to barf,” Yurio calls from far away. “Remember when you were actually teaching us to skate, Katsuki?”

Victor pouts at Yurio. “He is teaching me.”

“No, you two are busy flirting. Come teach me how to do a flip jump.”

Yuuri lets go of Victor’s shoulders and smiles at him one last time before skating away to Yurio. Victor leans against the half-wall of the rink, watching him with a heavy sigh. As much as he loves Yurio, and knows that Yurio loves him deep down (however deep that adoration may be), he wishes he had this session alone with Yuuri. Wishes he had every session alone with Yuuri. Really, he just wishes he had every minute of his life alone with Yuuri.

“Victor, work on your jumps!” Yuuri calls over to him.

Victor snaps out of his trance. “Yes, sir.”

(He doesn’t miss the way that Yuuri’s cheeks flush, the way that he ducks his head a little before Yurio whacks him on the shoulder.)
The week goes by quickly.

Yuuri has sessions with every actor. They’ve all gotten basic jumps down, especially those who had figure skated in the past. Victor comes over to hang out almost on a daily basis, except for when he has interviews or meetings.

They’ve settled into a basic routine—they’ll order food, or Victor will bring food, or Yuuri will cook, occasionally, and watch a movie or just talk. Yuuri has never been happier. He FaceTimes Phichit regularly, and Phichit endlessly asks for details about Victor while also keeping Yuuri up to date on the happenings in Detroit. He’ll be competing at the Cup of China in a week’s time, and after that he plans on visiting Yuuri before heading back to Detroit.

On the third week of training, Yuuri is planning to start with actual choreography. He’s still teaching more complex jumps, but he doesn’t expect any of them to get it perfect. After all, there’s only so much he can do.

Monday and Tuesday he has sessions alone with Christophe.

“I could come,” Victor suggests on the Sunday before the sessions, not meeting Yuuri’s eyes. “Just to observe. It might help me, too. To watch.”

Yuuri smiles at him, the idea tempting. “No offense, Victor, but you’re sort of…”

“Sort of what?” the actor asks, looking up, blue eyes now staring into brown.

He’s not sure how to phrase it.

Hopes Victor won’t be offended.

“Well, distracting.”

Victor blinks. “I’m distracting?”

“A bit,” Yuuri admits, trying to backtrack. “I mean, you could come, it’s just that sometimes I have a hard time focusing on anything whenever you’re around.”

They stare at each other.

(Yuuri realizes what he had just admitted a moment after Victor does.)

“That is not what I meant. No, no, I just meant… I meant, like, not like that. I didn’t mean… I just…”

“I know what you meant,” Victor explains understandingly.

Yuuri sighs in relief. “You do?”

“You meant that I’m so stunningly attractive that you can hardly focus on skating when I’m around. I understand.”

Yuuri groans, laying back against the arm of the couch. “Victor.”
“I get that a lot,” Victor sighs over-dramatically. “What if I toned it down? I could wear a really ugly shirt. Or get a bad haircut.”

“Stop.”

Victor is grinning and kicks Yuuri in the shin lightly, teasingly. “Fine, I won’t come to your sessions with Christophe. What can I say? I just want you all to myself.”

Yuuri laughs, taking the words into consideration. “You do?”

“Of course I do.”

“We have a private session on Wednesday. And then it’s you, me, and Mila Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. We’re supposed to start working on the pair skate.”

Victor hums. “So on Wednesday, I get to practice the choreography for the pair skate on you?”

“No, we’re doing overviews of all of your solos on Wednesday, getting the general feel of them. And then for the three days with Mila, I’m going to cover her in so much bubble wrap she can’t breathe.”

“Mila trusts me,” Victor complains. “We’ve known each other for ages. I wouldn’t drop her.”

Yuuri raises an eyebrow. “Have you ever lifted somebody on the ice before?”

“No, have you?”

“Oh, sure. Not competitively, but during practices.”

Victor hums. “Then maybe on Wednesday, you show me the choreography by practicing on me? Lift me up?”

“I don’t know if I could carry you,” Yuuri thinks, squinting his eyes playfully as though trying to consider Victor’s weight.

Victor crawls across the couch and lays dramatically in Yuuri’s arms. “Here, attempt number one.”

“Wow, so heavy,” Yuuri jokes. Victor laughs as Yuuri places an arm underneath his back, trying to lift him up. He succeeds, but only a bit.

“You’re stronger than I expected,” Victor compliments.

That’s when Yuuri realizes that Victor Nikiforov is, in fact, laying in his arms. A second ago, it had seemed funny, part of a joke. But now…

He’s laying in his arms. On Yuuri’s hotel room couch.

Right.

“Now I get to try,” Victor tells him, and they shift positions. Victor easily lifts him up, far higher than Yuuri had.

“Okay—I’ll admit, I’m impressed,” Yuuri says. “But you can put me down now.”

“I don’t know, this is sort of fun,” the actor muses, lifting him even higher in the air, one hand on his back and the other underneath his legs.
Yuuri struggles in his arms a bit and Victor laughs as he lowers Yuuri back on top of him. “I’m shorter than you, probably easier to pick up,” Yuuri points out.

“And I have incredibly muscular arms,” Victor informs him. “You have stronger legs though, I’m sure.”

(And it’s basically cuddling, isn’t it?)

Yuuri is beside him, but they’re pressed up against each other, one of Victor’s arms behind his shoulders as it rests on the arm of the couch. The couch is far, far too small for both of them in this position, and when Yuuri turns to look at him, Victor’s face is only a few inches away, lips tantalizingly close to Yuuri’s own.

He licks his lip unconsciously, and his breath catches when he sees Victor mimic the action, his pupils dilated slightly. “Yuuri…” he starts, but the second syllable trails off, as though he had quickly forgotten whatever it was he was going to say.

“Imagine if the paparazzi saw us now,” Yuuri replies, earning a chuckle from Victor, who grabs Yuuri’s hand in his own, laces their fingers. Yuuri squeezes it, smiling a little, but internally having a breakdown because this is happening.

(This is really, truly happening.)

(Victor is looking at him like he’s the sun but Yuuri is the one blinded, his heart thumping violently in his chest, his palm getting sweaty against Victor’s, the feeling of their thighs pressed together incredibly distracting.)

“Can I admit something, Yuuri?” Yuuri can feel Victor’s breath against his own lips, it’s hot, his tone lower than usual, layered with want.

Yuuri doesn’t trust himself to speak—he nods.

Victor reaches up with his free hand and touches Yuuri’s cheek, brushing his thumb across his cheekbone. Yuuri lowers his gaze to observe the movement, but it’s almost impossible to see, so he just shuts his eyes and feels, trying to keep himself under control. It would be a lie to say he hadn’t dreamed of a moment like this—Victor so close to him, using that exact tone, touching him in this exact way.

“I’d much rather perform a pair skate with you than Mila.”

Yuuri opens his eyes—needs to—and blinks at him, trying to ascertain his meaning. “You would?”

“Mmm,” Victor hums. “Mila is nice, of course, but… Watching you on the ice is like nothing I’ve ever seen before. It’s like a work of art coming to life.”

He doesn’t know what to say, doesn’t know how to breathe, doesn’t know whether or not he should move. Yuuri makes a split-second decision and shifts a bit closer, his leg overlapping Victor’s a bit, making the most of the limited space. He hears Victor take in a sharp breath, his hand on Yuuri’s cheek stilling, his thumb making his way down to Yuuri’s bottom lip.

It’s a familiar motion, reminds Yuuri of that time in the motel room.

Victor seems to remember, too, because he smiles a bit, breaking the moment in the best possible way, as if to ask Yuuri if this is alright. Yuuri smiles back, just a small one, and remembers to breathe, his hand squeezing Victor’s once again. “I’m so glad I met you,” Victor mumbles.
(A ringing.)

Yuuri’s thoughts are cloudy, his vision hazy.

(But there’s a ringing.)

Victor blinks, snapping out of a daze, his lazy smile melting. After a moment, when he seems to have processed the sound, annoyance coats his features, radiates from every inch of his being. It’s an expression Yuuri rarely sees on him. He pulls away from Yuuri and reaches deep into his pocket, pulling out the offending phone.

Yuuri blinks.

(What had just happened?)

He crawls off of Victor’s lap and back to the other side of the couch, eyes wide as he watches Victor answer the call.


He hangs up the phone and places it down on the coffee table, leaning back against the couch cushions and stretching his arms out above his head. “Yakov wanted me to tell you that he’ll be at the rink on Wednesday to talk with both of us about his visions for my solo routines. And to talk to you about the pair skate.”

“Oh.”

Victor looks annoyed.

Very annoyed.

(Yuuri sort of likes it.)

“Maybe we—” Yuuri’s voice comes out an octave higher than intended, and he clears his throat. “Maybe we should get some dinner?”

“Good idea,” Victor agrees. His hair is messier than usual, his eyes more unfocused. Yuuri wonders if he had been about to kiss him.

He thinks so, but it’s hard to tell.


Yuuri shrugged. “I’m fine with any of those.”

“Katsudon it is!” Victor announces. “I’ll order it.”

~
“You two look happy,” Yakov comments when they enter the rink on Wednesday, his arms folded across his chest.

Victor smiles brightly at him, sitting down on a bench. “Do we?” He glances at Yuuri and sees that the skater is blushing, sitting down beside Victor, a bit farther away than usual, to Victor’s dismay.

Yakov proceeds to explain to them what he had been envisioning for Victor’s solo routines throughout the movie. There are three, all full-length, but only bits and pieces will be filmed, since there will be cutaways to other character’s reactions. The music had been settled, and he sends Yuuri a link to a playlist containing the songs.

“Any questions?” he asks, glancing between them.

“Nope,” Victor replies.

Yakov turns to Yuuri, who shakes his head. “No, thank you.”

“No problem. If you two have any questions, let me know. And I expect you to have something for me by the time we start filming, alright?” Yakov says.

Victor and Yuuri nod eagerly.

Yakov leaves.

“Now let’s get skating,” Victor urges, pulling his skates out of his bag.

Victor likes skating, sure, but he loves it because of Yuuri. Especially when they’re alone like this. There’s nothing better. Yes, he may get distracted, but that’s the best part.

“We’ll start on your first solo,” Yuuri tells him, removing a packet from his backpack and flipping through the pages. “It looks like there’s loose choreography, mostly though he just talks about the feeling of the routine. And, like, the cutaway moments.”

Victor bumps Yuuri’s shoulder with his own. “Guess you have room for interpretation, then?”

“I guess so. I’ve never officially choreographed before. I’ve done a bit of my own routines, but… I’ll try.”

“You’ll do great,” Victor tells him, because Yuuri will, of course, do great. He’s an incredible skater. Unbelievably smart. Pays attention to Yakov when Victor doesn’t. Is able to look at the minuscule details of things.

“And it doesn’t look like this one is supposed to be too jump-heavy, so it’s a good one to start with,” Yuuri muses. “It’s more to establish your character, according to Yakov’s notes.”

“Establish my character,” Victor repeats. “More acting less skating?”

“Exactly. Alright, let’s get started.”

~
The choreography goes okay.

Yuuri manages to make it look decent. Victor, though, is amazed—clapping his hands and grinning when Yuuri finishes demonstrating each section of it, still working on tying it together in his head. A routine can’t be choreographed in a day, after all. In fact, it’s sort of a waste of Victor’s time to have him here while Yuuri is just working on his own. He figures he’ll have to come in some other time of his own accord to choreograph the other routines so that this doesn’t happen again.

“Do you have any paper?” he asks Victor.

Victor hurries to Yuuko’s office and comes back with a small notepad, handing it to Yuuri along with a pen. Yuuri scribbles down notes about the choreography before he forgets, connecting different parts of the routine that Yakov had detailed with pieces of his own, tying it all together to be something comprehensible.

“Your handwriting is messy,” Victor tells him, looking over his shoulder.

Yuuri laughs and clicks the pen, handing it back to Victor. “Alright, well, I’ll have to finish this later, but for now this rough outline will do. We’ll just work off of the pieces that Yakov has cemented.”

“Okay,” Victor says, placing the pen on the half-wall of the rink.

Victor copies each section as Yuuri demonstrates it, making the jumps easier for his own skill set but getting most of the main movements down. It’s a simple routine, just to build character, really. The main theme is vulnerability. Victor’s character had just failed at the Grand Prix Final, flubbing his jumps and ending up in last place.

This movie was a tale of redemption, and Yuuri tries to fill the routine with dismay, with hope mixed in, too. In the script, Victor skates this alone in a dim, local rink. “And then my arms go like this,” Victor says, focusing, and moving his arms downwards as he skates ahead, posture straightening.

“Good,” Yuuri notes, looking down at his notepad. “Hang on, I’m going to get my glasses. Keep going.”

He’s surprised by Victor’s memory.

(As in, incredibly surprised.)

Because Yuuri can hardly remember the details of what he had just choreographed, only remembers the vague gestures because of his scrawled notes, but Victor remembers perfectly. He may not be able to land the jumps yet or flawlessly perform the step sequence, but he remembers every subtlety.

“You have a good memory,” Yuuri points out, because he’s curious, really.


Yuuri smiles. “Oh, right. That makes sense.”

“So how was that?” the actor asks, skating closer to Yuuri and glancing down at his notebook again, squinting at the writing.

“Good. Excellent, actually, for the first day. I’m sort of blown away.”

Victor shrugs. “I couldn’t do any of the jumps. Or… Any of it, really.”

“Right, but you’ve already basically memorized a full scale routine. Not a very well choreographed
routine, but that’s my fault. And I’ll fix it. I’m going to stay late, actually—I’ll take a taxi home. I want to work on some other routines. Especially the pair skate.”

“I don’t mind staying,” he offers, then rocks back on his heels. “Unless I’ll distract you.”

Yuuri feels himself blushing, hates that this happens to him whenever Victor says something remotely flirtatious. (Is it flirtatious? Or is it just his personality? Yuuri certainly hopes it’s flirtatious, but it’s hard to tell.) “No, but I’m sure you’d rather go home. You have to take care of Makkachin, right?”

“I let him out before I left,” Victor explains. “And it’s not his dinner time yet.”

“Oh, well, if you want to stay, then sure. I don’t mind.”

Victor is still looking at him, focused.

Yuuri shifts under his gaze, scrutinized. “What?”

“How come you don’t wear glasses more often?”

“Oh,” Yuuri says, laughing a little and pushing the glasses farther up on his nose, fixing them. “I don’t know. I’m not too blind without them.”

“I like them,” Victor tells him, and his gaze is heavy, thoughtful.

“Thanks. You’re already distracting me, though, Victor.”

Victor blinks. “Oh, right. Sorry. I’ll just… watch?”

Yuuri rolls his eyes as Victor grins mischievously at him. “Go sit down,” he orders, laughing, and Victor listens obediently, nodding his head and skating off of the ice to go sit on the benches.

It takes a while for Yuuri to forget that he’s there. But, eventually, he drowns himself in his work, fixing up the choreography for the routine that Victor had just been practicing. He perfects the awkward pieces in between and tries to keep it as simple as possible, focusing on the emotions instead. Every once and a while, he’ll ask Victor for an opinion, and Victor will happily answer. The song is playing on a constant loop, but sometimes Yuuri will ask him to restart the song or start it from a different spot.

It’s a slow, instrumental piece, all violins and soft melodies, easy on the ears. The initial impression is that it’s a sad piece, but if one listens closely, it’s possible to hear the hope, the promise of rehabilitation. Yuuri thinks it’s perfect.

(And he’s starting to see what Victor means about the routines having the power to completely redefine the movie. If the romance is just background, and the routines can be poignant enough to gain the audience’s emotional investment, then it could be a true, fascinating story of redemption. More than a chick flick.)

He composes a more detailed layout of the routine, in nicer handwriting. After a while, he asks Victor if he thinks it’s okay if Yuuri makes a few changes to Yakov’s notes, and Victor provides an overwhelming ‘yes’ as a response. So Yuuri edits a few things that he doesn’t think fits and ends up with a long list of steps, jumps, movements, details. A full minute and a half’s worth.

He hands it to Victor. “What do you think?”
“It looks great. We can show it to Yakov.”

“Okay, I’m going to work on the pair skate, then we can leave. Is that alright?”

Victor nods, resting his elbow on his knee and then his chin on his palm. Unless Yuuri is mistaken, the actor seems perfectly content with watching him skate. For whatever reason, it almost looks as though he’s elated to do so, as if it’s some sort of privilege. “Do you need an assistant to choreograph the pair skate?”

Yuuri laughs, shaking his head. “I think I’ll be able to imagine it just fine.”

The actor pouts.

“Okay, fine, you can help me.”

Victor beams.

~

On Thursday, Victor gives him a ride to the rink, where they meet Mila. There are less paparazzi outside of the building, but their questions are more vicious, their cameras more intrusive. Yuuko had kept them out, though, so Victor and Yuuri sneak in the doors when Mila opens them from the inside.

“I’m so excited for this,” Mila tells Victor, grabbing his arm and squeezing it.

Yuuri feels uncomfortable, hearing that (or seeing that?), but he tries not to let it show.

They get onto the ice and Yuuri takes out his notepad, going through the detailed routine he’d laid out. After they’d left the rink yesterday, he had gone home and pored over the details, examining each and every second. He wanted it to be perfect. “Alright, Mila, could you come here to demonstrate it with me? Victor can watch, and then I’ll do it with him so that you can watch.”

(Yuuri isn’t sure if he makes up the way that Victor perks up at that, his eyes going wide. It could just be his imagination.)

He stands near Mila. “Okay, for this part, you’re going to copy what I do.”

They skate separately for the first section of the routine, the motions simple. There’s one jump combination that Mila doesn’t land correctly, but right now, he really just wants her to get the basic choreography down. The hard part will come later.

“Now we move closer together…” Yuuri explains, and he skates towards the middle. Mila is focused, moving closer, too. They meet and Yuuri pauses. “Okay, now pretend I’m Victor. I’m going to lift you up like this—don’t worry, I won’t drop you, just don’t move too much.”

He lifts Mila by her sides—she’s light and doesn’t move—and twirls her around before setting her back down. “Put your hand on my shoulder,” he instructs, and she does, smiling at him. Yuuri smiles back. “There, that’s great. So that’s the first lift. And then right after, we have a lean, so…”

Yuuri takes her hand as they spin around, transitioning to the next step. “Okay, I’m going to lean you back, now, and you’re going to try and skate in a circle. This is all about trust, it will be easier if you
can forget that I’m holding you.” Mila nods. “Put that hand back on my shoulder. Let your other hand fall freely, although for now you can put it on me if you need to. And I’m going to lean you back like this.”

Mila fumbles and they both fall, she presses her hand against her mouth and hurries to stand up, offering to help Yuuri up. “I’m so sorry! That was my fault!”

“No, you’re doing great,” Yuuri insists. “Here, let’s try it again. Don’t worry, you can do it. Like I said, it’s all about trust. I won’t drop you.”

“I know you won’t,” Mila gushes, and Yuuri nods, brushing off his knees.

He glances at Victor. He’s standing by the edge of the rink, posture stiff, arms folded across his chest as he watches them, blatantly uncomfortable. Very uncomfortable. To the point where it looks like he’s about to leave the room. Yuuri frowns and turns his attention back to Mila, figuring he’ll ask Victor what’s wrong in a minute.

They attempt it again, and it’s messy, not graceful in the slightest, but it is a lean. “Now we hold hands like this…” He takes her hand. “And this is sort of a separate move, but we’re both going to raise our hands in the air, then let go, and then spin around. I’ll show you first.” Yuuri lets go of Mila’s hand and demonstrates a spin. Mila copies it roughly. “Great.”

“Now,” Yuuri continues. “This was from Yakov’s notes. There’s going to be a zoom in on this part. I lean close, like this, and you put your hand here…” He grabs her hand and places it on his own cheek, her fingers grazing across it. “Now you spin.” She spins and pulls away.

“That was really good for a first attempt, Mila,” Yuuri tells her a second later. “Have you skated before?”

“A bit, when I was a kid,” Mila answers. “I took ballet, though, for many years. I think that’s helping some.”

“Oh, probably,” Yuuri agrees.

“Could we try it again?” she asks, touching Yuuri’s arm.

Victor interrupts, voice louder than necessary. “I’d like to try it, actually.”

Yuuri glances at him.

There’s something very wrong with Victor.

He’s normally good at hiding his thoughts, as Yuuri has noticed in the past, but now? Now he looks… Thrown. Perturbed. Off.

“We’ll just try it one more time,” Mila promises. “I want to try and get the different parts connected.”

Victor licks his lips and nods reluctantly.

Yuuri performs the routine again with Mila, taking it slow and stopping to help her when she needs it. “That was great!” he tells her at the end.

“Really?” she asks, her cheeks tinted pink and her breaths coming quick.

“Really,” Yuuri assures her. “Very good progress. We’ll have to work on the smoothness of everything, but you’ve got the basic idea down, which is important.”
“Alright, I’m ready to try,” Victor calls, skating closer.

“Okay, I’ll watch,” Mila offers, skating away.

Yuuri looks at Victor when they’re alone, rubbing the back of his neck. “Are you okay, Victor? You looked sort of annoyed a minute ago.”

“I’m fine,” the actor insists. “So you’re going to be Mila?”

“I suppose,” he answers. “Do I need to go put on pads?” With that, he adds a smile, hoping he can lighten Victor’s mood.

“No, I won’t drop you,” Victor promises, and there’s a bit of a smile, Yuuri notices happily. “And if I do, you can land on top of me. I’ll break your fall.”

Yuuri blinks, wondering if that statement had been suggestive on purpose. Probably, knowing Victor. “I’ll… I’ll, um, keep that in consideration.”

They start the routine. Once again, Victor seems to remember every detail of the skate Yuuri had just performed twice with Mila. They meet in the middle after the first jump—which, to Yuuri’s surprise, Victor actually lands somewhat correctly—and they pause before the first lift. “Are you sure about this?” Yuuri asks him.

And then, in that moment, it clicks.

What Victor had said in their conversation only a few days ago. *I’d much rather perform a pair skate with you than Mila.*

(A minute ago—had Victor been jealous?)

“Sure, I just saw you do it. I just go like this…”

He places his hands on Yuuri’s sides and Yuuri feels his breath catch in his throat. Victor’s eyes are focused on the position of his hands, on angling the move perfectly, but Yuuri is focused entirely on him, captivated, enthralled, anticipating. Victor lifts him up and twirls around on his skates, the move rough but overall correctly performed, and sets him back down a moment later. Before Yuuri can speak, he has already started the leaning move, one hand wrapping around Yuuri’s back and letting him fall backwards in his arms.

(Fall a little too far.)

It hurts a bit, but Yuuri can’t stop laughing.

“Are you okay?!” Victor says, falling to his knees beside Yuuri, helping him back up. “I’m so sorry, I thought that I had it but then…”

“I’m fine,” Yuuri answers. “That was just kind of funny.”

“That wasn’t funny,” he protests. “You could’ve been hurt, and I…”

“Let’s try it again,” he suggests. “You almost had it.”

They try it again, and it’s more successful the second time. Then, Yuuri moves closer and places his hand on Victor’s cheek, enjoying the way he instinctively leans into the touch before pulling away and spinning.
“That was great!” Mila shouts from the sidelines, clapping her hands. “Oh my gosh, you two are adorable together, that was unbelievable.”

Yuuri blushes, shrugging. “Now do you two want to try it together?”

“I think I’d like to try it with you one more time,” Victor says.

(What is he trying to do?)

But Yuuri just shrugs and nods. “Mila, do you mind if we try it again?”

“No, but can I record it?” Mila asks excitedly.

Victor agrees, and Yuuri does too, after a moment of consideration. They start the routine again. He doesn’t fall, this time.

~

When the session is over, Mila and Victor are exhausted.

More exhausted than Yuuri has ever seen them before. Mila looks like she’s about to collapse on the nearest flat surface and Victor looks as though he’s already asleep, a walking zombie. “Maybe you shouldn’t drive home,” Yuuri suggests.

“I’m dying,” Victor complains, sitting down on the bench and lowering himself until he’s laying down, head resting on the hard wood.

“I’ll drive him home in his car,” Mila suggests. “I took a taxi here anyway.”

“Okay, I’m going to stay and work on the rest of the pair skate,” Yuuri says. “If Yuuko doesn’t mind—I’ll go check.”

Mila lifts Victor by his arms, forcing him up. “Let’s go, Victor.”

“I think I’ll stay here,” Victor argues weakly.

“You’ll drool all over him,” Mila points out. “Come on.”

He doesn’t protest any more as she pulls him out of the building and into the passenger seat of his car, where he immediately collapses against the seat. Yuuri watches with surprise, feeling a bit tired himself but knowing there is plenty of work he has to get done.

~

Victor wakes up several hours later, not sure when or how he’d gotten into bed. His head is aching but it feels better as he splashes water on it, Makkachin pawing at his leg. “Oh, it’s dinner time, isn’t it?” he muses, reaching down to pet him on the head.
He checks his phone as he walks towards the kitchen. There’s a text from Mila. A video attachment. And a message. **You two are cute together, by the way. xx**

As Makkachin eats, Victor rewatches his practice duet with Yuuri, eyes focused on the young skater. He looks gorgeous. Every move graceful, purposeful…

He has two more sessions with Yuuri and Mila over the next two days. He’s currently calculating what he can do to get the most time skating with Yuuri, touching Yuuri, spending time with Yuuri. He’ll have to mess up many, many jumps. Perhaps he should apologize to Mila in advance.

~

Friday morning, before going to the rink, Victor heads out to fetch breakfast somewhere. But Yuuri’s hotel is nearby, so, somehow, he ends up outside of his hotel suite with a bag of pastries in his hand. (Just visiting, of course. Purely because he was in the area. That made sense, right? Surely Yuuri wouldn’t think that was weird?) Victor knocks on the door and takes off his hoodie, trying to make himself presentable. He fixes his hair in the reflection of Yuuri’s doorknob.

The door swings open. He’s presented with a yawning man in sweatpants.

“Oh, were you still asleep?”

Yuuri blinks. “Oh. No. I didn’t know you were coming.”

Victor should’ve thought this through. He shrugs awkwardly. “I was grabbing breakfast at a bakery down the street, and I thought I’d stop by. If now is a bad time…”

It takes him a moment to fully take in Yuuri’s appearance. He’s wearing glasses and a wrinkled grey t-shirt, his hair sticking up in every possible direction. His sweatpants are cuffed at the ankles and he’s barefoot. Then, he notices Yuuri’s expression—his eyes are wide and his lips are parted slightly, looking as though he expects Victor to disappear at any moment. “Give me two minutes, I’ll be right back.”

He shuts the door on Victor’s face.

Victor stares at the door for a second, wondering what just happened.

But he waits anyway. Leans against the wall beside Yuuri’s door, pulling out his phone. A woman walking past stops suddenly, staring at him. “Are you…? Oh my god, are you Victor Nikiforov?”

“I am,” he answers, smiling.

“Could I have a photo?” she asks.

He poses for a photo with the woman, who hurries away happily, already tapping out a text with her thumbs. A moment later, the door has swung open, and Yuuri is standing there in the same grey t-shirt—it’s a bit less wrinkled, now—and jeans, his feet clad with socks and his hair flatter. He’s no longer wearing his glasses, Victor notes, a little disappointed.

“Oh, now you can come in,” Yuuri says, sounding a bit tired.

“Sorry I didn’t text first,” Victor says, sitting down on a barstool in the kitchen. “Like I said, I was
just grabbing breakfast…”

“No, it’s fine. Just threw me off a bit,” Yuuri explains, sitting down beside him and resting his hands on the counter, rolling his shoulders back. Then, he remembers something. “I was in the middle of FaceTiming Phichit, though.”

“Oh, you can call him back,” Victor suggests. “Or I can leave. I don’t mind.”

“You can stay,” he replies quickly. “He’d probably like to say hi, anyway.”

Yuuri pulls his phone out of his pocket and the familiar ringing of the FaceTime app starts. Victor fixes his hair in the camera reflection and Yuuri gives him an exasperated look, to which he replies with an innocent “What?”

“Hi, Yuuri, why did you—Oh. Victor?”

“Hi, Phichit,” Victor says, smiling and waving at the camera.

Phichit’s eyes go large. “Are you two skating together today?”

“Yeah, in a couple of hours,” Yuuri answers. “Sorry I hung up on you a minute ago, Victor knocked on the door.”

“No, no, that’s fine,” Phichit insists.

“Phichit has a competition on Saturday,” Yuuri tells Victor. “In China.”

Victor’s eyebrows shoot up. “That’s exciting. Good luck!”

“Thanks. It’s a qualifying competition for the Grand Prix,” Phichit replies.

“You’d be competing in that, too, if you weren’t here?” Victor asks Yuuri, a bit concerned. Did Yuuri mind being here? Would he rather be competing? It makes him feel a bit guilty to realize that he had never really taken that into consideration before. He makes a mental note to ask him about it later.

Yuuri shrugs. “Maybe. Every skater is assigned to two of six different qualifying competitions. I competed in China last year. You’ll do great, though, Phichit. You’ll qualify for sure.”

“I hope so,” Phichit sighs. “There’s a lot of good competition this year. JJ will be at China, too.”

Victor purses his lips. “JJ is the one who auditioned to be our trainer, too?” He also remembers that JJ is the one who had beaten Yuuri at last year’s Grand Prix Final, but he doesn’t mention that, knows that it’s a sensitive topic. Though, how anyone could possibly beat Yuuri is beyond him. Yuuri is easily the most talented person he has ever met.

Yuuri nods. “He’s very good. But so is Phichit, obviously.”

Phichit smiles brightly. “Thanks, Yuuri. Anyway, I’ll let you two get back to… Whatever it is you were planning on doing.”

Victor and Yuuri glance at each other, then glance back at the phone. “Okay, I’ll talk to you later,” Yuuri says, before hanging up. “Do you want a drink or something?”

“I’ll take some water,” Victor says. “But I can get it. You can have some of the pastries in the bag, by the way, they’re for you.”
Victor stands up and grabs a glass from the familiar, mapped-out cabinets, filling it with water from the refrigerator’s filter. Yuuri thanks him and pulls the brown bag towards himself, examining the contents. “You sure were tired yesterday,” the skater notes.

“You exhausted me,” Victor jokes, giving him a look before taking a sip of the water and sitting back down on a stool beside him. Yuuri ducks his head a bit, running a hand through his hair.

“Pair skating is harder than regular skating. As you noticed, I guess. It takes a lot more work, a lot more focus. And trust.”

“Mmm. I looked ahead in the schedule and saw that we get eight days to work on my routines, though. Just you and I.”

Yuuri bites his lip. “We do? Eight days for three routines? We’ll have to make sure we don’t get sidetracked. That’s gonna be a lot of work.”

“Well, I’m willing to stay after class.”

(The way Yuuri looks at him is adorable.)

(Flustered, unsure of what to say.)

Victor sets his water down on the counter and leans closer to him, placing his hand on Yuuri’s sleeve, smoothing out a wrinkle there. He watches as Yuuri’s eyes trace the movement, his lips looking a bit chapped, his hair still a bit messy if Victor looks close. “You may have to do that often,” Yuuri points out.

“That’s fine by me.”

His hand moves to Yuuri’s neck, cupping the back of it, his fingers drifting across the short hairs there. His skin is warm, the way his breathing slows tempting beyond belief. It takes all of Victor’s self-control not to pin himself to Yuuri then and there, not to press him down against the kitchen counter and capture his lips.

“I’m glad you like the class,” Yuuri says, and there’s a bit of breathlessness to his voice, a type of want that Victor wants to hear again and again and again.

“You know what I like more than the class?” Victor asks, drawing out the syllables, keeping the tone low, intimate.

“What?”

“My teacher.”

Yuuri wets his lips, hands resting on his thighs, as though he’s not sure what to do with them. “You do?”

Victor hums in agreement, hand moving from Yuuri’s neck to his cheek. It reminds him of the part in the duet, reminds him of Mila’s hand making the same motion, reminds him of the sharp jealousy that had stabbed him in the gut when he’d seen Yuuri teaching her, despite Mila’s amicable personality.

Now, though, he has Yuuri all to himself. The thought makes him giddy.

(And he wants something.)

(But does Yuuri want it? What if he doesn’t? Victor values their friendship above anything,)
everything, and it would be so easy to mess this up. Just a few words and Yuuri could leave, never wanting to see him again. It would be so simple, so terrible.)

“Victor, what are you thinking about?” Yuuri asks quietly, his eyes searching Victor’s own.

“What are you thinking about?”

The skater smiles a little, Victor brushes some of his hair out of his eyes. Yuuri shivers a little at the touch. “Not fair, I asked first,” he protests.

Victor pulls his hand away, thinking of a response. “Just… You.”

“Me?” Yuuri asks, surprised.

“Mhmm. Your turn to answer.”

There’s a pause.

He answers. “You.”

“Could I kiss you?”

Yuuri stares at him.

Victor isn’t sure where those words, that courage, came from.

But they’re out in the open, unless the last five seconds were made up by his mind. Which is possible. Very possible.

It feels like walking a tightrope. Feels like skydiving. Feels like jumping off of a diving board for the first time, waiting for the impact, praying that it won’t hurt. Time slows down, his heartbeat speeds up. They sit on kitchen stools in a hotel in the middle of Los Angeles looking at one another, and Victor wonders what he had done right to lead him to this moment, wonders what he needs to do in the future to lead to more like it. Wonders if he made the right choice.

Yuuri is everything he could want. He’s everything. Victor has met many interesting people—singers, actors, actresses, a foreign leader or two, but none of them compare to Katsuki Yuuri. They can hardly hold a candle to Yuuri—the sun, the moon, the stars, they’re all captured within him.

(It’s cheesy, yes, cheesier than most of his movies, but it’s real.)

(He knows it’s real because he feels it, feels the laughter that comes forth when he sees Yuuri laugh, feels the pain that he endures when he sees Yuuri in pain, feels the nervous excitement that Yuuri feels when he’s anticipating something.)

It’s real.

Not many things in Victor’s life have been real.

(But this is.)

And he wants to hold onto it more than anything, wants to grasp it and never let go, but here he is, risking it all. A diving board. A tightrope.

Yuuri doesn’t answer.
(But he kisses him.)

(Soft, gentle, complex.)

(His lips are warm, obsessive.)

(He’d dreamt of this, but dreams were nothing compared to the real thing.)

They don’t move for a moment, just enjoying the gentle brush of their lips against one another’s. Victor touches his hair—finally, finally—and weaves his fingers through the black strands. It’s soft like he’d imagined, Yuuri hums a little at the touch and Victor moves his mouth, unable to help it, taking Yuuri’s bottom lip between his own and sucking just so.

Yuuri moves forward, one of his hands coming to rest on Victor’s arm for support, his other pressing firmly against the granite, kissing him back.

(It’s magical.)

(Iridescent colors swirl behind Victor’s eyelids.)

The younger man makes a noise that sounds like the beginning of a word, but it’s quickly forgotten when Victor shifts again, this time experimenting with Yuuri’s top lip, sighing against his mouth when Yuuri squeezes his arm. He pulls away a bit, their lips no longer in contact, and Victor realizes he’s out of breath, his eyes fluttering open.

“Yuuri,” he mumbles, the word almost incoherent, his chest rising and falling heavily.

“Couch?” Yuuri asks simply.

Victor doesn’t answer, just keep staring at him.

Yuuri squeezes his arm again. “Victor?”

“Yes, couch,” he agrees, standing up and taking Yuuri’s hand, leading him to the couch in front of the television.

He sits down and can’t wait anymore, pulling Yuuri on top of him and letting him sit on his lap, kissing him again, harder, this time, more needy. Yuuri lets out a gasp when Victor’s lips open, his hand flying up to cup Victor’s cheek, index finger brushing against his temple. Yuuri shifts on his lap to get comfortable and Victor wraps one arm around his back, pulling him flush against him and taking his lower lip between his teeth.

It’s messy, explosive, incredible.

“Victor,” Yuuri mutters, leaning his head against Victor’s shoulder as he catches his breath, arms having moved around his neck.

“Is this still platonic?” Victor asks quietly.

Yuuri stiffens.

Pauses. Pulls away, stares.

Then, he seems to understand, and he starts laughing, his breath hot against Victor’s neck as he places a gentle kiss to it, his arms tightening their grip. Victor holds him closer, his chin resting on top of Yuuri’s head.
“I didn’t like watching you skate with Mila,” Yuuri admits. And it’s part of the movie, part of the script, an integral part of both of their jobs, yet Victor understands exactly what he means.

Victor pulls away to meet his eyes. “I didn’t like watching you skate with Mila.”

“I was just teaching her, that’s different. You have to pretend to be in love with her.”

The actor shrugs. “It’s business. But I’ve never done this to Mila.”

He leans forward and kisses Yuuri again, chaste, this time, meaningful—trying to put his words behind his actions. Yuuri hums against him, chest flush against Victor’s own, his grey t-shirt riding up his back. He fists his hands in the fabric of Victor’s black hoodie and when they pull away for breath, Yuuri rests his head against his shoulder again, sighing.

“You’ve done that to Mila a thousand times,” Yuuri points out. “I’ve seen your movies.”

“I’ve never done it like that. With it meaning anything. It never means anything for her, either.”

“Yeah?” Yuuri asks, and Victor wonders if he can hear the beat of his heart through the sweatshirt given the current position of his head, wonders how quickly Yakov would find them if they just remained like this forever.

(Because what was fame, fortune, a career when kissing Yuuri was an option? Dirt, commonplace pebbles being compared to diamonds.)

“Yeah,” he confirms, kissing the top of his head.

Yuuri yawns and Victor hugs him tighter, thinking that it’s impossible for this to get any better, thinking that he could die right now and have led a happy life because it contained a morning of kissing Katsuki Yuuri. Trophies and other accomplishments be damned. “Are you tired?” Victor asks him.

“Yeah, but we have to go to the rink in two hours,” Yuuri says.

“Two hours is plenty of time, do you want to take a nap?”

Yuuri shrugs lazily. “Would you sleep, too?”

“Sure.”

Then Yuuri seems to remember something, pulling away just enough to meet his eyes. “Set an alarm?”

“Okay,” Victor agrees, wondering why he looks so intent on that point. He sets an alarm before leaning back and pulling Yuuri down with him. Yuuri instantly cuddles his head on Victor’s chest and wraps his arms around his torso, humming a little, the noise almost inaudible. He’s more affectionate than usual, but Victor isn’t certain if it’s because of the kissing or the sleepiness.

(And how is he supposed to sleep like this?)

Because Yuuri’s eyes are shut and all he can focus on is how peaceful he looks when he’s sleeping, how Victor’s heart swells whenever he shifts a little or lets out a heavy breath. He’s somehow filled with both adrenaline and the overwhelming need to rest, so he contents himself on holding Yuuri closer, burying his nose in his hair, taking in the scent of his shampoo.

It’s physically painful, how much he adores him.
(He just hopes—no, *prays*—that Yuuri adores him back.)
The Cup of China occurs, Phichit comes to visit, and Yuuri and Victor head to Griffith Park. Meanwhile, they're both cultivating their own insecurities.

I know what you're thinking: 'hey braveten, why do the chapters for this fic keep getting longer?'
The answer: I have no idea

There's not too much plot in this one, just a lot of relationship building and A LOT of cuddling (whoops idk why so much cuddling my apologies), I promise there will be more plot soon. Also, there's a bit of Russian in here (get Google Translate ready), so as per usual, if it's a complete mess and somebody wants to help my monolingual self out lmk!!

Be sure to leave a comment down below and let me know what you think :D :D Every comment makes me smile for ages you guys have no idea.

p.s. I'm uploading this late at night so if there are any blaring errors I apologize and they'll be fixed in the morning!!

The Cup of China starts around noon on Saturday in China, which is around eight p.m. in California on Friday.

Victor had offered to come and watch the event with him, but he had to go home to feed Makkachin first, so Yuuri sits alone on his couch, trying to figure out how to get the livestream to properly display on the television. Eventually, he manages it, and though the picture is blurry, it's there.

He wishes Phichit good luck over a text and the Thai skater replies with a nervous batch of emojis. Yuuri isn’t sure how to respond, so he just offers a thumbs up in response. They’re currently interviewing a skater that Yuuri doesn’t recognize on the television, and Yuuri stands up to go find some snacks. Sadly, though, his fridge is notably desolate.

Yuuri debates going out to buy something, but doesn’t want to risk missing anything important, so he texts Victor. **Would you mind picking up food?**

**I already did <3**

He stares at the heart for a ridiculous amount of time, unsure as to whether or not it’s truly there, before returning his attention to the TV. The crowds are huge, extending off of the screen in either direction. It’s different, Yuuri thinks, to see the rink on the livestream versus in reality. When he had skated there, it hadn’t seemed so bright and vibrant. He supposes this is just the magic of television.
An interview with JJ starts a moment later, some question about him potentially winning the Grand Prix for the second year in a row.

There’s a knock on the door.

Yuuri jumps off of the couch and hurries over to it, looking through the peephole and seeing Victor standing there, adjusting his hair with one hand and holding a grocery bag with the other. He swings open the door and Victor grins at him, immediately giving him an awkward, one-armed hug.

“Yuuri!”

“Hi,” Yuuri greets, laughing.

“Has it started?” he asks, glancing over at the television. “Oh, is that JJ?”

Yuuri nods, moving out of the way so that Victor can set the bag down on the kitchen counter. He shuts the door and then digs through the contents. “Thanks for bringing food.”

“I got chips and salsa, does that work?” Victor asks, popping open the bag of chips and plucking one out, eating it with a swift crunch.

“Perfect.”

When Yuuri sits down on the couch, Victor sits beside him immediately, wrapping an arm around his shoulders. It feels weird.

(Not a bad weird.)

(But weird.)

(Because are they a couple now?)

He’s not sure what they are, but whatever it is, he likes it. Likes the feeling of Victor sitting close to him, likes the way he had made flirtatious jokes throughout their skating session today. And there’s little things, too—Victor’s hand brushing against the small of his back when they walk through a doorway, Victor’s gaze drifting down to Yuuri’s lips when he talks.

They’d only kissed for the first time that morning.

(But it’s easy to get carried away in the thoughts, the fantasies, the potential.)

(The change in their relationship is exciting, yet a bit horrifying.)

“I believe I’ll be able to win the Grand Prix this year,” JJ is saying on the screen, white teeth glinting underneath the bright lights. “Especially with the support of my fans and my fiancée.”

“Who skates first?” Victor asks.

“I’m not sure, they haven’t said.”

Victor nods and settles farther back into the couch, grabbing for the container of salsa and balancing it precariously on his knee. Yuuri wonders briefly if he’s bored already, but then Victor’s eyes widen. “Look, there’s Phichit!”

Sure enough, Phichit is in the shot as soon as they shift away from JJ’s interview. He’s stretching, arms on the edge of the rink. Celestino is standing near him, looking nervous. “I hope he does well,” Yuuri says, thoughts drifting off. It would be nice if Phichit won the Grand Prix this year. He
certainly deserved it, and he certainly could.

“I’ve never been to China,” Victor says after a moment. “Is it nice?”

“I didn’t get to do too much sightseeing,” Yuuri responds regretfully. “But from what I saw it was. The rink was certainly pretty.”

Victor turns the bag of chips to him, offering some, and Yuuri takes one out, dipping it in the salsa that’s still on Victor’s lap, and the enter thing is so couple-y that he’s not sure his heart can take it.

A while later, the skating starts. A skater that Yuuri thinks Phichit is friends with is up first, somebody named Leo, and his routine is enthralling. Yuuri finds himself leaning forward, on the edge of his seat, paying attention to the intricacies of each jump, of each movement, of the way he had so carefully matched his motions to the song.

“He’s good,” Victor says, voice quiet.

Yuuri just nods.

Two more skaters perform their short programs, both of whom Yuuri recognizes, though he can’t recall their names. Then, it’s Phichit’s turn. Yuuri smiles at Victor before focusing completely on the television, grabbing the remote and turning the volume up high. The song is familiar—“Shall We Skate” from the movie The King and the Skater.

“This is the first movie he ever watched,” Yuuri tells Victor, though he can hardly hear himself speak, can hardly blink out of fear of missing something.

It’s perfect. He nails the first jump combination. His costume is red and gold, the audience is captivated, the camera angles perfectly showing off every second of the routine. Phichit had always wanted to skate to this, ever since Yuuri can remember. They had watched the movies together back in Detroit—it was how they’d bonded when they had first met.

The next jump combination goes perfectly. Then, he’s already in the second half of his routine, but it looks like he’s just getting started. A quad salchow. Flawless. A step sequence, an extremely difficult one, but every movement is purposeful. From what Yuuri remembers of his practice, he must have edited the movements, making it possible to score even more points.

When the performance is over, Yuuri feels tears stinging at his eyes. It’s stupid, he thinks, and he rubs at them desperately, hoping Victor is too invested in either the television or the chips to notice. “He did great,” Yuuri says, watching as the camera cuts away to the Kiss and Cry, where Phichit is now making peace signs at the camera.

Victor turns and, most likely upon seeing his red eyes, squeezes Yuuri against his side, hand running up and down his arm comfortingly. “He did.”

“Sorry, I’m just happy for him,” Yuuri tells Victor, looking up at him.

“That’s because you’re a good friend.”

Yuuri just smiles and waits in anticipation for Phichit’s score to come in. He’s clutching a stuffed hamster and smiling for a selfie, Celestino beside him.

And the scores are…

“Oh my god. That’s great. He did incredible.”

Victor beams, and Yuuri continues staring at the television, watching as Phichit turns to give Celestino a hug. After a minute, they cut back to the ice, and JJ is warming up to skate. Yuuri shifts in his seat. If anyone here could beat Phichit…

He shakes off the thought and watches.

JJ does well.

But he flubs a jump combination in the second half. Yuuri winces at the sight, but the performance is still captivating, the audience clapping their hands along to the song and the judges looking impressed. He places in second by the time the short programs are over, and Phichit is in first.

“It’s over? He won gold?” Victor asks, then turns to Yuuri, confused. “How come you’re not more excited?”

“They still have to do the long programs,” Yuuri explains. “But for now he’s in first place.”

“Oh. He’ll win for sure.” The actor grabs another chip then seems to realize that all of the salsa is gone. “Wow, that didn’t last very long.”

“No, it didn’t,” Yuuri replies, feeling a bit odd. Just a few minutes ago, he’d felt elated to be with Victor, had been smiling to the point where it could probably be considered unhealthy. But now he can’t seem to make himself smile, can’t seem to pay as much attention to the interviews of random skaters he has never seen before.

“So when are the long programs?” Victor asks him.

It had gotten late, and Yuuri yawns, figuring he’ll feel better in the morning. He was probably just tired. “Tomorrow. About the same time.”

Tomorrow is Saturday, and he has a session with Victor and Mila in the early afternoon to continue working on the pair skate. “Could I come over again?”

“Sure.”

“Do you want me to?”

Yuuri glances at him, offering a smile that doesn't feel genuine. He does want Victor to come over, but it’s as though his body won’t listen to the rational part of his mind. “Of course.”

Victor seems to notice.

He frowns a little, his eyebrows drawing together as though he’s trying to analyze anything and everything that could possibly be wrong with Yuuri. Yuuri doesn’t like the attention, so he turns back to the television, pretending to be interested in some random clip of a skater’s short program.

“Yuuri?”

“Mhmm?”

“Is something wrong?”

“No, I’m fine.”
Victor doesn't say anything, but Yuuri can tell he’s still looking at him, can feel his gaze like a physical force weighing him down. It’s frustrating. He has always hated people trying to comfort him, has always hated his tendency to be overemotional. Especially now, because he doesn’t even have anything to be emotional about.

“Do you want me to leave?” Victor asks quietly, grabbing Yuuri’s hand and squeezing it.

“No,” Yuuri answers. He hates himself, because no, he doesn’t want Victor to leave, but he also doesn’t want Victor to look at him, doesn’t want to be diagnosed. “But… If you want to…”

“No, I don’t want to. I’ll clean this up.” He picks up the empty container of salsa and walks over to the kitchen, and Yuuri lets out a breath, falling back against the couch so that he’s laying flat on his back. When he looks over at the screen, Phichit is in an interview, and Yuuri watches, intrigued.

He’s happy for Phichit.

(Right?)

(Why wouldn’t he be? Just a minute ago, he’d been crying over the sight of his routine. And he loved Phichit—they were best friends.)

Tired. He must be tired. That would explain it.

~

Yuuri seems better on Saturday.

During practice, Victor is relieved when they can return to their new dynamic, incessantly flirting and teasing. The night before, he had started to think that maybe Yuuri was beginning to regret… Whatever this was.

Mila doesn’t seem to mind them, thinks that they’re an adorable couple—Victor and Yuuri both stare at each other upon hearing the word “couple,” but they never talk about it—and simply practices her skating. The pair skate is going well, there are still kinks that need to be worked out, namely the jumps, but the progress is promising.

“I’ll come over later to watch the long programs?” Victor asks when he’s parked outside Yuuri’s hotel, fingers drumming against the steering wheel.

Yuuri smiles and nods. “Sure. I can bring the food, this time.”

“Don’t bother, I’ll pick something up,” Victor insists. “Maybe popcorn.”

“Popcorn sounds good,” Yuuri agrees.

Victor considers something, running a hand through his hair. There’s a breeze entering through the open car door and he always hates this part of his days, driving Yuuri back to the hotel and having to watch him leave. “Hang on, sit back down for a minute.”

Yuuri blinks, confused, and sits down in the passenger seat.

(Victor needs to know for sure that everything is okay.)
So he takes Yuuri’s hand in his own and leans forward, kissing him gently on the lips. Yuuri kisses him back, shifting towards Victor’s seat, and places his free hand on Victor’s knee to maintain his balance. The car door is still open behind him, and Yuuri’s backpack is awkwardly sliding down his shoulder, but the sensation of the kiss is far too distracting for either of them to care. Victor hums against him, pulling Yuuri closer and weaving his fingers through his hair. He runs his tongue across Yuuri’s lower lip, and Yuuri sighs, opening his mouth, his—

A car honks.

Victor groans and lets Yuuri scramble off of his lap until he’s outside the car once again, cheeks tinted pink and his eyes wide. His hair is ruffled and it fills Victor will an inappropriate sense of pride to know that he had done that. Him. Yuuri glances at the car behind them and Victor is tempted to give an angry monologue to the other driver who had just interrupted a moment of extreme importance.

“Bye, Victor,” Yuuri says, looking both amused and flustered.

“See you tonight,” he answers, taking his time to pull away, simply to spite the driver behind him. Surely he had been able to see them? Surely he had realized what he had just done?

~

He brings an unnecessarily large amount of popcorn to Yuuri’s flat, the perfect kind, like out of a movie theater. The excessive butter is horribly unhealthy, and Victor prides himself on maintaining a nutritious diet, but he figures one night of indulging won’t kill him. He reclines on the couch beside Yuuri, watching as skater after skater is interviewed on the television.

Victor still doesn’t quite understand the nuances of figure skating, but it’s definitely an interesting sport to watch. Especially with Yuuri beside him, willing to answer any and all questions and looking genuinely interested in anything that happens.

“I really hope Phichit wins,” Yuuri says, sounding nervous.

“What happens if he doesn’t?”

“He could still qualify for the Grand Prix Final, the top six skaters overall do, but it’d just be really nice for him to get a gold medal today. I know he really wants it.”

JJ’s free skate is good—his score is insanely high. They watch as he grins at the screen, hooking his fingers in a way that represents two ‘J’s. “That’s a bit cheesy,” Victor jokes, and Yuuri laughs a little bit, but it doesn’t sound like it usually does. Doesn’t have the same ringing cheerfulness.

“Oh, it’s Phichit’s turn,” Yuuri says, leaning forward on the couch. Victor understands that he wants to pay close attention to his friend’s routine, but he’s also not a fan of the fact that Yuuri’s new position meant Victor’s arm was no longer around his shoulders.

“This song is from The King and The Skater Two,” Yuuri tells him, and Victor has never seen those movies before, but he figures they must be good if Phichit had done not just one, but two routines based off of them.
Phichit is the last skater to perform his free skate and Yuuri’s breath catches as his friend sits at the Kiss and Cry, fingers crossed. Celestino—who had also been Yuuri’s coach in Detroit, Victor remembers—says something to him that isn’t picked up by the microphones. It looks like words of encouragement.

A score appears on the screen.

“Oh my god, he won.”

Victor stares at Yuuri, whose eyes widen, a hand flying up to cover his mouth. “That’s great!”

Yuuri sniffs, pulling out his phone and typing an extremely long text to Phichit, which he figures the skater won’t read until later. Phichit waves happily at the cameras, posing, and Celestino is laughing happily beside him. Yuuri looks longingly at the television, phone now resting in his lap, a hand still clamped over his mouth.

Victor starts to realize…

Oh.

(Oh.)

(How could he have been so stupid, so selfish?)

(Of course Yuuri would miss skating. Of course he would miss his friends. Why had Victor just assumed that he would much rather be here, that he wouldn’t get emotional watching Phichit skate without him?)

(Narcissism, probably.)

(Victor hates himself.)

“Yuuri…” Victor starts, but he doesn’t know how to address the topic, isn’t sure what to say. He can’t remember a time that Yuuri has been sad before. Nervous, yes. Scared, certainly. Flustered, sure. But sad?

The only time he’d seen him even slightly like this was when Victor had come to visit him at the motel several weeks ago, insisting on him taking the job that Yakov hadn’t given to him. But back then, he hadn’t really known him. Hadn’t correctly interpreted the red eyes and nervous edge to his tone.

It feels like sadness doesn’t fit him—shouldn’t fit him. Like a fish out of water, a tiger in the arctic, a penguin in the savannah. It doesn’t click, doesn’t compute. Victor hates it. Hates that Yuuri doesn’t seem to want his help, doesn’t seem to want to open up.

“Yeah?” Yuuri asks, and he smiles again, but it’s that weird smile that he’d done yesterday, too, the one that stops at his lips and doesn’t reach his eyes. He squeezes Victor’s hand, but it feels forced, feels as though it doesn’t mean anything. It’s cold, objective, as though he’s trying to assess the situation from Victor’s perspective and see what he wants.

“I’m sorry, I’m an idiot. I should’ve thought of the fact that you would miss being on the ice while you’re here.” He wants to say more, but isn’t sure what else he could add. Isn’t really sure what to do. It’s not like he can put Yuuri back in the competition, not like he can pay for his flight to China and make everything instantly alright.
“Oh, no, I’m fine,” Yuuri insists, waving his hand as though the topic is permeating the air, as though he can get rid of it. “Don’t worry about it. You’re not an idiot.”

Victor swallows, looks at him. “I am, though.”

“Never thought I’d see the day when Victor Nikiforov would insist on calling himself an idiot.”

He laughs, then, and Yuuri laughs, too. He’d gladly accept a thousand bashes to his ego if it meant hearing that sound again. Victor lowers his voice and squeezes Yuuri’s hand. “Do you want to talk about it?”

Yuuri glances down at their joint hands, worrying his lower lip. “There’s not much to say.”

“Do you wish you were skating this season?”

“I… I’m glad I’m here, but I also wish I were skating. Just because I know that this could be a big year for Phichit and I know that Celestino didn’t want me to leave in the first place.”

Victor nods, not wanting to talk and ruin the moment, because he had finally gotten something out of Yuuri. Instead, he pulls the skater onto him so that his head is on his shoulder, and Yuuri sighs, wrapping an arm around his torso.

“I am glad I’m here, though,” he repeats. “I just wish I could do both.”

“I know this is selfish, but I’m glad you’re here, too.”

Yuuri smiles up at him and places a brief kiss to his lips. Victor’s heart gets light, his head feeling dizzy.

(And then it occurs to him for the first time that Yuuri will skate against next year.)

(Traveling around the world, going to different competitions, competing with Phichit by his side, most likely. All while Victor will be here, in California, working on another cheesy romance movie with a coworker who won’t be Yuuri, training for another part with another trainer who won’t be Yuuri, talking to many, many more people who won’t be Yuuri.)

He pushes that thought to the back to the dark recesses of his mind. They still had several months together, so surely they could enjoy that while it lasted and deal with the future later.

(If they had a future together.)

(That thought hurts.)

He buries it on the second attempt.

“Phichit is going to fly here on Tuesday afternoon,” Yuuri tells Victor. “He said he wanted to visit me, but I think he really just fell in love with California.”

“Have you?” Victor asks him, curious.

“It is very pretty,” he admits, glancing towards the window behind them, the view of bustling streets, everyone on a mission, everyone going somewhere. “And different. Different from Detroit and Haesetsu. It’s like another planet.”

“Let’s visit Detroit sometime,” Victor suggests, leaning down to kiss Yuuri’s neck.
Yuuri gasps and his hands fly to Victor’s sides, steadying him. The noise is delicious and Victor hums against his skin, keeping his lips on that same spot and testing it again. “I don’t—ah—I don’t think you’d like it there.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. I just have a hard time picturing you there.”

Victor nips on his collarbone, and Yuuri jumps a little bit. The actor laughs at that and soothes the spot with his tongue. “And where can you picture me?”

“Just here in California, honestly.”

“Not in a little apartment building along the Detroit River?”

Yuuri laughs, hands bunching up the fabric of Victor’s shirt. “I don’t think you’d—Victor,” he’s interrupted by Victor sucking on his pulse point and shuts his eyes tight. “I don’t think you’d last a day in anything other than whatever sort of palace you live in.”

“Are you calling me spoiled?”

“A bit.”

Victor pulls away and stares at him. “I’ll have you know I could do perfectly fine in an apartment. I live in trailers on movie sets, and those are smaller than apartments.”

“But that’s a movie set. Your movie set, in a way. You have a thousand people at your beck and call.”

“Hmm. You’re hurting me, Yuuri, you know that?”

Yuuri rolls his eyes and kisses him. “Bruising your ego?”

“Always calling me egotistical,” Victor complains. “What did I ever do to deserve that?”

“On our first date, you used your name to get us into a restaurant,” Yuuri reminds him.

Victor raises an eyebrow.

(He waits.)

Yuuri stares, confused.

Then he realizes, and it’s adorable, his oh-god-that’s-not-what-I-meant face. It consists of dilated pupils, his lips forming an ‘o’ shape, and rambling. Plenty of rambling. Victor has grown used to it by now. “Not that that was… I mean… It wasn’t, at the time… But now…?”

“You should’ve told me that that was a date, Yuuri. I would’ve dressed up more. Would’ve brought you flowers when I picked you up. Roses, maybe?”

“Victor,” Yuuri groans, begging him to stop.

He does.

They sit for a minute, Yuuri resting his head on Victor’s shoulder and Victor leaning back, holding the other man in his arms. He loves this position, loves everything about it, from Yuuri’s weight on
his legs to the rising and falling of his chest. He wonders how it’s possible for a human being to be so endearing, to make Victor want to kiss him without even meaning to. It’s like some kind of superpower.

“I’m sorry I was upset earlier,” Yuuri tells him, suddenly, voice muffled by his chest.

“Don’t apologize for that.”

“But I was taking it out on you when I should’ve—”

Victor stops him. “I completely understand what you were feeling. And I don’t mind you taking it out on me—you didn’t mean to. What I really care about is you being happy with your decision. Are you?”

“Yes, definitely,” Yuuri answers confidently. “I love teaching you, and Mila, and Yurio, and Christophe…”

“Christophe?” Victor asks, raising an eyebrow.

“He’s nice.”

Victor pushes Yuuri back a bit with his hand so that their eyes can meet. He searches Yuuri’s for answers. “I suppose I can tell you now that I didn't like you skating alone with Christophe.”

Yuuri blushes, licking his lips. “I sort of got that impression, but it was strictly professional.”

“I don’t think Christophe has ever done something strictly professional in his life.”

“Well, he tried to flirt with me, but I told him in a very polite manner that I was interested in someone else, and he backed off immediately.” Yuuri smiles shyly, eyes shifting downwards.

Victor pauses, trying to find words. None come. His eyebrows draw together, his head cocking to the side. “What do you… You told him…?”

“I didn’t give him a name,” Yuuri tells him, poking him in the chin. “You do something with your chin when you’re confused, you know. Like, set it, or something. I don’t know the word for it.”

Victor covers Yuuri’s hand with his own and moves it to his cheek, ignoring his comment. “Who were you talking about? With Chris?”

“Oh, a Hollywood star that I think is sort of attractive.”

He’s relieved, sinking back against the couch. “Yeah?”

“He’s pretty handsome.”

Victor raises an eyebrow, grinning. “So it’s a he, then?”

Yuuri shrugs innocently. One of his hands reaches up to drift through Victor’s hair, and he shuts his eyes in response to the sensation, letting Yuuri’s fingers weave through the short strands. His nails scrape across Victor’s scalp and Victor sighs, leaning into the touch. It’s addictive.

He lowers his voice, keeps it teasing, keeps the game going. “What’s the name of this handsome actor?”

“Ryan Gosling.”
(There’s an audible crack in the air as Victor’s heart snaps in half.)

Victor’s eyes fly open, lower lip extending in a pout. “Yuuri!”

“Kidding, kidding.”

~

They spend a lazy Sunday together.

Playing board games in sweatpants and tossing the pieces at one another, ordering pizza online and requesting ridiculous things in the ‘special instructions’ field. Victor can’t remember ever being this happy. Can’t remember a time when his life was about something other than his work.

Before, it had a question of what movie he would perform in next, what costars he would be working with, how much money the most recent film would make in the box office.

Now, it’s a question of what does Yuuri want for breakfast? What would Yuuri like to do that day? What would make Yuuri the happiest?

(Because, as Victor has discovered, making Yuuri happy makes him twice as happy.)

(And that’s new.)

He has never cared so, so much about someone. To the point where it makes his heart hurt to be apart from him even for a few hours, to the point where he wants to flood his Instagram account with photos of him and the skater, of which he has taken many.

But every time he’s about to post one, he remembers (or, more specifically, Yuuri remembers) Yakov’s request for them to stay on the down-low. It’s surprisingly difficult, considering Victor would like to take a megaphone and make his way to the nearest busy street corner so that he could shout about his love for Katsuki Yuuri to everyone who would listen.

Monday goes by quickly. They work on one of Victor’s solo routines, and end up staying late for an extra two hours, due to getting slightly sidetracked.

(Needless to say, Yuuko had been rather scandalized when she saw Victor pressing Yuuri against the half-wall of the rink, his hands on the younger man’s hips and their mouths pressed together as though they needed one another to breathe.)

(Yuuri felt slightly bad about it—it was her rink, after all—but Victor couldn’t bring himself to care.)

(Was that selfish?)

(Maybe.)

~
On Tuesday night, Yuuri goes to meet Phichit at the airport. He’s planning to crash on Yuuri’s couch in his suite. Victor decides not to interrupt their day, figuring that the two friends will want some time to reunite. Yuuri insists that he can come to hang out with them, but he says that he was planning on spending time with Makkachin, anyway.

(It only takes him about forty minutes to regret it.)

He sits on his bed, phone in his hand and dog on his lap. He loves Makkachin, yes, but he loves Yuuri, too. He also loves sitting on Yuuri’s couch in his suite, and the fact that it will be occupied by Phichit for the next five days will be a slight disturbance. Phichit, of course, is very kind—Victor has taken a liking to him—but he associated that couch with very, very good things.

(Such as: kissing Yuuri, holding Yuuri, cuddling Yuuri.)

~

“Okay, spill.”

Yuuri watches as Phichit lowers his bags onto the couch and then approaches Yuuri, setting his hands on his shoulders, expression grave. Yuuri takes a second to respond. “Spill what?”

Phichit rolls his eyes. “Victor. And you. And everything that has been going on. You said you’d FaceTime me every day, Yuuri, but I have been left out of the dramatic rollercoaster that is currently your life.”

“I don’t know that it’s a rollercoaster,” Yuuri admits. “All I really do is train and choreograph lately. I had a meeting with Yakov and Sara yesterday about the practicality of some costumes for a few routines in the movie. Not too exciting.”

“Let me get this straight: You’re saying that coming to Hollywood, auditioning for a job training a world-famous actor and your number one celebrity crush, then not getting the job, then having said celebrity crush show up at your door to personally give you the job, then getting pasted on the covers of countless tabloids with said celebrity crush, then making him your boyfriend is not a rollercoaster?”

“How did you manage to say that in one breath?”

“Yuuri.”

Okay, okay. We might be… We’re… Something.”

“Something.”

“Something.”

Phichit squeezes his arms, offering a smile. “You’re like somebody who wins a million dollars in the lottery and then doesn’t know what to do with it. You’re dating Victor Nikiforov. You could get a yacht, if you wanted! Or a new car!”

“I’m not going to ask Victor to buy me a yacht.”

“I’m not saying you should,” Phichit assures him. “I’m saying you could. Yuuri, I’m so happy for
Yuuri laughs and ducks his head, not quite wanting to say thank you because that would, in fact, mean that he was admitting to dating Victor Nikiforov.

(Which he wasn’t.)

(Or was he?)

“And you won a gold medal,” Yuuri points out. “I’m the one who should be ranting to you about success.”

“Gold medal schmold schmedal,” Phichit responds, but Yuuri can tell that he’s proud, can tell that winning the Cup of China had meant a lot to him.

Yuuri gestures for him to sit down and begins getting them both glasses of water. “I started tearing up at your short program.”

“Did you really?” Phichit asks, flattered.

“It was so perfect. And I know how badly you had been wanting to skate to that song, and how much it meant to you… I may have embarrassed myself in front of Victor, but it was worth it. You did great, really.”

“Victor watched it with you?”

Yuuri nods. “He was happy for you, too.”

Phichit takes a sip of the water and glances around the kitchen of the hotel suite appreciatively. “This place looks even better than it did in the pictures you sent me.”

“Sara went all out with it. Victor says it was because of the request you made to him.”

“Aha, I’m the best manager, aren’t I?” Phichit jokes, grinning at him and walking over to the large window on the far wall. “Pretty view. What do you say we go get dinner? I’m parched.”

They walk to a local diner and sit down, catching each other up on stories and experiences. They hadn’t been apart long, but they were so used to telling each other every detail of their lives that it was weird having so many fresh topics to talk about. Back in Detroit, their conversations had consisted mainly of skating and movies.

After eating, they head back to the hotel and quickly go to bed, Phichit exhausted from jet lag and Yuuri tired from skating that day.

~

Wednesday, they wake up late, only an hour before they need to leave for the rink. Phichit had offered to help Yuuri train the actors—he needed all of the help he could get, after all. Today they would be training Yuri and Victor, tomorrow Mila and Christophe.

“Victor will pick us up,” Yuuri tells Phichit, yawning and grabbing clothes out of his bedroom drawers before heading towards the en suite bathroom.
Phichit had come into Yuuri’s room the moment he had woken up, planting himself on a chair by the window and scrolling endlessly through his phone. “Victor drives you to the rink?”

“Yeah, he says he doesn’t mind.”

“Oh, I’m sure he doesn’t.”

Yuuri rolls his eyes as he enters the bathroom, changing into black pants and a maroon sweater. He doesn’t bother to fix his hair yet—they still have time before Victor will come, after all—and lays back down on the bed. “I feel like I’m always more lethargic when you’re around.”

“It’s because you’re used to slacking off with me in Detroit,” Phichit reminds him, grinning.

After they’ve both gotten ready, Phichit holding his skates in his hands, they head out to Victor’s car. He’s wearing sunglasses and a tan blouson, hair styled to perfection and the windows rolled down. Luckily, the corner of the parking lot is barren, because he’s certainly not disguising himself. Yuuri can’t help but smile at the sight, walking a bit quicker.

“Hello,” Victor greets them as they hop in, both of them sitting in the back since Yurio is in shotgun, currently blowing a bubble with his gum.

“Hi, Victor,” Phichit says.

Yurio pops the bubble, the noise louder than expected, and glances at Phichit in the rearview mirror. “Who are you?”

“This is Phichit,” Yuuri introduces. “He was with me when I first auditioned, I lived with him in Detroit.”

“Do you figure skate?” Yurio asks.

“Yeah,” Phichit answers as the car starts.

“He just won a gold medal in China,” Victor tells him. “Congratulations, by the way.”

“Thanks!”

~

Yuuri had forgotten how much fun it was to skate with Phichit on the ice beside him.

“Oh, look what I learned how to do,” he says, and then composes himself, lowering his arms and looking down towards the ice. A moment later, he takes off, then he’s in the air, a perfect quad toe loop.

Victor and Yurio blink, impressed, and Yuuri claps. “That was great! Wow, Phichit.”

“Celestino and I have been working on perfecting that for ages, and I think I’ve finally got it down. Now I just need to master your quad flip,” he says, then winks. “I don’t think I’ve ever landed one of those.”

“Quad flip?” Victor asks, glancing between them.

“You don’t know? That’s Yuuri’s signature move.”

Yuuri ducks his head, not fond of all of the attention being on him.
“You didn’t tell me you had a signature move,” Victor points out, looking slightly offended.

“You didn’t ask,” Yuuri replies, smiling.

Yurio folds his arms across his chest. “Can we see it?”

“No, it has been a while, I probably won’t even be able to land it. Besides, we haven’t warmed up much. Maybe later.” He waves his hands, trying to get them to dismiss the subject.

Phichit shrugs. “He has pulled it off at competitions before.”

“At the Grand Prix?” Yurio asks.

“Yeah, in my long program. We should probably get started, now. Since Phichit is here he can work with Victor while I start on one of Yurio’s solos…”

Phichit frowns. “Yurio?”

“It’s a nickname,” Victor provides.

“A stupid one,” Yurio grumbles.

“Okay, Victor, let’s go,” Phichit says, skating towards one side of the rink, Victor trailing him.


“Got it.”

~

The session goes well—it’s much easier for Yuuri to handle one student than two, especially a student who isn’t Victor and who doesn’t get sidetracked as easily. As grumpy as Yurio can seem on the exterior, he’s smart (and secretly kind, Yuuri thinks, though he’d never say that). He picks up on things quickly and pays attention, putting all of his focus into whatever it is he’s doing.

“Great job!” Yuuri praises him.

“Thanks,” Yurio answers, and he smiles—actually, truly smiles—and stops himself on the ice. It’s gone after a moment. “You made up that entire routine yourself?”

“The routine? Most of it, Yakov gave me a few notes to work off of.”

Yuuri expects some sort of compliment, but instead Yurio just makes a humming noise, as if he’s not quite sure if he believes him. But Yuuri will take what he can get. So he continues teaching.

Phichit and Victor look as though they’re doing well on the other side of the rink, Phichit demonstrating jumps and then Victor following, attempting them again and again and again. Yuuri knows that Phichit isn’t an easy teacher, he’s been under his regime himself in the past, but he’s definitely effective.

“Let’s all go get lunch,” Victor suggests.

Yurio complains, but when asked if he wants to come, says yes.

(A quiet yes, but a yes all the same.)
Then, they drive Phichit and Yuuri back to the hotel, and wave goodbye before pulling away. Yuuri smiles at the grumpy receptionist, whose annoyed expression is unwavering, and they make their way to the elevator. “How did teaching Victor go?” Yuuri asks.

“Good. He’s talented, but he got distracted a lot by a certain skater on the other side of the rink.” Phichit pokes him in the side.

Yuuri bites his lip. “Really?”

“Every time I’d say something to him, I’d see his eyes drifting off a bit, and I’d follow his gaze, and...” Phichit makes a vague hand gesture towards Yuuri. “But, he was good. And it was sort of romantic, in a way.”

He laughs. “I didn’t notice.”

When they enter the suite, they both enter Yuuri’s bedroom, Yuuri sitting on the bed and Phichit occupying the desk chair, spinning around in mindless circles. Then, though, he pauses and looks at the stacks of papers on the desk. “These are the routines?”

“Mhmm,” Yuuri responds, scrolling through Instagram. Victor had uploaded a cute picture of Makkachin earlier that day. He taps the little heart at the bottom of the photo and watches as it turns red.

“And this is the script? Am I allowed to look at this, or is somebody going to snipe me?” Phichit asks, touching the front of the thick packet. “I’m surprised you’re even allowed to have this, shouldn’t it be, like, locked away in a safe or something?”

“It’s still only a working script,” Yuuri explains. “But I think you can look at it. Anyway, just don’t go posting pictures of it all over social media or Yakov will snipe me.”

Phichit grins at Yuuri before turning back to the script, like a child who has just discovered a new toy. “Working Title: History Maker. I like that. It has a ring to it.” Phichit adopts a bad attempt at a narrator’s voice. “Victor Nikiforov in History Maker. He was trained by Katsuki Yuuri, medal-winning figure skater and his boyfriend.”

Yuuri laughs and hops off of the bed to stand beside him, looking over his shoulder. “It’s pretty cool, having a script before the movie is even out, isn’t it?”

“If I had told you a couple of years ago that you’d have an unreleased script to a Nikiforov movie one day, you would’ve had a heart attack.”

“You would’ve, too,” Yuuri reminds him.

“Probably.” Phichit opens the first page and glances through it. There’s details about camera angles and costumes and lighting. “You really don’t need, like, half of this information. Looks like it’s all for Yakov.” He skips ahead a few pages. “Oh, look, Victor skates and then meets Mila’s character, and then here’s Yuri—I mean Yurio—and Christophe…”

Yuuri hadn’t read through the entire script, but he’d skimmed the first half or so. It definitely seemed interesting, and part of him didn’t want to read it just so that he could fully enjoy the movie, as ridiculous as that was. “It looks good.”

Phichit flips through several more pages. “Blah blah blah, cameras cameras cameras. Another routine, this one is Mila’s. And then they meet again, and they’re more in love…” Then he opens a random section in the second half of the packet, squinting to read the text on the page. “Oh.”
“Oh what?”

“Did you read this entire script, Yuuri?”

Yuuri frowns. “No, why?”

Phichit shuts the packet and turns around to glance up at him. “Did you know there’s a sex scene?”

(Oh.)

“What do you mean there’s a sex scene?”

“I just read something about… Wow, I feel like a voyeur just from reading two lines of that. It’s weirder having it written in a script than actually seeing it on a movie screen.”

Yuuri grabs the packet off of the desk and flips to it, looking for the part that—oh. There it is. He reads a line about Victor pinning Mila dramatically to a bed, his hands on her wrists and… Yuuri shuts the packet, swallows. “That’s… Definitely a sex scene.”

“Did Victor tell you about that?”

Yuuri feels a bit uncomfortable, sitting back down on the bed with the script still in his hands. It feels dirty, though, so he places it on the nightstand. “No, he didn’t.”

“Well, I guess he wouldn’t. What is he going to say? ‘Oh, by the way, Yuuri, there’s a sex scene in the movie.’ But seriously? In a figure skating movie?”

“There was a sex scene in Serenade for Two,” Yuuri reminds him.

“But it was classy.”

“Maybe this one will be, too.”

He’s not sure how he feels. He is a bit annoyed that Victor hadn’t told him about that, but at the same time, of course he wouldn’t. Besides, he had probably assumed that Yuuri had already seen the script. After all, it had been sitting on his desk for the past several weeks. Yuuri rubs at his forehead, unsure of what to do, what to say. But why should he do or say anything? It wasn’t as though it mattered.

Besides, it was with Mila.

(And besides, it wasn’t as though Victor and Yuuri were dating.)

(So why does he care at all?)

“I’m sure he just didn’t think to mention it. I saw the way he was looking at you today, and, honestly, it was so sweet I think I might have ten or so cavities. Plus, it’s not as though he wrote the script. It’s just a part of his job.”

Yuuri lays back on the bed and stares up at the ceiling. There’s something that has been bothering him since last weekend, when Victor had kissed him for the first time. Something that has endlessly been shouted by an annoying little voice in the back of his head. “Phichit, don’t you think it’s weird that Victor likes me?”

“What do you mean?”
“It doesn’t really make sense.”

Phichit sets down the packet and moves to sit down beside him on the bed, cross-legged. “What are you talking about? Of course it makes sense.”

“But what if he doesn’t? He’s an actor, and actors probably have flings all the time. What if I’m misinterpreting everything about him?”

“Are you talking about the sex scene, because I’m sure—”

“No, no,” Yuuri interrupts. “Nothing to do with that, just in general.”

(Because it doesn’t make sense, does it?)

(Somebody like Victor and somebody like Yuuri? Basic arithmetic says it shouldn’t happen, shouldn’t work. And it only makes it worse that Yuuri scolds himself for that thought because they’re not dating—not really. They’re not anything. They’re just Yuuri and Victor, yet that label doesn’t feel right, either, and he wishes he knew.)

Phichit frowns and plucks at a stray thread on his shirt. “I don’t think you’re misinterpreting anything. Has he said something weird?”

“Not really. But the whole thing is sort of weird. There’s no label, we only kissed for the first time a few days ago.”

“You kissed?!”

“Oh, did I not mention that?”

Phichit buries his face in his hands. “No, Yuuri, you did not mention that. No wonder he was staring at you with bedroom eyes all day today. Of course he likes you.”

“But what if…” Yuuri sighs and lets his words trail off, turning onto his stomach. Phichit touches his shoulder comfortingly.

“You’re overthinking it. Don’t stress about it, just let things happen, you know? And if he doesn’t like you, then he’s an idiot, and you could do better, anyway.”

Yuuri turns his head to smile at him. “Thanks, Phichit.”

“No problem. Now let’s go watch one of his movies, pause it on the ugliest frames, then send him pictures of the screen.”

“I don’t think he ever looks ugly, though.”

“Everybody has to look ugly sometimes.”

~

Are you busy tonight?

Yuuri stares at the text from Victor on his phone on Friday night, then stares at Phichit, who has
fallen asleep during a Netflix binging session, a bit of drool glistening on the corner of his mouth. What did you have in mind?

Anything.

He bites his lip to hold back a smile, even though nobody can see him, and feels his heart beat a bit faster in his chest. You could come over for dinner?

Let’s go somewhere.

Yuuri looks at Phichit again, as if to ask his sleeping form for permission. After contemplating the text, he turns off the television and nudges his friend’s leg. Phichit’s eyes blink open as he yawns, shifting his head against the pillow. “Good morning.”

“It’s five in the afternoon.”

“Oh, good afternoon.”

He laughs and shakes his head. “Listen, Victor asked me if I wanted to go somewhere with him, do you want to come?”

“Where to?”

“He didn’t say.”

Phichit grins, then yawns again, hugging a pillow. “A mysterious date with Victor Nikiforov? I’m not going to intrude. Go ahead, I’ll stay here.”

“Are you sure?” Yuuri asks, feeling a little guilty, because Phichit was only here for two more days and he wanted to make the most of their time together, but at the same time, he does want to see Victor. “We really wouldn’t mind you coming.”

“Go ahead. I need to sleep more anyway. You were right about us being more lethargic when we’re around each other. Somebody should do a scientific study on that.”

~

Yuuri debates what to wear for the next half hour, Phichit saying yes to this shirt and no to that shirt, offering to style his hair and being extremely disappointed when Yuuri turns the opportunity down. He ends up selecting a white undershirt covered by a dark blue trench coat that Phichit insists he spices up with a thin, brown scarf. It’s cold that evening, the coldest it has been since he has come to California, so he figures the outfit will be fine.

Yuuri smiles and stands up. “Okay, I’ll see you later?”

“Be safe!”

“I will.”

“Very safe.”

“I will.”

“Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

“I won’t, Phichit.”
(Victor is excited, to say the least.)

He pulls up to the front of the hotel, grinning when he sees Yuuri looking around for him. He’s wearing a coat, scarf, and glasses. Glasses? Yuuri didn’t normally wear his glasses. It’s stupid that Victor gets so excited over the sight, but he does anyway, pulling up in front of him and lowering his window. “Do you need a ride, stranger?”

A concierge gives him a shocked look in the background, most likely recognizing him, but Victor pretends not to see.

Yuuri laughs and hops in the passenger seat. “Yes, I’m afraid I’m lost.”

“Oh, that won’t do. Lost in L.A.?”

“I’m new here,” Yuuri jokes, and Victor can see that he’s pursing his lips to try and hold back a smile, successfully maintaining a pokerface.

Victor hums sympathetically. “I guess I’ll just have to take you somewhere.”

“Where to?”

“It’s a surprise.”

(He’d brainstormed possible locations for hours before texting Yuuri, wondering if he’d like this place or that. Victor had visited so many different Yelp pages that it was now his number one suggested website on the home page of his search browser.)

(After all, he’d lived in Los Angeles for a while now, but he’d never really gone out anywhere. Never really had had a reason to.)

“Phichit didn’t want to come?” Victor asks. He’ll admit, he was a little relieved when Yuuri had told him that Phichit wasn’t coming. Yes, he liked Phichit, but he hadn’t had Yuuri alone for four days now, and he was starting to go a little insane.

(An irrational insanity, but an insanity nevertheless.)

“No, he’s tired,” Yuuri explains, looking out the car window.

Victor watches the road, taking them towards Griffith Park. There was plenty to do there, plenty to see. Plenty of choices for Yuuri to pick from. Victor had been to different parts of it before for various reasons, and he figured it would be fine. Or at least, he hopes so.

They end up passing a large sign indicating the park, and Yuuri turns to him. “Griffith Park?”

“Yep. Is that alright?” he asks, a bit desperately, perhaps, because what if Yuuri doesn’t like parks? What if he has some odd aversion to parks that he hadn’t told Victor about? Or what if he just found them boring? There was a zoo there. Did Yuuri like zoos? The zoo was on the other side of the park, but he could drive there, certainly, if Yuuri didn’t like parks.

“Of course.”
Victor breathes, smiling at him. “I thought maybe we could go to the Observatory. Or they have horseback riding, or bike rentals, or hiking…”

Yuuri shrugs. “I’d be happy with any of those things.”

“The observatory, then? It’s nearby?” Victor asks, turning a corner. Yuuri nods.

They pull into the parking lot a minute later and Victor gets out of the car, walking around it and taking Yuuri’s right hand, in his own, thumb running across the back of it. It had been far, far too long since he’d been able to do that. In fact, he’d be satisfied to just stand by the car and talk to him for several hours.

The skater blushes, glancing around. There are plenty of cars around, but no people in sight. “Shouldn’t we not…?”

He had chosen to wear a white hoodie with a faded band logo on the front for this very purpose. “I’ll put up my hood once we get to the doors. I could care less about Yakov’s rule right now. Besides, I’ve realized I’m not a big fan of wearing hats.”

“Yeah?”

Victor hums, reaching out to touch Yuuri’s scarf with his free hand. It is soft. Softer than he’d thought it would be, in fact. “You in scarves, though… That I like.”

“You do?” Yuuri asks, squeezing his hand.

“I think I’d like you in anything.”

Yuuri laughs and starts walking, and Victor follows, their steps synchronizing.

“The Hollywood sign is that way,” Victor tells him, pointing their joined hands to the left. Because their hands are joined. Because he’s holding hands with Yuuri. Because his life, and this night, are already perfect. “And the zoo is way over that way.”

The sun is starting to set, the sky a beautiful mixture of oranges and pinks, and it’s cold out, but he enjoys the crisp air. They walk across the gravel of the parking lot, a slow pace. Victor smiles at Yuuri, who smiles back at him, and he can’t remember having been this happy before, can’t remember his heart threatening to burst and his lips being permanently turned upwards like this.

“You know, you haven’t told me a lot about your skating,” Victor points out.

Yuuri’s shoulder bumps into his as they walk. “What do you mean?”

“The other day, when Phichit mentioned you had a signature move. I didn’t know that.”

Yuuri shrugs. “It’s not a big deal.”

They open the main doors to the observatory and Victor pulls up his hood, offering a smile to the receptionist who, to his disappointment, doesn’t seem to recognize him. Yuuri gives her a polite nod before they continue inside, glancing around the different exhibits that they could visit.

There are a few people milling about, but not nearly enough to be threatening. Victor keeps his head turned downwards slightly, keeps himself close to Yuuri. “What else don’t I know about the life of Katsuki Yuuri?” he teases, swinging their arms.

“Umm, well, I’ve qualified for the Grand Prix three years in a row now. My signature move is the
quad flip, I first landed it in my second year on the senior circuit…”

“I looked it up, and you’re one of the only people ever to land it in the Grand Prix with all of the required rotations.”

Yuuri ducks his head. “That’s… That’s true. You Googled that?”

“I was curious. I wanted to know just how impressive my trainer was, and I found out that the answer is very, very impressive.”

“Not that impressive.”

“I also learned that he sells himself short.”

Yuuri pushes up his glasses with his free hand. “Well, I’m not nearly as impressive as you.”

“I think we had this conversation before, and, if I recall correctly, we tied. Maybe instead of arguing over who’s more impressive you should just let me drown you in compliments.”

“Maybe you’re right.”

Victor kisses him on his hairline, because he can’t really help it. He loves the way that Yuuri instinctively squeezes his hand, his fingers warm. He tugs on Yuuri’s arm and leads him through a doorway.

“So you know anything about space?” Yuuri asks in a hushed voice as they enter the wide, dark room, filled with hanging models of planets and exhibits after exhibit.

“Nope,” Victor admits.

Yuuri chuckles, reaching up on his tippy toes to kiss Victor on the cheek. “You’re ridiculous.”

“We’re here to learn,” Victor protests, nodding towards one large figure hanging above them. “Like, what’s this planet?”

“That’s Mercury.”

“How do you know that?”

“I don’t know, I just know the planets,” Yuuri answers.

Victor glances at a large door with a sign above it reading ‘Planetarium’ in a formal, bold print. “Let’s go in there!”

“The sign says it’s only open during shows. And the next show is in an hour.” Yuuri looks slightly disappointed.

(That won’t do.)

“Oh, but I bet it’s beautiful. Maybe they could turn it on for us?” Victor suggests. “Here, I’ll be right back.”

“Victor,” Yuuri accuses, tone layered with suspicion, “are you going to go do something that will make us stand out?”

“No?”
“Victor.”

“Just give me one minute. I won’t.”

“Promise?”

“No.”

Victor talks to the lady who hadn’t recognized him, but luckily there’s another staff member standing near her, now, who perks up at the sight of him, mouthing his name silently. He smiles and takes a photo with him before explaining his current situation. The staff member nods enthusiastically, and when he comes back to the planetarium doors, Yuuri looks horrified, folding his arms across his chest and standing out of the way while the doors are unlocked for them.

“What?” Victor asks, bumping his shoulder.

“I cannot believe you just did that.”

“Ah, but you’re smiling.”

He had asked the observatory staff to turn on any projection, and they’d turned an image of the night sky, none of the constellations labeled. The planetarium is bigger than he’d anticipated, row after row of black seats in a u-shape surrounding them. They sit down beside each other in the middle, looking up at the projection.

“It is pretty,” Victor notes.

“There’s Ursa Minor.”

Victor frowns, squinting and shaking his head. “What, where?”

Yuuri takes his hand and points with his index finger, tracing the image in the air. “Right there, see?”

“How do you know that?”

The skater shrugs. “I don’t know, we learned about them in school and I always thought they were interesting. And, there… That’s Libra, I think.”

“Where’s Capricorn?” Victor asks.

“Umm, I’m not sure. I know mine, Sagittarius, and it’s over here.”

Victor watches as Yuuri points out different shapes in the sky, getting adorably confused by what some are and having to look them up on his phone. At some point, his head is on Victor’s shoulder, their fingers lazily intertwined, Victor leaning back onto him. They had removed the armrest between them and their thighs are pressed against each other, feet occasionally bumping.

They sit in silence for a while, Yuuri sometimes mumbling something about the stars low in Victor’s ear and the noise sending a warm feeling throughout Victor’s entire body. There’s something about having Yuuri all to himself like this, something about them just enjoying each other’s company, about the feeling of Yuuri’s hair nuzzling Victor’s neck and his glasses occasionally brushing against him.

“This is nice,” Yuuri says after a while.

“It is,” Victor agrees, shutting his eyes. He toys absent-mindedly with Yuuri’s fingers, content.
“Wasn’t it worth it?”

“Yes, but you’re still a show-off.”

“Only for you.”

Yuuri hums contentedly, snuggling farther into Victor. “Listen, Victor… Could I… Could I ask you something?”

He sounds nervous, unsure of every word. Victor purses his lips, stilling the movements of his hands and opening his eyes, but all he can see is Yuuri’s hair, his face hidden. “Anything.”

“Do you like me?”

(Did he like him?)

(What was that supposed to mean? Was it a trick question? Was he joking?)

“What?” he asks, confused.

“Nothing, never mind.”

Victor pulls away, trying to see his eyes under the dim light of the fake stars but unable to do so. “Tell me.”

Yuuri shakes his head. “It’s nothing, I just… It’s nothing. Sorry. I don’t want to ruin our time.”

“You talk to me;” Victor insists, placing a hand on his shoulder, his other hand still holding Yuuri’s own.

“It’s nothing. I’m sorry I brought it up. Listen, I—”

The doors open, and the staff member who had let them in earlier walks inside. “They need to clean and prepare the room for the next showing in a half hour. I’m sorry, Mr. Nikiforov.”

“Oh, that’s fine,” he says. “We’ll leave.”

(He doesn’t miss the way Yuuri swallows before standing up, keeping Victor’s hand in a tight grip, like he’s afraid to let go.)

They leave the building and it’s darker out, now, a few stars visible above them, but not nearly enough to make sense of any constellations. He wants to bring up what Yuuri had been about to tell him, wants to talk about it more than anything in the world, but it seems that any time he gets close to doing so, Yuuri will do something and they’ll be off topic once again.

“Let’s rent bikes,” Victor suggests after they’ve made their way down the hill that the observatory sits on, not quite sure of where they’re going. “Do you think that place is still open?”

Yuuri squints at the bike rental stand in the distance. “It doesn’t look like it’s manned. Maybe we can rent them any time.”

It turns out he’s right. Victor swipes his credit card—earning a why-do-you-always-pay-for-everything stare from Yuuri—enters some information, and retrieves two bikes from the stand.

“Where should we go?”

“I don’t know,” Yuuri muses, glancing around. “Maybe that way?” He points out towards a woody
area with a thin path running through it—if the flattened dirt could even be considered a path. He figures it’ll be perfect, it probably won’t have many people, and wonders if Yuuri is thinking the same thing.

“Okay, that way it is.”

They bike for a while, and Victor realizes he had forgotten how physically fit Yuuri is as the younger man passes him with ease, laughing over his shoulder and turning a sharp corner expertly. Victor isn’t weak, but he certainly doesn’t have the legs of a competitive figure skater.

“Come on, Victor!” he encourages, speeding ahead.

“Yuuri, wait,” the actor drones, gripping the handlebars with sweaty hands. The cold air of the night drifts through his hair and chafes against his skin, but it feels good, invigorating. He can’t remember the last time he had felt like this.

Eventually, Yuuri stops, panting, and sets his feet on the ground. “That was fun.”

“Definitely a workout.”

He laughs, running a hand through his hair, and he’s sweating, too, but on him it looks good, purposeful. It’s unfair, really. “Now we just have to get back.”

“Alright, but you’re going at my speed,” Victor claims, picking up his bike to turn it around.

By the time they make it to the car, bikes having been deposited at the rental place, they’re both sweaty. Yuuri is desperately drinking a bottle of water that he’d left in Victor’s car. “Should we go back to the hotel?” Yuuri asks, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

“You could come back to my place?” Victor suggests.

Yuuri stares at him.

Victor stares back, confused.

“Not like that. No, no, I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Oh.”

“Did you want me to mean it like that?”

“No!” Yuuri says quickly, waving his hands. “No, no. I just… Thought you did. Mean it like that.” He clears his throat. “Um, I mean, I need to shower.”

Victor shrugs. “So do I. I have a shower.”

Yuuri stares at him again.

“Not like that! Yuuri, when did you get such a dirty mind?” Victor complains, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“I wasn’t thinking that! I was just thinking about Phichit. I could text him and I could take a taxi back to the hotel later.”

Victor turns on the car and backs out of the parking lot, making his way back onto the road. “I could drive you back, I don’t mind.”
“Are you sure?”
“Or… If you didn’t want me to drive you back so late… And you didn’t want to spend money on a taxi… You could sleep over? And, before you say it, not like that. Just, you know, crash on the couch or something. I have, like, five.”

“Five what?”
“Couches.”
“You… You have five couches?”
Victor shrugs. “That’s not that many couches. And there’s a guest room. That would make more sense, I suppose.”

“You have a guest room?”
(Is he bragging on accident? Judging by the shocked look on Yuuri’s face, Victor figures he’s bragging. He hadn’t meant to.) He finds a way to backtrack. “You don’t have to. I just… Didn’t really want our night to end.”

“I don’t want it to, either. I’ll ask Phichit. But I’d need clothes… Do you…?”
“I have clothes.”
“I’m guessing a lot.”
Victor grins at him. “Are you making another stab at me?”

“Always,” Yuuri promises, biting his lip. Then, his expression falls, eyes widening, breath catching. “Victor, watch the road!”

He swerves their car to the left. “Sorry.”

~

Yuuri isn’t sure what to expect from Victor’s house.

It was only when he had mentioned a guest room that Yuuri had realized how little he had thought about it before—it was as though he had always assumed that Victor lived on a cloud or in some mystical palace. He’d never figured that he had real, actual property. Real windows and a real driveway and a real mailbox that he probably never checked.

(But he does have all of those things.)

It’s in a gated community, for safety and privacy reasons, Yuuri figures, and Victor pulls up to the gatekeeper’s window. “привет!” Victor greets.

Yuuri frowns, a bit thrown off by the foreign language. The gatekeeper responds in Russian, smiling brightly. It’s a man with white hair and a thick beard, his eyes bright blue. Then, he points at Yuuri and, judging from his tone, whatever he says next is a question.

“Это мой друг,” Victor answers, chuckling.

“Дружок?”
Victor blushes and shakes his head. (Yuuri hardly ever sees Victor blush.) He frowns and glances at the gatekeeper, wondering what he was saying. Victor licks his lips and pauses before replying, “Еще нет.”

The gatekeeper laughs, giving him a thumbs up, and presses the button, letting them drive past. He gives an extra wave to Yuuri, who waves back. Yuuri stares at Victor, puzzled. “That was Russian?”

“Mhmm. Alexei has been working there since I moved in, he’s very nice.”

Yuuri shifts in his seat. “And what did he say to you? When he pointed at me?”

“Oh, nothing, just asked who you were. I told him a friend. He’s not used to me…”

His words trail off, and it takes Yuuri a moment to realize what he had been about to say. Surely Victor brought people home often? It wasn’t as though he was short on friends. He had Mila and Yurio and Yakov…

(Though, now that Yuuri thinks about it, Victor doesn’t necessarily come off as a socialite. Yuuri had always assumed that somebody with his life would be attending a wild Hollywood party every other night, but Victor seemed calmer compared to those types of celebrities. More reserved, which was a word that Yuuri had never previously associated with him, but it seemed to fit, in a way.)

The houses along the sides of the road are…

They’re…

Not houses. Mansions. They’re ridiculous. Yuuri feels as though they’re going to fall on top of him at any moment and bury him alive. Feels as though he’s surrounded by mountains.

And then Victor stops the car.

“You do not live here.”

(Yuuri recalls a memory with Phichit back in Detroit. Phichit, out of curiosity, had Googled Victor’s net worth and had had to count the amount of commas in the number twice to ensure that it was correct.)

Victor is staring at him, confused. “What do you mean?”

Yuuri isn’t sure how to tear his eyes away from the beast that stands before him, looming over every other house in the neighborhood on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Giant palm trees stand in front of it, the last pink of the sunset lowering in the distance, as though bowing to it out of respect. He figures one brick on that roof is worth more than his every possession.

Victor pulls into the driveway, pressing a button on a small clicker contained in the cupholder of his car. And the garage door opens.

(Either Victor was secretly an expert burglar, or this truly was his home.)

Even the garage is…

Yuuri has no words.

There are two staircases leading to the main door of the building, since it’s on an awkwardly shaped hill, and the driveway is off to the left, lowered. The house looks to be three stories tall. The exterior walls are beige while the roof is made of reddish-brown bricks. The plants in the front are
blossoming, trees and small bushes lining the walkways.

“Do you take care of this?” Yuuri asks breathlessly, stepping out of the garage and into the front of the lot, examining a plant.

“What, the plants? No, there’s a gardener.”

“A gardener,” Yuuri repeats.

(He has an epiphany, then.)

(He had forgotten something over the past several weeks.)

(That Victor was rich.)

(On the surface, yes, Yuuri had always remembered that—he knew that Victor could probably buy several helicopters if it fancied him—but the extensiveness of his fortune had never really hit Yuuri until now. How could some successful movies lead to this?)

“Do you… want to come inside? Or would you rather look at the plants?”

Yuuri turns to Victor. He almost feels as though he should get down on his knees. He’s talking to a millionaire. Billionaire? No, probably not a billionaire. Honestly though, to Yuuri, it’s the same difference. “I… Okay.”

He follows Victor inside, and the interior only makes his stomach turn more. Makkachin hops on Yuuri, his paws on his legs, and Yuuri smiles at him and pets his head. “He looks just like my dog.”

Victor smiles sympathetically, patting Makkachin. “Get off of him, Makkachin.”

Yuuri bends down to pet the dog, who happily pants up at him. The skater glances around the room, and it’s just the mud room, but it’s already bigger than Yuuri’s actual bedroom back in Haesetsu. They go up some stairs and then they’re in the foyer, a giant chandelier looming threateningly over both of their heads and ridiculous abstract artwork hung on the walls.

“Do you…? You’re sort of quiet.”

He glances at Victor. “What? Oh, um, sorry, I’m just a bit… Well… Your house is kind of…”

“You don’t like it?” Victor asks, looking a little hurt. He kicks off his shoes and leaves them by the grand staircase. “You can take your shoes off, if you want?”

Yuuri does. “It’s not that I don’t like it.” It’s more that he feels like he shouldn’t be standing in it. He feels as though by breathing the air of this house he’s lowering the value of it. It makes him feel a little bit better when Makkachin jumps on the nearest lounge chair, which has an ornate decorative pillow on it.

“Would you like a drink? Or a snack? Have you had dinner?”

“I ate some food before you picked me up, but I wouldn’t mind a snack,” he admits.

Victor smiles and leaves towards what Yuuri assumes is the kitchen. Yuuri forgets to walk for a second, staring at the staircase. Then he follows him.

The kitchen has a giant window replacing one of it’s walls, and it takes Yuuri a minute to realize that it’s also a sliding glass door leading to a wide, brick patio with a pool. A swimming pool. And a hot
tub. Not to mention a large, grassy yard off to the left.

“Makkachin likes the yard,” Victor explains, noticing his gaze. “That’s why I bought this one, actually. It’s a perfect size for him.”

(That was why he had bought this one?)

(For the yard?)

“Oh, that’s nice,” Yuuri answers, feeling a bit light-headed. He sits down and tries to focus on something other than the grandeur of the building. Victor opens his fridge—it’s hardly stocked—then moves to a pantry, instead, and comes back with a container.

“Want Pringles?”

“Sure,” Yuuri responds. Phichit was a fan of Pringles, he used to buy them all the time back in Detroit.

Victor passes him the red container, then looks in the fridge once again. “I really have no food. If I’d had known you were coming over, I would’ve stocked up.”

He laughs, taking off the plastic lid and removing a chip. Luckily, it doesn’t taste like it’s made out of gold. “Don’t worry about it.” Yuuri glances out the window again. “So you have a pool?”

“Oh, yeah, it’s nice,” Victor says nonchalantly. “Makkachin likes that, too. He loves swimming, especially when the weather is nice.”

He is starting to notice that Victor seems to care more about Makkachin’s happiness than most other things. It’s kind of charming. He eats another Pringle and smiles. “I’d love to see him swim. He’s very cute.”

“What was your dog’s name?” Victor asks, a little quietly, as though asking for permission.

It was a sensitive topic, but he also appreciates Victor broaching it. What he doesn’t appreciate, though, is that specific question, considering he had named his dog after him. “His name was… Um, it was Vicchan.”

“Vicchan? That’s a nice name.”

He didn’t make the connection. Yuuri sighs internally with relief. “How long have you lived here for?”

“Oh, a while now. Now what would you like to do? Watch a movie, play pool, or go swimming—it’s late at night but we could anyway—or something else? Ooh, I have air hockey. Do you like air hockey? Or ping pong.”

Yuuri is slightly overwhelmed. “Could I shower first? That is, if you don’t mind.”

“Oh, I forgot,” Victor says, running a hand through his hair. Was Victor nervous about something, or was Yuuri going insane? “Of course, let’s find you some clothes.”

He leaves the Pringles on the kitchen counter but Victor insists that he brings them, so he awkwardly carries them up the stairs as Makkachin bounds behind them, tongue hanging out of his mouth, still excited to see a stranger in the house. Victor leads him down the hallway to a room. His bedroom.

Yuuri glances around, curious. There’s a framed photograph on a bookshelf in the corner—him,
Makkachin, Yurio, Mila, and Yakov—and another beside it, just of Makkachin on the beach. The books themselves are scarce, but Yuuri sees several, several biographies.

“Other actors and actresses always send me their books,” Victor explains, shrugging. “It’s nice of them, I suppose, but I didn’t really want fifty autobiographies of people I hardly even know in my bedroom. But I also never want to get rid of them.”

“What’s this?” Yuuri asks, picking up a small gold medal, because it doesn’t look like any acting award he has ever seen before. There’s an inscription on it, but it’s too scratched to make out. It’s obviously made of plastic and not real gold, he realizes upon further inspection. There’s a green ribbon woven through a wide hole in the top.

Victor opens a door—a walk-in closet, of course—and starts digging around for clothes. He looks over his shoulder to see what Yuuri is talking about. “Oh, that’s… It’s silly. That’s a medal I got after I performed in my first play at school.”

Yuuri smiles at him, his heart warming. “That’s not silly, that’s nice.”

“I’m pretty sure they gave one to everyone. I don’t remember the name of the play, though. I’ll have to look it up, sometime.”

“But it’s how you first got interested in acting?” he asks, still holding the medal. He tries to picture a tiny Victor receiving it and being overjoyed, and the image is almost painfully adorable. He wonders if he had grown out his hair when he had been very young, or if he had only done it in his late teenage years.

“I think so. I liked the stage lights.”

Yuuri sets it down and squints at the bookshelf. “Shakespeare?”

“I played Hamlet, once. After I landed my first movie role.”

He had already known that Victor had played Hamlet—Yuuri had watched the performance several times on YouTube—but he decides not to add that. Victor exits the closet with a white t-shirt and black sweatpants in his hands. “Will these work? I don’t know if they’ll fit, but… Oh, and…” He ducks back into the closet and comes back with a pair of boxers. “I don’t know if you prefer boxers or briefs?”

Yuuri blushes, shrugging. “Either way.”

“Alright, well, you can use the shower in the guest bathroom, if you want. It’s down the hall and to the left.”

“Thanks,” he says, taking the clothes from him and smiling.

The shower has a sliding glass door and marble walls that Yuuri stares at for a solid two minutes before remembering that he should, probably, at some point, turn the water on. After the water has heated up and he’s under the pounding jets, he squints at the label on the shampoo and conditioner two-in-one bottle. Typically, Yuuri uses them both separately, but he tries it anyway.

Then, he gets dressed in Victor’s clothes, which almost fit. The sweatpants are too big, falling down on his waist and dragging on the ground slightly, and the t-shirt is slightly broad in the shoulders, but he is comfortable.

(He ignores the fact that he’s currently wearing Victor’s boxers. It’s for the best that he doesn’t
address that fact. He’s not sure what would happen if he were to dwell on the thought for too long.)

First, he opens up a newly purchased plastic toothbrush that he finds, figuring Victor won’t mind, and brushes his teeth with some toothpaste from a cabinet. He examines his hair in the mirror and searches for a comb, not finding one in any of the drawers. He does the best that he can with his fingers, then leaves in search of Victor.

When he enters Victor’s bedroom once again, the closet lights are on and the actor isn’t in sight. “Victor, do you have a—”

Yuuri looks around the corner and sees Victor shirtless, searching through his racks of clothes. He sees Yuuri and smiles, running a hand through his own wet hair. “Have a what?”

Yuuri blinks.

Don’t look at his chest. Don’t look at his chest.

(Mission failed.)

He had seen Victor shirtless in movies before, yes—it seemed as though producers would utilize any possibility to get him to remove articles of clothing—but it was a completely different experience in real life. His stomach is flat, muscular, his skin practically glowing, and Yuuri wonders why this his pectorals aren’t the eighth wonder of the world.

“A comb?”

“Oh, sure.” Victor exits the closet. Still shirtless. Very shirtless. Noticeably shirtless. Distinctly shirtless. He retrieves a comb from his bathroom and hands it to Yuuri before entering the closet once again. “My clothes don’t fit too well, huh? I can try and find smaller ones if you’d like.”

“No, that’s fine,” Yuuri assures him. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Are you sure?”

“They’re sort of comfortable, actually.”

Victor pulls a shirt over his head (and if Yuuri swallows at the sight, eyes drawn to his back, is he really to be blamed?) and turns, looking him up and down. He shrugs. “Well, now it’s up to you. Ping pong, air hockey, pool, swimming, er, what else? Video games, board games…”

“I would say air hockey, but I’m afraid I’d make you cry.”

“Is that a challenge, Yuuri?”

He pretends to look nonchalant, rocking back on his heels. “I don’t even think it’d be a competition, more of a carnage.”

~

A while later, Yuuri has won every game that they have played.

“Life is meaningless,” Victor complains, over-dramatically laying on the floor of his basement. Yuuri tugs on his arm, trying to get him to stand up. “Come on, Victor, I was just kidding…”

Victor takes advantage of the contact and pulls Yuuri down beside him, hands moving to his side to
tickle him. Yuuri yelps and scrambles to get away, but Victor pins him down. The skater can’t stop laughing, can hardly catch his breath, and grabs at Victor’s wrists, trying desperately to stop him.

“Victor—Victor please!”

“I didn’t know you were ticklish,” Victor teases, hands stilling, his face only inches away from Yuuri’s own.

Yuuri catches his breath, hands squeezing Victor’s wrists in a death-grip. “Why do I have a feeling that I’m going to regret you finding that out?”

“It’s cute,” he promises, removing his wrists anyway and standing up, pretending to dust off his knees.

He feels his cheeks heating at the compliment and stands up beside Victor, his hands defensively covering his sides. “Want to do something less reliant on exercise? And less competitive?”

“Only because you keep winning. Here, I have an idea.”

They head back up to the kitchen and Victor makes them both tea. “Sugar?” he asks Yuuri.

“Sure, just a bit, thanks.”

Victor hands him the cup and waits expectantly for his reaction. “It’s my favorite brand.”

It’s delicious—there’s a kick of flavor to it that Yuuri can’t quite put his finger on. “This is great.”

“They don’t sell it in the U.S., so I always pick up some whenever I visit St. Petersburg,” he explains, taking a sip of his own cup. Then, he leads Yuuri to a living space with a large window on one wall, looking out over the rest of the neighborhood. It’s night out, now, and Yuuri yawns.

There’s a fireplace with a white, L-shaped sectional couch beside it. It’s a modern fireplace—one that Yuuri probably wouldn’t have even noticed if Victor hadn’t lit it. It is surrounded by a white, ceramic base. The fire comes to life almost immediately, contained by a clear screen, and the smoke is lifted up and away through a hole in the ceiling. The warmth is lovely, and Yuuri reaches his hands out towards it.

Victor sits beside him, cradling his cup in his hands. The room is large, the floor made of a rich cherry wood. The couch is covered in decorative pillows, the color scheme of the room seeming far too well thought-out to be Victor’s doing. Off to the side is an ottoman that Yuuri figures had come with the couch, and that looks like it would fit perfectly in the middle of it.

“If I lived here, I would never leave,” Yuuri tells him.

The actor smiles at that, sipping his tea. “How come?”

“It’s gorgeous. Huge. You have everything.”

“It’s not that great,” Victor protests.

Yuuri wonders if he’s serious, or if he’s just saying that. Sometimes, with Victor, it’s hard to tell. After all, he was the type of man who insisted on buying everything for Yuuri and had bought a house with a large swimming pool for his dog to use.

There’s a dark blue blanket laying over one edge of the couch and Victor leans to grab it, laying it across both of their laps. It’s possibly the softest thing Yuuri has ever touched in his life. “See? Even
“This blanket is, like, perfect.”

“A British diplomat gave that to me, once,” Victor remembers, eyebrows drawing together. “I think that was who it was. Or did he give me a blender?”

Yuuri presses his cheek against the fabric, sighing. “It’s so soft. It doesn’t even feel real.”

“Do you want it? I’m sure I have another somewhere.”

(It was the things like that.)

(Victor nonchalantly offering him a blanket from a foreign diplomat.)

(As if it was just another Friday night conversation.)

(It was the things like that that reminded Yuuri that Victor wasn’t, in fact, normal. It reminds him of when the planetarium had been closed, when most people would’ve simply walked away disappointed but Victor had gone out of his way to get what he had wanted. It reminds him of that time at the overcrowded restaurant.)

And, yes, Yuuri knows he’s trying to be kind, trying to be nice, thoughtful. And in many ways he is. But at the same time, things like that make Yuuri remember the sharp contrast between them, the unending fear that this would never work out, that they really, really weren’t compatible in any way, shape, or form.

Because Victor deserved…

Somebody on his level.

And Yuuri doesn’t know who that would be, but he certainly knows it’s not him.

(He’d asked Victor earlier that night why he liked him.)

(But then he’d backed off, realized what a stupid question that would be, realized that he would ruin their entire night by broaching an insecurity like that. The last thing he wanted was for Victor to think that he was being clingy.)

“No, I couldn’t take this,” Yuuri laughs, shaking his head, because couldn’t Victor tell how ridiculous he was being? Most likely not.

Victor doesn’t respond, just sips his tea. Makkachin is laying at the other end of the couch, already snoring. Yuuri feels tired, too, from biking and viewing stars and air hockey and, most of all, just from being around Victor. A good sort of tired, though. The warm type of tired that made him want to wrap his arms around the closest object and succumb to his exhaustion.

He yawns at that thought, and feels Victor wrap an arm around his side, fitting it between the couch and Yuuri’s back. “I’m tired,” Yuuri admits, shutting his eyes. The fire is hot and the tea is, too, and he’s not sure he will ever be able to leave this place, this room, this couch, this person.

“Do you want to head to bed?”

“No, I want to keep talking to you,” he complains, covering Victor’s hand on his side with his own, Victor’s fingers cold.

Victor hums at the touch. “Hang on, I’ll be right back, I have an idea.”
He stands up and pushes the matching ottoman from the corner of the room into the middle of the couch, transforming the couch into a square shape that would be perfect for laying down on. Victor puts his hands on his hips and grins proudly at Yuuri.

“Neat trick,” Yuuri compliments, stretching his legs out on the newly available space.

Victor plops down beside him. “Are you done with your tea?

He takes one last sip, finishing it, then hands Victor his cup. He sets both of them down on the marble table. Yuuri tugs the blanket higher, covering his neck and lowering himself until he’s comfortable, head resting against the couch cushions.

“You’d rather sleep here than the bedroom?”

“I’m not sleeping, just resting,” Yuuri protests, though another yawn isn’t helping his case.

Victor matches his position, and Yuuri takes a risk, leaning forward and resting his head on Victor’s shoulder. Luckily, the older man wraps an arm around him again, holding Yuuri tight against him. Yuuri sighs against the fabric of his shirt. He isn’t sure what’s softer—Victor or the blanket. The warmth and the aftertaste of the tea are slowly luring him to sleep, but he fights to stay awake.

“Victor?”

“Mmm?” he asks, and then he’s touching Yuuri’s hair, his fingers carding through the strands, and Yuuri just melts, letting out a soft breath, lips parting. He briefly wonders if Victor is perfect. Or, at least, as close as someone could get to perfection. Every moment with him feels like an honor.

“Thank you.”

“For what?” His voice is low, gentle, and Victor’s thumb brushes across Yuuri’s temple.

There aren’t really words that can describe what Victor has done for him, has done to it. Victor had turned his life around completely in a mere month, had shown him kindness, had shown him respect.

“Everything. This job and spending time with me and driving me places.”

It’s a lame explanation of what he means to him, but it’s impossible to describe, impossible to calculate. Victor is indefinable, unpredictable, incredible. He is everything that Yuuri isn’t, and Yuuri has found himself coming to admire Victor even with his flaws, which only seem to make his personality more endearing, more attractive.

Victor doesn’t respond for a moment, his hand on Yuuri’s hair stilling. Yuuri protests by leaning into the touch, and Victor seems to understand, resuming the movements. “You shouldn’t be thanking me for any of that. I should be thanking you for everything.”

He shakes his head. He’s wrong, so, so wrong. “That’s… Why would you be thanking me?”

“I don’t know where to start, Голубушка.”

Yuuri turns his head to meet his eyes, but he’s too tired, so he gives up halfway, contenting himself on burrowing back into Victor’s chest, one of his hands bunching up the fabric of his t-shirt. “What does that mean?”

Victor doesn’t answer, just brushes some of Yuuri’s hair to the side, his other hand drifting to his back, drawing incoherent shapes with his index finger. The touch is soft, gentle, as though he’s caressing something delicate.
“Victor? What does the word mean?”

His response is quiet, the word barely audible. “Darling.”

Yuuri grins madly, can’t help it. His chest threatens to explode with happiness, his lungs constricting, and he tries desperately to control his reaction. (Because Victor, truly, really, had just called him darling in Russian.) “It sounds pretty. Say it again?”

“Голубушка.”

“I like it,” Yuuri muses. “Can I ask you something?”

Victor’s nails scrape against his scalp and it takes all of Yuuri’s self-control not to moan, the sensation impossibly good, body instinctively moving closer to Victor’s. One of his legs snakes between both of his, but Victor doesn’t seem to mind, reaching down and kissing him on his hair, lips lingering there for a minute. “Of course.”

“I’ve heard Yakov call you Vitya before. How come?”

“It’s a Russian thing called a diminutive. It’s like a nickname.”

Yuuri licks his lips. “It sounds nice.”

“You could call me that, if you wanted,” Victor says, and his hand moves to the back of Yuuri’s neck, brushing across the hairs there. Yuuri shivers.

He rolls over so that he can see Victor, reaching up a hand to cup his cheek. Victor leans into the touch, his hand still brushing through Yuuri’s hair, as though the motion is automatic. “Vitya,” Yuuri says, testing the nickname on his tongue, enjoying the way it feels, enjoying the way Victor seems to melt a little bit at the sound.

Victor moves his hand from his hair to the back of his head, lifting him up just high enough so that they can kiss, Victor’s lips lingering there, his free hand gripping Yuuri’s knee, which had bent so that he could keep his balance. “You’re gorgeous.”

“You’re gorgeous,” Yuuri protests, leaning upwards to kiss him again, wet and hot and tasting of tea. Then he falls back down onto Victor’s chest, content to cuddle with him once again. “Do you want me to go to the guest room? I think I’m about to fall asleep.”

“No, stay,” Victor insists, shutting his own eyes and leaning his head back on the couch pillows.

He doesn’t argue.

(But he does listen to the sound of Victor’s breathing, does let himself succumb to his touch. He does fall asleep between the soft blanket and soft fabric of Victor’s t-shirt, does hear Victor saying something to him before he drifts off. Mumbled, quiet. Russian, maybe? Or had it been English?)

(He does feel lips pressing to his hairline after he falls asleep, but it’s so light, so surreal, that he can’t be sure it actually happened.)
Yuuri fills a room.

(With life, with laughter, with love.)

Victor yawns as he wakes up, noticing a distinct absence on his chest. His shirt is wrinkled, his head resting on a throw pillow, and the blanket is drifting down one of his shoulders. At some point during the night, he had ended up completely horizontal, the edges of the couch forgotten. Victor blinks—the fire is off, when had that happened?—and turns his head. “Yuuri?”

There’s no answer. He stretches out his limbs before rolling off of the couch cushions and setting his feet on the floor. His eyes hardly work, he rubs at them to try and remove the layers of sleep. There’s light flooding in through the windows, and he supposes it’s still early, the sky a light blue and the sun peeking out from behind a palm tree.

A text on his phone from Yakov. **You’re in the tabloids again. Call me.**

He’s not particularly surprised, nor does he particularly care.

But there’s humming.

(Humming?)

He drags his feet towards the sound, trying to sort his hair out with his fingers, though it’s nearly impossible without a mirror. When he looks through the kitchen entrance, Yuuri is standing by the stove, still wearing Victor’s baggy t-shirt and sweatpants, humming.

Victor’s heart stops in his chest.

When he moves to the side to look in the fridge, Victor can see he’s cooking eggs in a pan on the stove. He doesn’t recognize the tune that he’s humming, but it’s slow, charming. His hair is ruffled, glasses on his nose, and he presses a spatula into the pan, doing something that Victor can’t see.

Victor feels like he’s filming a wildlife documentary. He’s scared to move, scared to breathe too loudly, scared to do anything to disrupt the moment. Because Katsuki Yuuri had woken up in his house and began making breakfast, wearing Victor’s clothes. And Makkachin is laying beside the fridge near his dog bowls, still asleep.

It’s…

Domestic.

(And normally Victor isn’t a fan of domestic. He’d always associated domestic with boring, domestic with something that average people did. Putting up white picket fences and making small talk on the phone in the middle of the evening, waiting for a casserole to heat up in the oven.)

(He didn’t like domestic. Didn’t like the idea of it. He had no prejudice against those who allowed domesticity to take over their lives—but no, it wasn’t for Victor.)

(But a lot of things had been changing lately.)

Yuuri turns around and freezes, eyes widening. It takes a moment for a smile to melt across his face, the type that makes Victor turn to jello, the kind that makes him want to forget the eggs and let his house burn down while he kisses Yuuri senseless, lifting him off of his feet. He makes a gesture towards the pan. “I hope you don’t mind, I started making us eggs.”
“You didn’t tell me you could cook, too.”

Yuuri laughs a little—it’s breathless, adorable, and every time Victor thinks it’s impossible for him to get better he just does, as if taking that thought as a challenge—and licks his lips, glancing at the pan. “I mean, it’s just eggs.”

(And there’s something about his lips, pink and inviting.)

Victor walks across the room, placing his hands on Yuuri’s hips and grinning down at him. “What else can you do?”

The skater blushes. “Not much. I’m afraid cooking eggs and figure skating are the extent of my skills.”

“Selling yourself short,” Victor chastises. “You’re very good at many, many things. Such as… Being smart, being kind, being attractive.”

“I don’t think being something counts as a skill. That wouldn’t look great on a résumé. Not to mention that some of those things are very arguable, and very opinionated.”

(And there’s something about the sight of him in Victor’s clothes.)

Victor hums. “I’d like somebody to try and argue with me on any of those points.” He lowers his lips to Yuuri’s neck, kissing his way from his collar bone to his shoulder.

“As much as I—ah, Victor—would like to keep going with this, my eggs are going to burn.”

He sighs and backs away, letting Yuuri take the pan of eggs and deposit them onto a plate, proudly presenting it to him. Victor grabs a fork and places it on the plate, then sits down at the kitchen counter, watching as Yuuri cracks open another egg.

It’s as domestic as domestic can get.

(And Victor can’t stop smiling.)
Phichit leaves for Detroit, Victor and Yuuri have a discussion about their relationship, and everyone begins preparing for the production of the film.

Phichit is leaving on Sunday.

Yuuri understands that he has to get back to training, that he needs to work hard if he hopes to qualify for the Grand Prix Final, but at the same time, he still selfishly wants Phichit to stick around. It was easier, having someone else with him. Yes, he’d grown close to Victor, but really, Victor was his only friend.

(There were Mila and Christophe, who were both kind to him, but it wasn’t as though they hung out together much.)

(And then there was Yurio. Yuuri still isn’t sure how to label that relationship.)

On Saturday night, Victor comes over to the hotel for dinner. Yuuri cooks, making katsudon with ingredients he’d scavenged from the nearest grocery store. They had all been to the rink earlier, and hadn’t eaten since.

“Yuuri, this is delicious,” Victor compliments.

Phichit hums in agreement, picking up his glass of water.

Yuuri smiles and sits down between them on the couch, his own plate in his lap. “Thanks. Family recipe.”

By the time they’ve finished eating, there’s a reality show that none of them are truly paying attention to blaring on the television. “Hey, Yuuri, would you do me a favor?” Phichit asks. He digs into his pocket and pulls out a wallet, producing a few dollar bills. “Could you go to the vending machine
and get me a soda?”

It’s an odd request.

(Not that Yuuri minds—it’s just odd. Why wouldn’t Phichit just go?)

“Oh, sure,” Yuuri answers, accepting the money. He stands up and walks to the door, glancing between Victor and Phichit one more time before leaving.

~

It’s always an awkward scenario, being alone with your friend’s friend.

He likes Phichit, and he’d been alone with him in the rink before, but even then Yuuri and Yurio had been on the other side of the ice. Plus, there had been something to do—a main focus. But now, he’s just sitting on the opposite end of the couch from Phichit, their already-empty plates on the coffee table in front of them. He licks his lips and looks at the television, unsure of what to do or say.

“Listen, Victor, I wanted to talk to you.”

Victor turns to him, surprised. “To me?”

Phichit nods and leans back against the couch, propping his feet up on the table. His expression is… Knowing, maybe? Protective? “About Yuuri.”

“Oh, I…” He glances at the door. “Is that why you…?”

“He’s my best friend.”

Victor rubs the back of his neck. Was that a statement, or was he waiting for an answer? And if it was a statement, why would Phichit be telling him that in the first place? “Er, yes?”

Phichit picks up the TV remote and turns off the television. “And if my best friend were to get hurt…”

Oh.

(Oh.)

So it was this sort of talk?

But they weren’t even dating, weren’t even…

(Well.)

(Were they dating?)

(They were certainly close. Certainly spent a lot of time together. Went places together. Kissed on several occasions. What exactly defined dating?)

“When would he get hurt?” Victor asks, because the last thing he wants is for Yuuri to get hurt in any way, shape, or form. He would never let that happen.

“Because he likes you, and you obviously like him. But you’ve both got very different lives, and if something were to not work out, I think it would break him.”
Victor isn’t sure what to say. His throat is dry. What was Phichit talking about, different lives? They weren’t *that* different. And even if they were, what did it matter? “Phichit, you’ve got the wrong idea. I wouldn’t ever do anything to hurt Yuuri.”

“I know that, I think. But I think you might on accident,” Phichit says, concerned, “and I don’t want that to happen, so just be careful, okay?”

“I…” Victor swallows. “Okay, I will.”

He doesn’t expect what comes next.

Phichit moves across the couch and hugs him tight, shutting his eyes. After a moment of shock, Victor hugs him back.

“Take care of him for me?” His voice is quiet, reserved.

Each word hits Victor like a poignant bullet to the chest.

*Take care of him for me.*

Victor will. He knows he will.

(He knows because he can’t imagine doing anything else.)

“I will.”

The door creaks open and Phichit scrambles back to his original position, clearing his throat. “And then I said, ‘Yuuri, I don’t care *how* drunk you are, you can’t just steal government property.’”

Yuuri enters the room, soda in his hand. “What are you saying about me?”

Victor glances between them, still slightly dazed from what had just happened. “He was just telling me about your adventures in Detroit.”

“*Phichit,*” Yuuri warns, handing him the drink.

“The time you tried to steal a traffic cone,” Phichit recalls. “Remember?”

~

Victor doesn’t see Yuuri on Sunday.

He has a meeting with Yakov and Sara about his scheduling for the production of the movie. There were two foreign locations involved—they’d fly to Moscow for a week, then Barcelona for another week later on, both to represent different competitions portrayed in the movie. Other than that, the rest of the film would be shot around California.

On Monday, though, he picks Yuuri up at the hotel and takes him to the rink. It’s just the two of them that day.

It had been over a month since the training had started, and it’s easy to tell that Yuuri is stressed about getting all of the routines to appear half-decent before the filming starts. Victor can’t exactly
blame him—Yakov appears threatening to most everyone.

He notices it in the way that Yuuri doesn’t stray off topic, seems solely focused on the skating. Not that Victor minds. He does enjoy skating. It’s an interesting sport and he has improved dramatically in the past month thanks to his teacher.

(He simply enjoys Yuuri more.)

“Alright, we’re starting your last solo today,” Yuuri explains, and he has that little notebook in his hand, but he doesn’t have his glasses, so he’s squinting at the text. Victor fetches them from the half-wall of the rink and places them on himself, experimentally looking around. The world is blurry.

“What do you think?” he asks Yuuri.

The skater laughs. “I think you look blurry.”

“Oh, that’s a problem,” Victor complains. He rests his hands on Yuuri’s shoulders and moves in closer, their faces only inches apart. “Can you see me now?”

“You might need to get closer, actually,” he teases.

Victor grins and leans forward, glasses bumping into Yuuri’s face. “This is hard,” he complains, pulling away.

Yuuri takes the glasses off of him and puts them on himself. “You poked me.”

“Oh, sorry. They look better on you, anyway,” Victor promises, kissing him on his temple. The younger man smiles and turns his attention back to the notebook, flipping through a few pages.

~

Victor thinks a lot about Phichit’s words.

Thinks a lot about Yuuri, about himself.

(Thinks about them.)

“Vitya, are you listening to me?”

He blinks. “What?”

Yakov looks annoyed, folding his arms and placing them on the desk. “What are you thinking about? Something more important than your career? I’d love to know what it is.”

Victor shrugs innocently, mimicking Yakov’s pose and reclining in the chair. “…Nothing.”

He looks unimpressed. “I’m becoming concerned you won’t be able to film this movie if Yuuri is on the set with you. You’re very distracted.”

“I never said I was thinking about Yuuri,” Victor points out defensively.

Yakov just smiles—and is it sympathetic, or is Victor going crazy? “You didn’t have to. Now pay
attention for five minutes and then you can get back to daydreaming.”

He does. Then he leaves Yakov’s office, not playing any music on the ride home, just driving in silence. What did Yuuri think of their relationship? Victor recalls a time when he had accidentally called that night in the restaurant a date. (Did he figure that they were dating? Were they dating?)

Boyfriend.

The word sounds weird. Funny on his tongue.

Then he remembers how Yuuri had looked in his baggy clothes, making breakfast in Victor’s kitchen, Victor placing his hands on his hips and the younger man looking up at him through dark eyelashes. His hair had been ruffled from sleep, his lips pink, inviting…

No, no. Off topic. He was supposed to be thinking about their relationship.

Of course he’d love to date Yuuri. He realizes that, subconsciously, he has always been under the assumption that they were dating. But, really, they weren’t. Despite what the tabloids say.

When he gets home, he takes out his phone and opens social media. The number one trend is #Victuuri.

(Victuuri?)

Why was it filled with photos of him and Yuuri?

Oh, a combination of their names. Ha. Creative.

Victor opens the first photo on the tag. Him and Yuuri in the observatory, the photo sniped from nearby. Some sneaky fan, probably. They were looking up at the model of Mercury, holding hands. Victor’s shoulder was pressed flush against Yuuri’s. It’s a low resolution photo, and extremely creepy, but he finds himself enjoying it anyway, reliving the memory.

The first comment: They’re obviously making a movie about figure skating.

The second: This is sooo cute. I wonder how they met?!

The third: I didn’t know Victor Nikiforov was gay?

He rolls his eyes and closes out of that photo, moving to the next. An image of them walking towards the bike rentals in the park. How had they missed so many people taking photos of them?

(Upon closer inspection of the photo, his eyes are focused solely on Yuuri, his lips parted slightly, their hands joined.)

(Well, that explained it.)

He blames Yuuri and his tendency to be… Distracting.

Yakov had already told him off about the press, warning him to stay out of the limelight and keep his hands to himself for a while longer. Normally, Victor didn’t have a problem keeping secrets about productions.

(Normally, he didn’t have anything he was excited to talk about.)

(He’s excited to talk about Yuuri. Excited to post photos of him and do interviews with him and
travel to different set locations with him and do anything and everything with him.)

He remembers breakfast. Remembers the sight of Yuuri in his clothes, standing by the stove. The smell of eggs.

(Boyfriend?)

It still doesn’t work.

He remembers walking down Sunset Boulevard, their hands touching for the first time, the way that his heart had skipped a beat. The effect that Yuuri had on him had never faded, had never diminished. He still gets breathless looking at him, still forgets how incredible he is from time to time until he’s reminded and left with an even more angelic image of him cemented in his mind.

(Boyfriend?)

No, no. So much more.

“Makkachin, what did you think of Yuuri?” he asks his dog, floating on the top of the pool after he gets home. He needed somewhere to think.

Makkachin lays on the side of the pool, panting happily at him, his fur damp. Victor takes that as a positive sign. He swims over and leans his arms on the edge of the pool, resting his chin on his arms. “Did you like him?”

When he realizes that Makkachin isn’t going to reply for whatever reason, he lifts himself up by his palms onto the patio and dries off his hands before picking up his phone. He opens the messaging app, opens his conversation with Yuuri, then closes it. Then opens it again. Then closes it.

He succumbs.

(Is it clingy? Does Yuuri think he’s clingy?)

What are you doing?

There’s a read receipt after a moment, and then a bubble indicating that he was typing back. Victor watches in anticipation, absent-mindedly scratching Makkachin behind the ear. Then, the bubble disappears. Then reappears. Victor smiles, wondering what he had almost said.

Nothing, what are you doing?

Victor purses his lips, trying to think of a response. Something funny. Something to make Yuuri laugh. What would make him laugh? Nothing. Do you need someone to whisk you away from your hotel/prison?

A suite with a flat screen television and a king-sized bed hardly qualifies as a prison.

Come over? :( Victor wonders if the face is too much, too desperate, then he remembers that he is desperate. He hits send. Regrets it a moment later. It’s clingy, isn’t it? Yuuri probably thinks it’s clingy. Probably hates him now.

I’m working on routines. :( 

Victor lays down across his patio, back pressing against the cold bricks. “Is he going to make me beg, Makkachin? Or what if he doesn’t want to come over?”
But then there’s another text from Yuuri. **But I could be convinced.**

He grins like an idiot. Yuuri could be convinced. Was that a challenge? He picks up his towel and fluffs his hair with it, walking into the house, droplets of water trickling off of him. He can’t be bothered to care. Makkachin enters after him—shaking off his fur and making even more of a mess.

Victor types out a response. **Well, there would be many advantages if you worked on routines here rather than there.**

**Such as?**

**Such as, I have a very relaxing swimming pool for you to take a break in.**

**Anything else?** Victor laughs at the text, walking up the stairs and heading towards the shower.

He thinks for a moment. **Another mind for you to bounce ideas off of.**

**Who, Makkachin?**

Sometimes, Yuuri’s potential for sass scares him. **Just because of that, you have to come over. I’ll pick you up in an hour?**

Okay <3

That heart was…


It doesn’t go away when Victor pokes the phone screen, isn’t rescinded by a following text scrambling to apologize. He loves it. Shows it to Makkachin, who doesn’t even bother to look at the phone screen.

~

Perhaps it had been a bad idea to come over to Victor’s house.

Yuuri had been very, very productive earlier that afternoon.

Now, less so.

Victor’s hand is cradling his back as he lowers Yuuri against the arm of the couch, lips warm and pliant against his own, his legs straddling Yuuri’s. When his nose bumps against Yuuri’s glasses, he pulls back for a moment to remove them, placing them on the coffee table before kissing him again.

Yuuri moans when Victor’s mouth opens on top of his, his teeth running across Yuuri’s bottom lip. Victor swallows the sound, other hand weaving through Yuuri’s hair. Yuuri cradles his cheek with one hand and is holding onto him with the other. The fabric of his t-shirt is soft, the taste of his lips intoxicating.

He shifts upwards to get a better angle, his hand on Victor’s side shifting to his chest to push him back so that they can switch positions, Yuuri now on top of him instead. Victor looks surprised, his eyes flickering open, and Yuuri takes his wrists, pinning them to either side of his body and nipping at his neck, working his way down towards his shoulder.

Victor’s hands fly to the back of his head, holding him there, and he lets out a whimper—an actual
whimper—as Yuuri sucks on a particular spot. “Yuuri,” he breathes, chest rising and falling quickly, now, eyes half-lidded. Yuuri isn’t sure he has ever looked more attractive than he does now, underneath him, hair ruffled, lips bruised.

(And there’s something about knowing that he had done this.)

(That Victor looked like that because of him.)

He hums as he moves upwards again, Victor’s tongue darting out to meet his own, Yuuri releasing one of his wrists in favor of touching his hair, brushing the bangs back out of his eyes. Victor is a drug, really. Exhilarating, addictive. Yuuri was simply getting his fix, content to do nothing else for the rest of his life, content to remain eternally fixed in this moment.

“Where did that come from?” Victor asks after Yuuri pulls away for breath, a smile playing on his lips, his eyes searching.

“Where did what come from?” Yuuri responds shyly, rubbing the back of his neck. In truth, he knows that he’s talking about—normally Victor was on top whenever they kissed—but the truth is, Yuuri doesn’t know the answer to his question. Isn’t sure where that had come from.

Victor seems to understand. He leans upwards and kisses Yuuri chastely, hand cupping his cheek. “I liked it.”

He feels lightheaded. “You did?”

“A lot.”

Yuuri laughs, looking down at him. “I really haven’t gotten anything done since I came here.”

Victor leans back into the couch, running a hand through his hair to try and make sense of it, biting his lip in the most provocative way, making Yuuri’s heart stutter. A drug. Definitely a drug. It has been about fifteen seconds and he’s already feeling deprived, already feeling the adverse side effects. “What do you mean?” Victor asks.

“Remember how you told me I could come over here to work on routines?”

“Oh, right.”

Yuuri sighs and moves off of the couch, picking up his notebook, which had, at some point, been discarded carelessly on the floor. “You never actually wanted me to work on routines, did you?”

“Does that make me a bad person?” Victor asks innocently, turning onto his side and propping his chin up with his elbow to get a good look at him.

“Definitely.”

“It’s worth it either way.”

He sits back down on the couch, grabbing his glasses off of the coffee table and flipping to the last page. His notes are scrawled quickly, most of the ideas having come in the form of lightning bolts—threatening to leave in an instant. He starts to consider what could come after the step sequence in Yurio’s final routine, wonders if it would be better to…

Victor yawns and lays on top of him, pillowing his head on his chest.

“Victor, you’re a bit…”
The actor glances down at the notebook, which Yuuri can hardly see, a head of silver hair blocking it. “What? Am I distracting you?”

“You never give up, do you?”

Victor turns to kiss him again. “Nope. But I think that dedication is an admirable quality.”

Yuuri isn’t sure what to think about Victor.

(Because he would do things like this, make him feel like the center of the universe, but then he would do something like mention his millions of Twitter followers in an offhand remark, and the cycle would continue. Yuuri is in a constant flux of what think of him, of what to think of them.)

“Filming starts in a month,” Victor says quietly, playing with the fabric of Yuuri’s hoodie, the feeling ticklish. Yuuri shudders.

“What is filming like?”

He nuzzles his cheek against Yuuri’s chest, eyes falling shut. “Busy. Frustrating, sometimes, if we can’t get a take right. One time, I had to say the same line over and over again for two hours. Yakov is a picky director, which doesn’t help.”

“I hope he’s okay with the routines I choreographed,” Yuuri says, imaging Yakov’s outrage when none of the skaters in his movie could perform a half-decent routine. He drifts his fingers through Victor’s hair, and the actor sighs, leaning into the touch.

“Who, Yakov? He’ll be blown away, I’m sure. I know I am.”

Yuuri bites his lip, not saying anything.

“Are you worried about it? Because you shouldn’t be. Yakov already likes you more than he likes me.”

“That’s not true.”

“You’re less unruly,” Victor points out.

“Okay, that’s true.”

He pouts, and Yuuri leans down to kiss him.

“By the way,” Victor starts, “have you seen the new articles about us?”

“Phichit has sent me some of them,” Yuuri explains. “But I haven’t really read any. Are they saying anything?”

“Some are funny.” He pulls out his phone to scroll through them, staring at the screen. “A lot have determined that we’re working on a movie together of some sort. Others just talk about whether or not we’re dating.”

Yuuri swallows thickly, and notes the way Victor’s gaze bounces up to him at that last point, as though silently posing a question. They look at each other for a moment, and he’s not sure what to say, what to do. “Oh… Well, that’s… I could see how they’d make that assumption.”

“It makes sense.”
“Yeah, because of the… Because… Yeah.”

Victor lowers his phone to his lap, locking it. “Are we?”

Yuuri stops.

(Stops moving, stops breathing.)

(Was Victor…?)

(Was this…?)

No, no, he had to be misinterpreting. He tries to recall the rest of the conversation, tries to figure out where the miscommunication had occurred. Because no, Victor Nikiforov could not be asking him if they were dating. Couldn’t be. Not with his head on Yuuri’s chest like this, not with his hand on Yuuri’s hoodie, not with his eyes so blue and stupidly pretty and looking up at Yuuri like that.

(Yuuri knows that he wants to be dating him. More than anything. But Victor is famous and gorgeous and it doesn’t make sense for Yuuri to be making this decision, because he’s not the better man here. This was Victor’s choice. Simply because Victor was… Victor. It made sense for him to decide.)

“Are we dating?” Yuuri repeats slowly, wanting to make sure that in no way, shape, or form was he misinterpreting this.

Victor nods, not answering the question but instead confirming the question’s existence, confirming that he was, in fact, asking Yuuri for an answer. That he was, in fact, serious. Genuinely, really, serious.

(Asking Yuuri if they were dating.)

(It doesn’t add up.)

“Do you think we are?” the skater asks.

He pulls away and takes Yuuri’s hand in his own, the movement more awkward than normal.

(His hand is shaking. Barely. But it’s shaking.)

(Victor’s hands never shake. Victor is never nervous. He’s the epitome of calm in situations where most people would be panicking, he gives off an air of confidence in every room that he enters. He demands attention, sometimes without even meaning to. The star of every show, whether the situation is a show or not. All the world is his stage. So why are his hands shaking?)

“I… I’m not… I don’t know how to tell you this, Yuuri.”

Yuuri’s breath catches.

It stings.

It hurts.

There’s a void where his heart had used to be.

His chest collapses inward.
(Air caught in his lungs, bones sinking, breaking, breaking, breaking.)

(Of course, of course, of course. Of course this moment would come. Of course. It made sense. He should’ve seen this coming from a mile away. Why? Why would he have expected Victor to want him in the same way that he wants Victor? It wasn’t as though Victor had had posters of Yuuri lining his walls, it wasn’t as though Victor had held Yuuri up on a pedestal for years.)

(Of course.)

“Vitya?” he chokes out.

He hates himself for crying so easily, hates himself for being upset when he had seen this coming from all along. It’s inevitable destruction. And he supposes that the inevitability is worse than the destruction, really, because he could have prevented this, could have done anything, but instead he’d just been passive. Had stupidly fallen for Victor Nikiforov.

“That’s not… I’m so sorry.” He hugs Yuuri tight, desperate. “Please, please don’t cry. That came off wrong.”

Tears blur his vision, he shuts his eyes. One falls down his cheek. “What do you mean that came off wrong?” And his voice is embarrassing, whiny and squeaky and distraught, and why couldn’t he be more like Victor?

“I was going to say… I was going to say that I’m not good at this.”

He pulls away and makes a vague hand gesture towards Yuuri.

Yuuri is still shattered, swirling thoughts unable to catch up with Victor’s words. “What are you talking about?”

“At… I’m not good at… I was trying to say, before, that I don’t know how to say this part.”

“Victor, you’re not making any sense,” Yuuri complains, sniffing, because he’s overemotional, because he has no idea what Victor is talking about, because is Victor trying to politely turn him down, or had that truly not been what he had meant?

“I know. Okay, okay, let’s start over,” Victor pleads, and he shifts closer to Yuuri, pulling him onto his lap and wrapping his arms around his torso. His head is on the younger man’s shoulder and he sighs, collecting himself. “I’m sorry, Yuuri. What I’m trying to say is that I’m not good at this. Relationships. But, yes, I thought—no, I think… I…”

Yuuri gives him a moment, a few more disloyal tears escaping. He hears Victor take in another shaky breath, squeezing Yuuri tighter.

“I want you to be mine. And I want to be yours in return.”

The words are hurried, desperate, and Yuuri clings to them, takes them in, repeating them again and again in his mind, the only thing he can hear, the only thing he can focus on. But he needs something more.

He turns his body so that they’re facing each other. Then, he moves his hand between them, presses it on Victor’s chest. Victor glances down at it, confused. Yuuri’s fingers drift across the fabric of his t-shirt, finding his heartbeat.

Fast.
Very fast.

Yuuri licks his lips and meets Victor’s eyes. They’re large, the pupils dilated, displaying an anxiety that he hasn’t seen before, that he’s unfamiliar with. “You do?”

Victor nods, hand covering Yuuri’s and lacing their fingers. He brings their joint hands to his lips and kisses the back of his palm, eyes falling shut. “I do. More than anything.”

There are goosebumps on Victor’s arm. Yuuri reaches out to touch them, unsure. “I’d like that, too.”

“You would?”

Yuuri laughs a little, ducking his head and feeling tears stinging at his eyes. “Yeah, I would.”

Victor practically leaps on top of him, causing him to fall back against the couch, the actor’s arms tight around him. “All mine. My Голубушка.”

Yuuri laughs and rubs at his eyes, still sniffing and trying desperately to stop. “And you’re mine?”

“Yes, yes, a thousand times yes,” Victor answers, placing a kiss to his neck. “I’m yours for as long as you’ll have me.”

“That is so unfair,” Yuuri mumbles.

“What’s unfair?”

“That you can say things like that and it never sounds cheesy. If anybody else were to say that, it would sound ridiculous, but when you say it, it sounds nice.”

Victor smiles and settles back against the couch, thumb swiping Yuuri’s wet cheek. “I’m sorry,” he whispers, and Yuuri is confused for a moment, until he sees Victor reach up and touch his own shoulder, which is still stained with his tears.

“No, that’s okay. I reacted too quickly. You didn’t have time to explain yourself.”

He shakes his head, kissing Yuuri on his hairline. “It’s not okay. I’ll never make you cry again. I’ll choose my words more carefully. That’s a promise.”

“There you go again.”

“What do you mean?” Victor asks, concerned.

“Making cheesy things sound nice. I bet you could do that with anything.”

“Are you sure?” He thinks for a second. “I’m no organ donor, but I’d give my heart to you.”

Yuuri laughs, and Victor smiles, relieved. “Okay, that still sounded cheesy. I guess you’re not a perfect actor, after all.”

“Hey, close your eyes,” Victor commands, and Yuuri does. “What do you see?”

“…Nothing?”

“That’s my world without you.”

He feels himself blushing despite himself and pushes playfully on Victor’s chest. The other man only
becomes more persistent, kissing his collarbone. “That was so bad,” Yuuri complains.

“Youuri, there’s something wrong.”

“What?”

“There’s no signature on your skin,” Victor mumbles, tugging down the neck of his hoodie, as though searching.

Yuuri winces in anticipation. “Why would there be a signature on my skin?”

“Every masterpiece has one.”

“Victor. Stop.”

(He kisses him anyway.)

~

Yuuri stays the night.

(A surreal sentence.)

(A magical one.)

(A gift.)

“Have you ever checked what the first things are that come up when you Google your name?”

Victor glances over at him. “No, what comes up?”

“Let’s check.” Yuuri pulls his grey laptop onto his lap and Victor takes it as an excuse to lean his head on his shoulder, cuddling up against Yuuri’s side on the white couch. There’s coffee on the table in front of them, still untouched. A blanket is draped over their laps.

He watches as Yuuri types his name into the Google search bar. Victor reads the results out loud, “Victor Nikiforov: age, height, dating, Instagram, movies. Those are boring. Try your name.”

Yuuri types in his own name. “Routines, skating, quad flip, age, costumes.”

Then, Victor takes the computer from him and clicks on costumes. Images of Yuuri flood the screen —many of his past outfits and many of his newer ones. He tries to take the computer back and close out of the tab, but Victor holds it just barely out of reach.

“Yuuri, how have I never seen some of these before?”

“Victor,” Yuuri complains.

There’s one in particular, a black one with a see-through strip along the chest and arm, a flare of cloth in the back, silver pieces embroidered on it. Victor sucks in a sharp breath. “What is this one?”

He groans in complaint. “That’s… That’s from a short program.”
“What’s the name of the program?”

Yuuri buries his face in his hands. “On Love: Eros.”


“Um… Passionate love.”

He gapes. “Yuuri!”

Since when had Yuuri skated to the theme of passionate love and worn clothes like that? And he knows that Yuuri slicks his hair back at competitions, but… That hair plus that costume… Victor opens a new tab. Types in ‘Yuuri Katsuki On Love: Eros.’

“Victor, please don’t watch it,” Yuuri pleads, grabbing his arm.

“Why not?” Victor asks.

Yuuri snatches the laptop back and shuts it. “Because it’s embarrassing, and I hadn’t even wanted to skate to the routine at first, because it was nothing like me, but I did it anyway… Celestino said it was good, and Phichit agreed. They said I needed to, um, open up more.”

“I’m sure it’s not embarrassing. Come on, Yuuri, please? I’ll let you watch my worst movies—the really old ones. Back when I thought that good acting was just slowly raising my voice in every scene.”

Yuuri shifts, resolve breaking. “Okay, but only because I know you’ll see it eventually.”

He watches the routine. And it’s…

Unexpected. Even with that costume.

(He’ll never look at Yuuri the same way. Isn’t even sure who he is anymore.)

(Though, at the same time, he realizes that he has seen this side of Yuuri before. This was the Yuuri who, just a few days ago, had flipped him over on the couch, pinning his wrists to his sides and having his way with his mouth. This was the Yuuri who incessantly teased him, who flirted and made taunting jokes.)

(But still. Unexpected.)

Yuuri—the actual, physically present Yuuri—is staring at him, waiting in horrified anticipation for his reaction. Victor sucks in a breath. “That was… Wow.”

“Wow?” Yuuri asks.

“Time to watch several, several more of your routines that I haven’t seen,” Victor announces, clicking on the next suggested video.


“Is Victor Nikiforov married, is Victor Nikiforov dating, is Victor Nikiforov gay, is Victor Nikiforov attractive…” Victor frowns. “People are Googling if I’m attractive? That doesn’t even make any sense. And is Victor Nikiforov single. Hmm.”
“There’s… There’s sort of a recurring theme there.”

He squints at the results. “You’re right. But, seriously, people are Googling if I’m attractive? Why would Google help somebody realize that?”

Yuuri laughs and pretends to think about it, looking him up and down. “Maybe they see you and they’re just not sure. You are sort of confusing.”

“Confusing to look at?”

“Well…”

“Yuuri, you’re hurting me.” Yuuri laughs and wraps an arm around him. All is forgiven. “Hang on, it’s your turn. Is Yuuri Katsuki… A figure skater, an Olympic athlete, talented—wait, people feel the need to Google if you’re talented?”

Yuuri shrugs.

“Why would any idiot wonder if you’re talented? Who is typing these things in? Search engines give you an endless amount of knowledge, and yet thousands of people are typing in ‘Is Yuuri Katsuki talented?’”

He kisses Victor on the cheek, and Victor relaxes a little, reading the rest of the results. “I have an idea. Let’s go to social media and see who can find the funniest comment about the two of us.”

“Oh, challenge accepted.”

~

Friday evening, Yuuri stays at the rink for an extra three hours, choreographing.

(He’s exhausted.)

He’s quieter than usual as he sits in Victor’s car, eyes falling shut then opening again, as though he’s warding off sleep like a dangerous foe. They had been planning on talking Makkachin for a walk, but Victor figures those plans are cancelled. “Do you want to go back to the hotel instead?”

“No,” Yuuri answers. “I just want to sleep.”

Those two points take a moment to click. Yuuri still wanted to go to Victor’s house, but he also wanted to sleep. Which meant he was intending on sleeping at Victor’s house. Which Victor was more than okay with.

(Because he was dating Katsuki Yuuri.)

(He, Victor Nikiforov.)

(Dating Katsuki Yuuri.)

(And it wasn’t a dream. Or, if it was a dream, it was a very prolonged and vibrant dream, which, honestly, he’s almost okay with. And if it wasn’t a dream, and if the parallel universe theory was correct, then he had made all of the right decisions throughout his life and was possibly the luckiest
version of himself.)

“Okay, we’re almost there,” he promises.

“Sorry I’m too tired to walk Makkachin, I think,” Yuuri mumbles when they get there, toeing off his shoes and collapsing on the kitchen stool. “I just want to…” He yawns again, words interrupted.

“Here, let’s get you into bed,” Victor offers, taking his hand. He leads Yuuri up the staircase and to his bedroom—no, the guest bedroom, not Yuuri’s bedroom, not technically—and watches as the younger man automatically shifts under the covers, rolling onto his stomach.

“I’m going to head out with Makkachin, but I’ll be back,” Victor tells him, shutting off the lights before leaving the room.

He makes a mental note to try and get Yuuri exhausted after skating more often, because sleepy Yuuri was—(and this is a scientific fact)—adorable. Victor walks Makkachin around the block, the dog stopping to sniff the ground every two seconds. The sun is starting to set, the sky a beautiful mixture of oranges and pinks.

By the time he comes back, Yuuri’s door is still shut, unsurprisingly, so he heads to his own room. It’s a bit embarrassing, how he can’t think about anything other than the man sleeping down the hall. Makkachin has no pity for him whatsoever.

~

He makes dinner.

(Well, more specifically, he heats up a frozen pizza. Did that count as making dinner? It certainly smelled delicious and looked impressive on the large pan, so he figures it counts.)

He’s debating whether or not to wake up Yuuri when the man in question enters the kitchen.

Victor stares.

(The pizza pan is burning his fingers.)

(He doesn’t notice.)

Because Yuuri is wearing his white jacket with the red sleeves and the letters ‘RU’ inscribed on it for Russia. His hair is fluffy and his glasses are gone, probably still on the nightstand. He glances down at the pizza, then rubs at his eyes with one hand, still dazed from sleep. “You cooked?”

He tries to process the image of Yuuri wearing his jacket, tries to grow adjusted to it so that he can formulate a response. But he doesn’t. Can’t.

(Because that’s his jacket. On Yuuri. As in, Yuuri is wearing his jacket. His boyfriend. The dreaded, unfitting ‘b’ word. His boyfriend wearing his jacket. Yuuri Katsuki, his boyfriend, is wearing his jacket. And the word still doesn’t fit, but he can’t be bothered to care. Because that’s his jacket.)

“That’s mine,” Victor points out lamely, Makkachin even looking up at him as though to call him an idiot.

“Oh, sorry,” Yuuri says, starting to slip it off of his shoulders. “I went to your bedroom to find you and I was cold and saw it so—”

“No, keep it on,” Victor insists.
He does, looking puzzled. “Aren’t your fingers burning?”

Victor yanks his hand away from the pizza pan. His fingers do hurt. He ignores it.

“Do you…Do you want some?”

The skater shrugs. “Do you mind?”

“No, no, not at all. I made it for both of us.” He grabs another plate and puts a slice on it, handing it to Yuuri, who sits down on a stool by the counter. The jacket is still around Yuuri’s shoulders. It hadn’t disappeared. Not yet.

“I was thinking about your solo routine, the last one,” Yuuri says, taking a slice of the pizza. “Wow, this is really good.”

Victor comes around the counter and wraps his arms around Yuuri, lacing his fingers over the younger man’s navel and leaning down to kiss his neck, eliciting a breathy sigh from him. “And what were you thinking about the routine?” Victor asks.

He shifts backward on the seat, trying to get closer, and Victor sneaks a hand up the bottom of his shirt, fingers drifting across his stomach. Yuuri shivers and turns his head to give Victor better access to his neck. His eyes are shut, his skin soft as Victor glides his lips across it. His torso is warm against Victor’s cold fingers.

“Yuuri? What were you thinking?” Victor teases.

(It’s incredible, making Yuuri speechless. Adorable.)

“I… That’s… This isn’t fair.”

He smiles and moves his hand upward, exposing and exploring new skin, enjoying the way Yuuri melts against him, head falling back. “Can I admit something?” Victor asks, breath hot against his ear.

The skater just nods, eyes falling shut.

“I think that I might have a thing for seeing you in my clothes.”

Yuuri turns to look at him, his eyebrows drawn together. “You do?”

“No, I just didn’t know.” He examines Victor’s jacket, smoothing his hand down the side of it. “It’s comfortable.”

Victor tries to turn his head to kiss him, but Yuuri shakes his head, backing away. “Yuuri?” he asks, brain too hazy to make any calculations. All he can understand is that Yuuri doesn’t want to kiss him. And that he wants to kiss Yuuri. Very, very badly. Had he done something wrong?

“I just took a bite of pizza,” Yuuri points out.

“You think I care?”

He laughs. “My breath is probably terrible. Later?”
“Or you could go brush your teeth,” Victor complains, still wrapped around him. “Or you could just not care and kiss me anyway.”

“You’d rather I kiss you and starve to death than eat?”

“Fine, fine. But can I have an IOU?”

“Sure. You have an IOU.” Yuuri smiles as he continues eating his pizza. Victor grabs a slice, too, and sits beside him. “I was thinking about the tabloid articles, you know.”

Victor glances at him, concerned. He knows how invasive the paparazzi can be firsthand, and his worst fear is Yuuri being scared away because of it. If need be, he’d find a way to protect him from every last camera. “You were?”

“I was thinking that… That maybe we should do something. Because everyone keeps throwing rumors out there, and the cameras keep trying to spot us, because there’s so much controversy, but what if we just…” His voice trails off, then he takes another bite, shrugging.

“What if we just what?”

“I don’t know. Not cleared it up, but, like, addressed it somehow.”

“Addressed it. Like, an interview?”

Yuuri shakes his head. “No, no. Like… Like something… Something nice. Vague. Then Yakov wouldn’t mind, right? Not announcing the movie or anything, just… Oh, I don’t know.”

Victor hums. “Maybe an Instagram post?”

“Exactly! I just don’t know what we’d post.”

“We’ll have to think of something. But you’d be okay with that?” He meets Yuuri’s eyes, searching them. “Yuuri, the paparazzi wouldn’t leave you alone. It wouldn’t help with that—not much, at least.”

“I don’t care about that. I just want people to know that we’re…”

(Victor needs to hear it.)

(Needs to.)

“That we’re what?”

Yuuri smiles, a little nervously. “That we’re dating.”

Victor grins in return, nodding. “Right. Well, if you want to let people know, then I do, too.”

“You do?”

“Mhmm. We’ll think of something.”

~

They end up watching a movie.

Yuuri falls asleep on the blue sofa in Victor’s basement, still wearing Victor’s jacket, hands
underneath his head to act as a pillow and his legs curled up to his chest. Makkachin is laying in front of him, content and asleep. Victor sits on the opposite end of the couch, the credits of the movie rolling, and watches him. His chest rises and falls, his glasses look uncomfortable. Victor leans forward and takes them off for him, placing them on the nearest table.

He takes a picture.

Pulls up Instagram.

Captions the photo with a single, red heart.

His thumb hovers above the post button.

(Yakov would be mad.)

(But, then, it was vague, it would grab attention. Surely he’d be happy?)

He hits the back button, takes another look at the photo. Yuuri’s hair drifting in front of his eyes, the red “RU” on his jacket visible, one of his arms falling off of the edge of the couch, Makkachin beside him. The light of the television screen brightens the photo, giving it a blue tone.

Victor looks up.

It feels as though a part of his heart has been detached. Out, exposed, vulnerable. His entire world is laying on that couch. Night is seeping in through the nearest window, and Victor yawns and lays down next to Yuuri, an arm wrapping around his torso. Yuuri’s back is flush against Victor’s chest, and the younger man cuddles into him automatically.

This was his everything, now. Yuuri had turned his life around completely in such a short span of time. Yuuri had taken everything he had thought he’d known and flung it out the window.

(He realizes there’s a fitting term.)

(Devotion.)

(He’s devoted in every definition of the world. Could watch his chest rise and fall as he sleeps for hours, could observe his relaxed features, everything from his eyelashes to his lips. Could kiss him and hold him and talk to him while suns set and rise again and again.)

He looks back down at his phone.

Hits the post button, doesn’t look back.

~

When Yuuri wakes up, his phone is buzzing.

CALL ME!

It’s from Phichit. He yawns and shifts, but there’s something behind him. No—there’s something in front of him, too. A dog.
(Vicchan?)

No, it was Makkachin.

(Then what was behind him?)

There’s an arm around his side, he turns his head and sees Victor pressed against him, still asleep. Yuuri is sandwiched in the middle, his phone screen far too bright for his sleep-glazed eyes. He yawns and opens the text, typing out a response. **Are you okay?**

An instant response. … **Yuuri plz**

He wiggles tactfully out of Victor’s grasp, moving down the couch in order to not wake Makkachin, either. Victor’s arm, which had previously been around him, drifts to Makkachin instead, pulling his dog close. Yuuri smiles at the sight, stretching out his arms and dialing Phichit’s number. He walks up the stairs into the foyer and sits down on the grand staircase, where he figures he won’t wake up Victor.

“Hi, Phic—”

“You, Victor pulled a Kim Kardashian.”

“What are you—”

“He broke the internet. Well, you broke the internet.”

“Phichit, what—”

“Look on Instagram. Right now.”

Yuuri puts Phichit on speaker and opens Instagram. He had push notifications turned off, but the moment he opens the app….

He had gained hundreds of thousands of followers overnight. “What happened?”

“Check Victor’s account.”

A photo of him, sleeping, Makkachin in front of him. He was wearing Victor’s jacket, the television playing off to the side. His hands underneath his head, his lips parted. Glasses were visible on the coffee table to the left.

The caption is a single red heart.

It has over three million likes.

There’s comments.

(Thousands.)

Yuuri stares at it, looks towards the stairs to the basement. “I’m… I’m with him right now.”

“And he didn’t tell you?”

“He’s still sleeping. He must’ve posted that after I fell asleep.”

“Yuuri, you’re famous now. Really, properly famous. It’s like something out of one of his movies.”
Are you alright with it? The post, I mean?"

“T’m alright with it. We were talking about making our relationship official yesterday, and we thought maybe posting something on social media would be a good idea, but—”

“Let me get this straight. You’re dating, officially, and you didn’t tell me?”

Yuuri winces. “Oh, I’m sorry, there just wasn’t a good time and it all happened so fast…” His voice trails off uselessly. Phichit was his closest friend, and he’d hate to lose him just because he was caught up in a relationship. No matter how incredible the relationship.

“No, don’t apologize. You’re happy and that’s all that really matters. And I’m happy for you. Tell Victor ‘hi’ from me?”

(What had Yuuri ever done to deserve him? Nothing, probably.)

“Of course. I’ll call you back later. Bye, Phichit.” He heads back down the stairs. The actor is still sleeping, Makkachin even closer to him now, his features slack. Yuuri nudges his shoulder. “Victor?”

Victor shifts a little, doesn’t wake up.

He kneels in front of the couch, bringing his hand to the other man’s cheek and cupping it. “Vitya, wake up.”

His eyes blink open slowly, and a lazy grin spreads across his features as he takes in Yuuri’s presence. “Good morning.”

“Your Instagram post blew up.”

“Oh, right,” he says, reaching up a hand to fix his hair. He strokes Makkachin with his other hand, rolling onto his back. “Was it okay? That I posted it? I thought… Because you said that about us addressing our relationship…”

“It’s all right,” Yuuri confirms. “I mean, I do wish you would’ve told me first.”

All of the blood drains from Victor’s face, his hand darting out and grabbing Yuuri’s. “I’m sorry, you’re right, I should’ve told you. I absolutely should’ve told you.”

“You’re already forgiven. Just don’t do make any crazy decisions without me again, okay?”

He nods, and Yuuri thinks that, in that moment, if he were to ask Victor for a million dollars, he’d say yes. His eyes are big, his grip on Yuuri’s hand still ridiculously tight. “I won’t.”

“Phichit is freaking out. He says that you broke the internet.”

Victor glances around the room. “Where’s my phone? Where did I leave it?” He stands up, walking barefoot to the kitchen. He finds it on the counter and opens it. “Oh, wow. I do have a lot of messages.”

“From whom?”

“A lot of question marks from Yurio. A lot of heart emojis from Mila. A lot of capital letters from Yakov. And, oh, let’s look at the comments.” He scrolls through the comments on the post, humming. “A lot of people are nice.”
“That’s good.” Yuuri says, toying with the sleeve of his jacket—no, Victor’s jacket—and looking over his shoulder. “Why’d you pick that picture, anyway? You’re not even in it.”

“It was perfect. And I wanted to show the world that you’re all mine.”

Yuuri feels himself blushing and glues his eyes to the floor. Then, there are hands on his hips, and Victor is standing in front of him, phone and notifications forgotten, his eyes locked onto Yuuri’s.

“Are you upset?” Victor asks quietly.

“No, no. I’m glad you posted it. Like I said, it was just unexpected.”

His phone rings. Victor picks it up, one hand remaining on Yuuri’s hip. “Hi, Yakov. What Instagram post?” He winks at Yuuri, and Yuuri laughs, covering his mouth with his hand and walking past him towards the staircase.

He makes his way to the bedroom, showering and changing his clothes—he had started keeping a few spare outfits here since not having clothes with him had become a recurring issue. Then, he heads back downstairs and sees Victor pacing around the kitchen, still talking to Yakov.

“Right, yes, I’ll stop surprising you. I promise. No, I don’t want you to have a heart attack. No, I’d like you to be in good health. Sorry, Yakov.” He winces. “Next time I’ll let you know before I do anything. But the publicity is good, right?” Victor rakes a hand through his hair. “Right… I understand. No, no, you don’t need to hire another actor. I know you can’t, anyway.” Another wince. “Okay, yes, you’re right, James Franco is very talented, but…”

A moment later, Victor frowns and looks down at the phone, as though Yakov had hung up on him. “Well, he was opinionated,” the actor explains. “I think he called me ‘the death of him’ at least forty-six times. But he also mentioned, briefly, that he’s happy that we’re dating. I’m going to get dressed, then I’ll be right back. I believe I still have an IOU from you? From last night?”

Yuuri smiles. “I believe you’re right. I’ll just wait here, then?” He sits down on the kitchen counter and swings his legs, stretching his arms above his head so that his purple shirt rides up, revealing a strip of skin. (Truthfully, it’s accidental, but Victor doesn’t know that.)

“Right there,” Victor confirms, eyes unashamedly glued to the bottom of his shirt, as though willing it to go higher with his vision.

“Very patiently, very alone.”

(He notices that Victor swallows, his pupils dilating.)

“R-right, but not… I’ll… Just… Give me five minutes.”

“Five whole minutes?” he drawls, extending his lower lip.

Victor stares, licking his own lips subconsciously. “Four minutes.” He moves backwards, looking at Yuuri in disbelief, and he walks straight into the archway leading to the foyer. (The same actor who had been voted Sexiest Man of the Year two years running.) “Four minutes,” he repeats, turning around to hurry towards the stairs, rubbing at his injured shoulder. “Wait right there.”

(He’s back in three.)
“It would appear there’s a slight problem.”

Victor stares at the crowd outside the rink, glancing at Yuuri.

“Um…” Yuuri starts nervously, blinking at the bright lights. There are already reporters turning towards them. They park and get out of the car, already surrounded.

“Victor, are you and Yuuri officially in a relationship?” a reporter asks.

He raises an eyebrow. “Didn’t you see my Instagram post?”

(It’s miraculous, a moment of silence among a crowd of reporters.)

(Yet Victor manages it.)

But the noise is back in an instant. The woman is already shouting a follow-up question that is lost in the crowd. “No comment, no comment,” Victor says, bored, glancing over at Yuuri as they walk towards the rink.

“How did you two meet?”

“No comment,” he answers, grinning for the cameras. There’s a thousand flashes, a thousand more shouts.

When they’re finally inside, Yuuko is there, slamming the doors for them and keeping the herd of paparazzi outside. There are cameras being shoved against the glass doors, still trying to get shots. “We’re awfully popular,” Victor tells Yuuri, nudging his shoulder.

Yuuri looks pale, his teeth worrying his lower lip. Victor frowns at the doors and takes his hand, pulling him towards the benches, out of sight of the cameras. Yuuko looks concerned, giving them both one last sympathetic glance before heading to her office. “Yuuri? Are you okay? Did you get hurt?” Victor interrogates.

The skater sits down. “No, sorry, I’m fine. Just… That’s…” His eyes drift downwards to his lap, where he’s wringing his fingers together.

Victor sits down beside him. “You don’t like the paparazzi? Because I can call Yakov and have him get rid of them somehow.” He thinks for a moment. “Or maybe I could pay them off. I don’t know how much they make off of each photo but—”

Yuuri laughs a little, and Victor’s heart soars. He hadn’t meant for it to be a joke, but he really doesn’t care how Yuuri interprets his words so long as it makes him happier. “I’m just not used to it.”

(He doesn’t want Yuuri to get used to it.)

(Doesn’t want him to get used to fame and everything that comes with that.)

(No, he wants Yuuri to stay Yuuri.)

Take care of him for me.

That was what Phichit had asked of him.
“I know, and I’m sorry. If I hadn’t posted that photo…”

“I’m not sorry,” Yuuri says quickly, meeting his eyes. “That you posted that. I’m just sorry that those people have to follow us around for a living.”

And Victor supposes that that sentence is Yuuri in a nutshell.

Not directly blaming the people who were harassing them, but blaming the fact that they made their living off of it. Not blaming Victor for posting the photo, but blaming the media for reacting.

He hugs him.

Yuuri hugs him back after a second. “I just like it better when we’re alone.”

“So do I.” Then he pulls away, smiling. “I just had a great idea.”

The skater rolls his eyes preemptively. “Does it involve us never leaving your house?”

“Yes!”

“That’s… Victor, we can’t do that.”

“Let me convince you?” Victor asks, his thumb drifting across the line of Yuuri’s cheekbone, his other hand coming to the bottom of his shirt, lifting the fabric slightly. He loves doing that, loves the way that Yuuri shivers at the feeling of his skin being exposed, loves the way he leans forward instinctively.

Victor leans forward, and suddenly Yuuri is against him, the kiss hot and slow, his mouth opening beneath Victor’s. He makes a delicious moan when Victor shifts onto his lap, and Victor swallows it, wondering if it is possible to tire of kissing Katsuki Yuuri. So far, he is still under the opinion that it will never lose its spark. Because if he had to pick one activity to do for the rest of his life…

(It would be letting his fingers wander across his abdomen, his shirt an annoyance, the fabric falling down and trying to block them.)

(It would be touching Yuuri’s hair, fingers weaving through the black strands, lovely and soft.)

(It would be enjoying the way that their foreheads bumped when they kissed, Yuuri’s glasses occasionally getting in the way, and both of them laughing as Victor reaches up to take them off for him.)

(It would be…)

(Yurio, entering the room?)

“Oh, I did not need to see that.”

Yuuri jumps, backing away from Victor and fixing his hair, putting his glasses back on. “Oh, hi Yurio,” he mumbles, glancing down.

“Remember when we were making a movie?” He eyes Victor carefully.

“I forgot,” Victor says sarcastically, eyes still focused on Yuuri’s lips. He can’t help it. Can’t help wanting Yurio to leave so he could resume what had just been happening.

“I saw your Instagram post.”
“What’d you think?” the actor asks.

“I thought…” He trails off. Then, his eyes dart from Victor to Yuuri. “It was gutsy, I’ll give it that.”

Yuuri smiles at him.

“Shut up,” Yurio commands.

Victor smiles, too.

He frowns. “Why are you both looking at me like that?”

“You love us, Yurio,” Victor taunts, standing up to hug him.

Yurio tries to back up, but then he finds himself being squeezed by Victor, fighting desperately to get out of his grasp before sighing, resigned.

~

A few minutes later, they get sidetracked.

“Victor, stop!” Yuuri says, laughing as Victor tickles his sides. “You’re going to make me fall.”

Victor kisses him firmly, hands on his ribs stilling, and they slide backwards on the ice, Yuuri gripping his arms tight. “I won’t let you fall.” Yuuri leans forward, stopping their trajectory, and kisses him back, smiling against his lips.

Yurio clears his throat.

They both glance at Yurio, and Yuuri’s cheeks flush red. “Oh, sorry, Yurio.”

“I should never have signed up for this movie,” he complains.

~

Victor likes having Yuuri over.

(Except ‘likes’ isn’t a strong enough word.)


Before, when Yuuri had remained at the hotel most of the time, Victor would always want to talk to him, and would either have to text him or just deal with it. Now, it’s a matter of wanting to talk to him, and simply walking to the room next door. Which is…


He enters Yuuri’s room one day—he had forgotten what he’d been planning to tell him on the walk over, and had instead changed his reasoning to simply saying hi, because he could—and hears him speaking to someone. Victor hesitates outside of the door. It’s Japanese. And Yuuri sounds flustered.

“いいえ、婚約していません。”
Victor turns the corner, glancing at him. Yuuri looks up, phone pressed to his cheek as he sits cross-legged on the guest bed, his laptop in front of him. “Oh, hi Victor.” Then he pauses. “Yes—I mean…” He switches back to Japanese, shooting Victor an apologetic look.

He wonders briefly who he’s talking to—his family, probably—and makes his way back to his room. Makkachin had taken his spot on the bed. He can’t bring himself to care when the poodle is so unfairly adorable.

A few minutes later, Yuuri stands in the doorway. “My mother called.”

“Oh,” Victor isn’t sure what to say. “How is she?”

“Everybody’s well,” he answers. “I might visit soon. They want to see me.”

“Oh,” he repeats.

“Do you think Yakov would be okay with that?”

“Probably. After filming starts, you won’t be quite as busy. Besides, if he gives you a hard time, I can always threaten to quit. It would be best to pick a week when we won’t be filming many skating scenes, though.”

Yuuri raises an eyebrow. “Do you threaten to quit whenever you want something from Yakov?”

“It usually works, even though he knows I won’t.”

The skater laughs and Victor pats the bed beside him. He sits down, stroking Makkachin’s fur. “It has been a while since I’ve seen them. Normally I’m so busy with competitions—the last time I went to Japan six months ago, I think.”

“I could go with you.”

Yuuri meets his eyes, tilting his head to the side. “You’d leave the middle of a production for a week to visit my family with me in Haesetsu?”

“Well, when you say it that way, it makes me sound like I’m not loyal to my career,” Victor jokes, kissing him on his hairline. “I definitely would, but I probably shouldn’t.”

“You probably shouldn’t,” Yuuri agrees. “I don’t think it’s very realistic. Though I’d love for you to come. You could try my mother’s katsudon.”

“Okay, fine, you convinced me,” he claims. “I’m coming. Yakov will just have to use a body double for me.”

“Victor,” Yuuri starts, laughing, and Victor turns, straddling Yuuri’s legs, kissing him and pushing him back on the bed. “You’re very easy to convince, then.”

“Only for certain people,” Victor points out.

~

They’re working on the final drafts of the script, and there’s a table reading on Saturday. Since all of
the actors are attending, Yuuri is alone for the day, and it’s bothering Victor to no end.

“Are you texting him under the table?” Yurio asks as everyone takes their seats.

“He’s alone,” Victor complains.

The blond actor doesn’t laugh, doesn’t sneer. Just gives him a look. One that Victor isn’t sure he has seen before. It’s almost… A certain type of sympathy.

Victor wants to comment on it, wants to understand, but then Yakov is standing up, saying something to all of them. Mila is bouncing her leg to his left, excited. Christophe is fanning himself with the script.

They work their way through the first chunk of the script, occasionally making notes about this line or that. It’s a good script, Victor thinks. The romance between his character and Mila’s is believable, built up from page one until the very end, and, according to Yuuri, it stayed true to the world of figure skating. Other than a scene where Mila’s character dramatically skates onto the ice to kiss Victor’s character during the middle of a competition.

(According to Yuuri, that would probably never happen.)

(But it was a cute thought, he had added.)

There’s a break after they’ve made their way through the first third of the script. Victor isn’t sure how long it has been, but he knows that he feels as though he has been here in this cramped room for a week. He sees Sara and Mila chatting in the corner and stands up, planning to find a water fountain.

He finds one down a random hallway, and the water tastes bitter, but he drinks it anyway.

“You’re different, you know.”

He glances towards the sound of the voice, sees Yurio leaning against a wall, wearing a red, white, and blue jacket labeled ‘Russia’ in all capital letters. It is one that Victor has seen many times before.

“I’m different?” Victor asks, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

“How so?”

Yurio shrugs casually. “The way you talk, the way you walk. You used to be so focused on the job. Now you’re focused on something else entirely.”

He opens his mouth to ask exactly what he was supposedly focused on now, but his phone buzzes in his hand. Yurio looks at it, and Victor looks at it. A text from Yuuri. He meets Yurio’s eyes again, understanding. “Is that a bad thing?”

“I didn’t know, before. That you weren’t happy.”

(That takes Victor by surprise.)

“I was happy,” he says.

Yurio laughs humorlessly, shaking his head. “I thought so, too. But seeing you now and remembering what you were like back then? Whatever role you were working on, you’d dive into it and let it consume your life. Now, at the table reading, nobody else can tell, but I can: your mind
isn’t on the part.”

“Are you telling me off?”

The blond rolls his eyes. “No, Victor, I’m not telling you off. I don’t care who you date. I’m telling you to be careful.”

“To be careful?” Victor asks, confused.

“He makes you happy, right?”

“Yes.”

(The answer comes automatically.)

Yurio nods. “Just don’t… Don’t let him go, alright?”

(Was Yurio…?)

Victor isn’t sure what to say, how to react. He’d never seen Yurio like this before. Never seen him care. Never seen him so vulnerable. “Yuri…”

“We never had this conversation,” he snaps suddenly, already marching away.

He smiles before heading back into the room, his mind on anything but the script in front of him. Victor puts emotions into the scripts, makes comments where he deems them necessary, but in the back of his mind is Yurio. They’d both moved from St. Petersburg to Hollywood at roughly the same time, trying to make livings for themselves as actors. Victor had already found success in Russia, and so had Yurio, to an extent, but America was a whole new ball game nevertheless.

He had watched Yurio grow up over the years, had watched him develop. It was heartwarming. The media portrays him as a diva, and he is—but he’s a diva with a soft side, whether he’ll admit it or not.

~

Victor drives back to the hotel, not to his house.

He knocks on the door, and it swings open quickly, Yuuri’s jaw dropping at the sight of him. “Victor! You didn’t tell me you’d left.”

“Why does it—”


“What’s going on?” he asks, a little concerned. It smells good in the suite, like fresh dough. “Something smells good.”

Yuuri’s hand leaves his arm.

“You can open your eyes if you want.”

He does, and Yuuri is standing in front of him, nervously running a hand through his hair. He’s wearing a black t-shirt and jeans, barefoot and unbelievably attractive. (Well, he was always attractive, so Victor supposes it should no longer be deemed unbelievable.)
“I’ll be right back, stay here,” Yuuri says, then darts through the doorway.

Victor frowns and pulls out his phone, scrolling through social media and occasionally hearing noises from the other room. An oven beeping, Yuuri scrambling to turn it off. The sound of a utensil scraping against something.

“Okay, come in.”

He stands up, hurrying to the the doorway, desperate to see what Yuuri was doing.

There’s a plate on the counter, silverware neatly set around it. And on the plate was piroshki. Victor stares at it, then glances at Yuuri, who is shifting his weight from one foot to the other, licking his lips. “Um, I made you piroshki. I remembered you mentioning it a couple of times, so I thought I’d try it. Yurio sent me his favorite recipe and translated it for me. I’m sorry if it’s no good, I tried to—”

Victor kisses him.

Presses him against the kitchen counter, hands bunching up the fabric of his shirt. One of Yuuri’s hands automatically comes up to his hair, and his other grips at Victor’s back, trying to keep his balance. Victor keeps the kiss slow, sensual, then kisses his way down to Yuuri’s neck, then to his shoulder. His hands dip underneath his shirt.

“Victor,” Yuuri gasps as his fingers drift higher. His grip on Victor tightens. “You like it, then?”

“I love it. Thank you.”

“You haven’t even tried it yet.”

“I know that I’ll love it. Because you made it.”

“Back with the cheesy—oh,” he stops when Victor nips at his ear, Yuuri’s hands moving to grip his shoulders, eyes shutting tight.

Victor hums, placing a kiss to his temple. “You liked that?”

“V-Victor,” is all Yuuri can say, letting out a shaky breath.

“You like this spot, too,” he mumbles, remembering a spot near Yuuri’s pulse point and testing it with his tongue, then brushing his teeth across it. Yuuri moans, tilting his head back. “I want to hear you do that again, and again, and again,” Victor praises against his skin.

The skater nods desperately. Victor pushes him up onto the kitchen counter then takes one of his legs and wraps it around his own hip. Yuuri gets the message, clinging to Victor and kissing him again as Victor carries him to the bedroom, depositing Yuuri on the pillows before jumping on top of him, grinning as he descends onto his neck, tugging down the collar of his shirt for better access.

“What about the—Victor.”

(There’s something about making Yuuri forget his words that makes Victor feel powerful. Unstoppable.)

(Yuuri looks gorgeous beneath him, his neck now covered in tiny red marks, his lips bruised and his eyes closed, lashes long and dark against his skin. His hands are gripping the bedsheets like anchors.)

“The piroshki isn’t going anywhere,” Victor points out.
“Neither am I.”

He smiles at that, kissing him on his hair, then his lips, then his cheek. Unable to make up his mind. At a spot, then already fleeting to the next. “I don’t think I’ll ever let you go anywhere ever again.”

Yuuri laughs. “Not even to your house?”

“Only there.”

“What about… The rink?”

“Hmm. Maybe.”

“What about another date?”

“Another date,” Victor muses, as if considering it. “Okay, I’ll rephrase. I don’t think I’ll ever let you go anywhere not involving me again.”

“Selfish.”

“Oh, absolutely.”
Yuuri runs into trouble at the hotel and filming starts. Meanwhile, Victor and Yuuri still harbor individual anxieties about their relationship and their future together.

Hi guys! This is sort of a transition-y chapter but I hope you enjoy it anyway <3 I promise the next one will be more eventful, some stuff just had to be set up first. Plus new characters!

Be sure to leave a comment & let me know what you think!! We're almost to 1,000 comments on this fic. What even. 1,000 comments. That's like, not even a real number. Like?? What?? Where did you all come from?? Ily all?? And all of the kudos?? Just?? I am so happy??

Also look at this incredible art made by the very talented fyology!!

WARNING: Please note the rating change! This fic WILL be explicit eventually, but in this chapter some adult themes are just addressed. If you'd like to avoid the slightly inappropriate part, don't read the section bordered by the double ~~!

“Good morning.”

Yuuri yawns, shifting on the…

Bed?

(Yes, it’s a bed, but he’s not sleeping on the bed. He’s sleeping on a person.)

He’s warm underneath the covers, which are pulled tight around him. His head is pillowed on someone’s chest—oh, Victor, of course—and one of his legs had somehow found its way in between his. “Morning,” he mumbles, not moving. Far too comfortable to move. Far too comfortable to consider ever moving.

There’s a hand on his hair, and it’s gentle, gliding through the strands in one direction, then the other. Yuuri wiggles closer, still lacking the energy to open his eyes. Perhaps this is what heaven is like. Victor touching his hair, the sunlight seeping in through the cracks in the blinds, the pull of sleep strong enough to keep him blissfully sedated.

“Did you fall back asleep?” Victor asks after a moment, voice barely a whisper.

Yuuri hums to let him know he’s awake. There’s a wet spot on Victor’s shirt, and he pauses, eyes blinking open. A wet spot right where his head had been.
“You drool in your sleep.”

(Heaven so quickly turns into anything but.)

Yuuri slaps a hand over his mouth, staring up at Victor, horrified.

“It’s cute,” Victor promises, hand still on his hair.

“I’m sorry,” he blurs, relaxing a bit, still unable to process anything but the embarrassment. He’d just drooled on Victor. And Victor had called it cute.

He tries to remember how they’d ended up sleeping together in his hotel room bed in the first place. The last thing he remembers is thinking about one of Mila’s routines, Victor sitting next to him, but that had been on the couch. Had he fallen asleep?

Yuuri reaches for the nightstand, finding his glasses and slipping them on. Victor leans back on his elbows, watching him. “What’s on the schedule for today?”

“I’m training with Mila, we have to work on her solos.”

“Can I come?”

He smiles. He likes being with Victor, of course, but the deadline for getting all of the routines laid out and film-worthy is approaching far too rapidly. There’s still plenty of work to be done, and the last thing he wants is to disappoint Yakov. It’s miraculous, really, how Victor can be so calm about it. It’s as though it doesn’t matter in the slightest. But for Yuuri, it’s a weight on his shoulders that he desperately wants to appease.

“Maybe next time,” he tries, feeling guilty but also knowing that Victor will be fine without him.

The actor pouts. The guilt is worse.

“I need to get work done,” he explains, cupping Victor’s cheek, thumb brushing across the corner of his lips. “And you’re distracting, remember?”

“I think you’re distracting,” Victor protests, taking Yuuri’s hand in his own and kissing his palm. “I don’t see why you’re putting all the blame on me.”

Yuuri laughs and swings his legs over the side of the bed, stretching his arms. “Let’s ask Yurio which one of us distracts the other more.”

“He would be on my side—we’ve known each other for years.”

Yuuri turns and looks at him, raising an eyebrow. Victor keeps his pokerface for approximately ten seconds before he starts laughing. He wraps an arm around Yuuri’s waist and kisses the back of his neck.

“I’m going to shower,” Yuuri tells him, and Victor pulls away, his infamous pout back. There’s a notable scarcity of clothes in Yuuri’s drawers. It’s starting to become a problem. He grabs an outfit, one suitable for skating in, and heads into the en suite bathroom.

“I’ll miss you,” Victor teases, waving at him.

Yuuri blows a kiss, and the actor pretends to catch it, dramatically falling back on the bed. He shuts the door and turns on the water, setting his already steam-coated glasses beside the sink.
(The warm water is ready, but he stares at himself in the mirror.)

(It hits him that Victor Nikiforov is waiting for him in his hotel room bed.)

*(Victor Nikiforov.)*

(There were two versions of Victor.)

(Firstly, there was the one that Yuuri had held on a pedestal for as long as he could remember. The Victor that he’d cried over in the movie theaters, Phichit handing him tissues, the Victor who had covered posters on his wall.)

(And then there’s the Victor who was surprised when Yuuri was impressed by the fact that he owned two cars. He had argued that the custom Mercedes-Benz was too loud for Makkachin to drive in comfortably, so he’d bought a second, quieter one. Simple. Yuuri had stared at him dumbfounded.)

(They’re blending, the two personas, so different yet so similar.)

He stares at his reflection in the mirror. His hair is messy, his shirt wrinkled from sleep. There are bags under his eyes, his lips are chapped.

And he can’t figure out what Victor sees in him.

~

Shooting starts in a week.

“Oh, aren’t you excited?” Mila asks Victor during another meeting about the production schedule. “We’re going to Barcelona! I’ve never been there before, have you?”

Victor shakes his head, smiling. “No, but I’ve heard it’s beautiful.”

“How Yuuri been there?”

It’s nice, talking to someone about Yuuri. Because normally the only person he talks to about Yuuri is Makkachin, who, for reasons he still cannot understand, doesn’t seem to care that much. And Mila *does* care. She has always been an empathetic person—a trait that Victor doesn’t see often in Hollywood.

“No, he hasn’t,” Victor responds. “He has been to Moscow, though, for a competition.”

She gapes. “Oh my gosh, I forgot about Moscow. We should all visit St. Petersburg, if there’s time. You could show him around! That would be so romantic, wouldn’t it?”

Yurio walks over, glancing between them. “A trip to St. Petersburg?”

(There was a running joke in Hollywood about how many breakout celebrities had come from St. Petersburg. First, Mila had come. Then Victor and Yakov, then Yurio shortly afterwards.)

(It was as though the city bred stars.)
“There probably won’t be time,” Victor says regretfully. “We’ll have to see if we’re ahead of schedule, and then maybe Yakov would let us.”

“He’d let us if we all teamed up on him,” Yurio points out.

Victor smiles. Yurio’s grandfather had moved with him to California, and they lived together, but most of his other family was still in Russia. Victor’s mother is in St. Petersburg as well, but he keeps in close contact with her. Mila, on the other hand, had everyone with her in California.

“Alright, everyone, gather around,” Yakov calls, sitting down at the head of the table.

The actors and other staff sit down at the large conference table. Yakov goes through dates and locations and details of the shoot that, really, are of no concern to Victor. Typically, he just goes along with whatever is happening on set.

He glances under the table, scrolling through social media.

During a pause, Yakov glares at him.

Victor turns his phone off reluctantly.

Bounces his leg.

Glances at the clock. It ticks. The shortest hand is broken.

Glances at Yurio, the only other person who actually looks bored.

(Victor wonders why Yakov is wearing a scarf even though they’re indoors.)

At some point, Yurio leans forward, his rolling chair shifting. He gets close enough to kick Victor’s shin underneath the table.

Victor kicks him back.

That continues for about five minutes, until they both get far too invested in their battle and don’t notice Yakov glaring at both of them.

And then, finally, it’s over.

He turns on his phone and leaves the room, relieved.

There are four missed calls from Yuuri. No voicemails. No texts.

(Why would Yuuri have been…?)

Victor calls him back, heads towards the car, doesn’t bother saying goodbye to anyone. Yuuri answers on the second ring. “Hello? Victor?”

“What’s wrong?”

“Oh, sorry, I’m fine,” Yuuri hurries to say.

There’s something off in his voice.

A tremble?

A tremble.
(A tremble he’s trying to cover up.)

Victor grips the phone harder.

Yuuri continues, “It’s just, there are some paparazzi in the hotel. I don’t know how they found it. But I was going to go get some food for later and… And I…” His words trail off and he clears his throat.

He tries to remain calm. “I’ll be there in fifteen minutes, just hang tight.”

“Don’t you think you showing up will just make it worse?”

Victor puts the car back in park. holds the phone between his ear and shoulder. Yuuri is right. What is he planning on doing? Yelling at them all? Getting his image pasted on the cover of tomorrow’s tabloids? “Okay, I’ll…”

(What could he do?)

“I’ll talk to Yakov.”

~

Yuuri had gone down to the lobby and noticed a large crowd outside the hotel and pouring over into the main entrance, but hadn’t thought anything of it. Perhaps there was an event of some sort going on. It was a large hotel—an event wouldn’t be particularly surprising.

(But then they’d stared at him. Started hurrying.)

(The hotel staff complained, tried to stop a few of them, unsure of what to do. There was a phone in a receptionist’s hand as she talked to her manager, playing with her hoop earring.)

Yuuri had been puzzled, questions being thrown at him, cameras flashing. All he was doing was standing in Vans and a white t-shirt. Was that really worth photographing? And why were the lights so bright?

He’d covered his face, that was his first instinct. A man got close to him, hurrying in front of the others, and grabbed his shoulder, trying to angle him to get a better shot. Yuuri backed away quickly, the man’s hand slipping off of him, and turned around, heading towards the elevator.

The moment he was inside, he shut the doors. Leaned against them, reached over to press the floor buttons, not bothering to make sure he’d clicked the correct one. He just needed to get out. A cold sweat had broken out on his forehead and he ran a hand through his hair, wondering if they’d go away, when they’d go away. He had just wanted food.

(His hands are shaking. He wipes them on his jeans. They don’t stop.)

(Why won’t they stop shaking?)

He wipes them again, more desperately this time. It doesn’t help.

He pulls his phone out of his pocket and dials Victor’s number. The elevator doors open on the wrong floor. He reaches over and presses the correct button. Luckily, nobody gets in the elevator with him. The phone rings. And rings. And rings. There’s no response.

(He can’t remember a time he’d texted or called Victor and not received a response in less than ten seconds.)
But he feels overdramatic—it wasn’t a big deal, after all.

Then the doors open.

There’s two men standing near his door, cameras hung around their necks. They look at him and raise the cameras, already snapping photos. Yuuri winces and steps out of the elevator, walking towards them. And his hands are still shaking.

(Why, why won’t they stop shaking?)

The men say something to him, but he doesn’t hear them. How had they gotten up here? How had they figured out what floor he lived on? Why wouldn’t they just leave him alone?

Yuuri drops his keycard. He picks it up and tries again, swinging open the door. One of the men darts out a hand and grips his arm, rough, making Yuuri yank it away out of instinct, tears now stinging his eyes. Then he darts inside the room and slams the door behind him, using both locks.

(Glances around the hotel room. Checks every corner.)

(He can see the crowd from his window, shuts the blinds.)

(Calls Victor three more times. Hates himself a little more each time, because Victor is busy, of course he’s busy, and of course he wouldn’t be able to respond, so why is Yuuri still trying?)

He texts Phichit, who tells him to call the hotel staff. He doesn’t. Instead he just sits on his bed, grabbing his laptop and worrying his lower lip. Still no response from Victor. But it’s fine—he’s fine. Everything is fine, obviously. Just some cameras, what did it matter? He’d faced cameras outside of the rink before.

Eventually, though, there’s a call.

Yuuri tries to sound calm, wonders if Victor can tell. He says something about talking to Yakov and Yuuri just remains on his hotel room bed, feeling useless. He probably shouldn’t have even called Victor in the first place. He had gotten famous at a young age, had probably been dealing with problems like this for ages. He probably thinks Yuuri is being histrionic, now. Probably is annoyed with him.

He pushes his laptop away and lays down on the bed, curls up in a ball. Phichit texts him again, asking if he’s alright. He answers. Phichit sends him a picture of his hamsters. It makes Yuuri smile a little.

After an hour or so, there’s a knock on the door.

Yuuri hurries to answer it, looking through the peephole first. To his surprise, it’s Yakov, wearing a hat and a blue scarf. He opens the door, trying to fix his mussed up hair so that he looks presentable. Rubs at his eyes to make sure there are no signs of tears. But the rubbing probably just makes it worse. “Hi, Yakov.”

“Are you alright?” the director asks.

“Um, I’m fine. Sorry if Victor made it seem like a bigger deal than it was, I was just sort of surprised. If you were in the middle of something—”
Yakov walks past him into the suite, heading to the window and looking out. “They’re gone now. And don’t apologize, you deserve your privacy.”

He wants to ask how Yakov had managed to get rid of a pack of hungry reporters, but then Victor is standing in the doorway. Yuuri doesn’t bother to think, just runs. Hugs him. Yuuri’s arms wrap around his back and he ducks his nose into Victor’s shoulder, shutting his eyes.

“All of the reporters were gone,” Victor protests, pulling away from Yuuri and searching his eyes. “Did any of them touch you? Because we’ll sue.”

Yuuri blinks. They’d touched him, but they hadn’t hurt him. Surely that didn’t count? “I…”

“None of them hurt me. One touched my shoulder and another grabbed my arm.”

(There’s a change in Victor.)

(For some reason, Victor is what breaks him.)

 Yusuri isn’t sure what to say. He glances at Yakov, then back at Victor. “I… I wouldn’t be intruding?”

Victor shakes his head and offers a soft smile. “Nope. Not at all. Or we could find you another hotel. Completely up to you.” There’s an edge of hopefulness to his words.
“I… I wouldn’t mind staying with you, if you promise that you really don’t mind.”

Victor hugs him again, tighter this time. “No, no, I don’t mind. Makkachin would love it.” Then, after a moment, “And I’d love it.”

“Well, I suppose my work here is done,” Yakov says, heading towards the door.

Yuuri smiles. “Thank you, Yakov.”

“Remember to focus on the movie, both of you,” he warns, though it sounds like an empty threat. Yakov shuts the door behind him, and Yuuri unconsciously locks it after him.


“I just sort of want to sit for a minute,” Yuuri answers, walking over to the couch and reclining on the cushions.

“Right, of course,” he says, sitting beside him and wrapping an arm around his side. Yuuri settles against him, taking in a breath. “I got worried when I saw your calls. I’m sorry I didn’t answer sooner, my phone was off.”

“Victor Nikiforov turning his phone off. Not something I thought I’d ever hear.” He keeps his voice teasing, tries to lighten the mood.

“Apparently I was being rude during the meeting,” he explains.

“You? Rude?”

“You bully me,” Victor complains, bumping his shoulder.

The skater kisses him lightly, chastely, but Victor chases his lips, cupping his cheek with one hand and prolonging the kiss. Victor places a hand on his knee, shifting closer, and Yuuri shuts his eyes, their foreheads touching as he pulls away, needing to breathe. He’s starting to realize just how much the events of the past hour had shaken him up.

“I’m glad you’re okay,” Victor tells him quietly, taking his hand. “I was worried.”

He wants to change the subject. “How was your meeting?”

“Boring. I would’ve rather been here.”

Yuuri laughs, kissing him again. Victor hums, squeezing his knee. “What was it about?”

“Scheduling. The thing that they don’t tell you about Hollywood is that ninety percent of it is scheduling. Scheduling this, scheduling that, this location, that location. It’s a miracle that anything ever gets done.”

“Fun,” he says sarcastically.

“Next time, you’re coming with me,” Victor claims. “I’m going to drag you along to every boring meeting from now on.”

He takes Victor’s hand, lacing their fingers. “Does that mean I get to drag you along to skating events?”

“Ah, there’s a difference. Both of us want to go to skating events. Neither of us want to go to
meetings where Yakov drones on for an hour. So you wouldn’t be dragging me along.”

“You’d want to go to skating events?” Yuuri asks.

Victor smiles. “Of course I would.”

It was the first time either of them had mentioned their future. And the topic is hanging over them, ripe for the picking. What would they do after the movie was over? Obviously Yuuri would go back to competing, and Victor would go back to acting…

(So how would it work?)

(How could it work?)

“What would you like for dinner?” Victor asks suddenly.

Yuuri wonders why he had changed the topic so quickly, wonders what he’s thinking. But instead of asking, he just shrugs. “I don’t know. I’m not very hungry.”

“But you will be. We can eat at my house—I need to feed Makkachin soon, anyway. I could help you pack your things?”

He stretches his legs before standing up. “Sure. Here, I’ll grab my suitcase.”

~~

It’s nice out that evening.

The weather is perfect, the sun just beginning to set. Victor takes a shower and then walks back downstairs, but there’s nobody around. He checks the kitchen, the foyer—no Makkachin, no Yuuri. Then he hears a splashing.

“Makkachin!” Yuuri yelps as Makkachin jumps on top of him, shaking out his wet fur. They’re sitting on the patio, a dog toy floating in the water, Yuuri’s white t-shirt and jeans now soggy.

“He does that,” Victor says as he steps outside, sitting down beside them. Makkachin bounds over to him, dripping. Victor scratches him behind his ear and the dog sits contentedly.

Yuuri is still smiling at the dog, a giant Makkachin-shaped stain now present on his shirt. It’s see-through, now, and Victor has to force his eyes away. “He’s cute.”

Victor just smiles, leaning over and plucking the toy out of the water. Makkachin stares at it, entranced. He throws it over into the grass and the dog sprints after it. “He likes swimming.”

“So did Vicchan.” Yuuri looks towards the pool thoughtfully. “Do you want to swim?”

“Do you have a swimsuit?”

“I brought one when I first got here.”

“Sure, then.”
They both stand up, Victor still watching Makkachin and Yuuri coming up in front of him, slipping his hands onto his waist. “Victor?” he asks, and his voice is soft, his lips full. A shy smile that breaks him.

Victor isn’t sure how to prevent his knees from collapsing underneath him. Yuuri is gorgeous. His eyelashes are dark and long, and his eyes… God, his eyes. Victor could be a prolific poet if he were to think about those eyes too long. The last light of the day bounces off of him, makes him glow, makes his features soft. Absolutely stunning. And his fingers splay across Victor’s hips… And then there’s that white t-shirt… “Yes?”

“First one in the pool wins!” Yuuri announces, sprinting away barefoot into the house.

(He stands there.)

(Stupefied.)

(It takes his mind a moment to catch up. To realize that Yuuri is, in fact, the greatest tease to ever walk the planet.)

Then, he hurries into the house, makes his way up the stairs and gets dressed in record time. He can already hear Yuuri running back down. Victor hurries to get to the patio, but he sees Yuuri’s head poking up from underneath the water, his hair slicked back, wet.

He forgets all about the competition.

Because he hasn’t seen Yuuri shirtless before.

(Except now he has.)

(And he’s a different person because of it.)

His body is obstructed by the water, so Victor lowers himself into the pool, swimming over to him. Yuuri looks like a deity. The sight of his upper chest and his hair slicked back like that and those eyes still sparkling and his cheeks flushed from running and…

A deity.

(Victor almost feels like he should look away. Feels like he’s unworthy.)

But he reaches up a hand to touch Yuuri’s hair experimentally, and the other man just squints at him. “You’re looking at me weird.”

(He wonders what he’d do if something were to happen to him. The incident with the paparazzi had opened his eyes to just how much Yuuri meant to him. The idea of someone placing their hands on him with malicious intent…)

“Am I?”

“Yes.”

He hums, moving his hand to cup Yuuri’s cheek instead. He marvels at the fact that he’s allowed to do this, to touch him like that. Wonders about what Yurio had said to him not so long ago about happiness. Is this feeling what he had been talking about? This feeling of floating, of weightlessness? “Because you’re lovely to look at.”

The other man’s cheeks flush, his head ducking. “You’re lovely to look at, too.” His eyes lock onto
Victor’s chest, then drift down to the water, to his legs, then dart back up.

“I think you won our competition. What would you like your prize to be?”

Yuuri pauses, hand reaching up. He presses it against Victor’s chest—his heart—and meets his eyes. Victor searches his irises, wonders what he’s thinking, wonders what he is.

(Because Yuuri isn’t human, that much had already been determined.)

(He’s some sort of ethereal star, one that the cosmos didn’t deserve.)

And his heart is racing in his chest, and Victor knows that Yuuri can feel it, knows that that’s what he had been searching for. He’s taken back to a time on his couch, Yuuri doing the same thing, except tears had stained his cheeks, crying had strained his voice.

(It’s better the second time, this touch.)

“Could I kiss you?”

And the words bring him back to a different time, in Yuuri’s hotel room that was no longer Yuuri’s hotel room, his thoughts running rampant and courage weaving its way into his very bones, taking control, taking initiative where his mind had been too afraid. Except now it’s Yuuri saying the same words.

(Now it’s Yuuri.)

(Now it’s Yuuri, and that means everything.)

Victor nods, doesn’t trust himself to speak.

And Yuuri kisses him.

It’s slow at first, gentle. The water splashes as Yuuri closes the space between them, his chest flush against Victor’s own. His lips simply drift across Victor’s at first, his breaths coming quick, eyes half-lidded. Victor takes his bottom lip into his mouth, a hand cradling his back—his bare back—and another touching his bicep.

He dips Yuuri back slightly, and Yuuri’s hands come around his back for support. Victor can’t get enough, the fresh evening air, the water around their waists, the taste of mint. Yuuri parts his lips, and Victor does the same, needing more, wanting more, pressing him closer. The kiss becomes desperate, sloppy, and Yuuri shivers.

Victor pulls away for breath, his vision hazy, his legs weak. A moment later, he’s back on him, this time pushing him backwards until he’s up against the edge of the pool, Yuuri’s hands turned backwards, bracing himself against the edge. Victor takes advantage of the new angle and brings his hands to Yuuri’s chest, running up and down, the new skin tempting, cool, even under the water. He leans down and kisses his shoulder—it tastes of chlorine.

“Vitya,” he mumbles, bringing him back upwards, meeting his lips once again. He takes Victor’s bottom lip between his teeth and Victor gasps at the sensation. Then, before he knows what’s happening, they’ve been flipped—Victor against the edge of the pool and the other man setting to work on his jawbone, peppering it with kisses and his hands beginning a quest of exploration.

Victor is weak, thoughts drifting through his mind as though it’s made of thick sand. All he can focus on is the man in front of him, the edge of the pool pressing into his back. The pool is definitely not
the best location for this. “Come here,” he says, and scrambles to get out of the pool, tugging on
Yuuri’s arm, already missing the contact.

When they’re both out, Victor is kissing him again instantaneously, hands clinging to his sides,
lowering him to the patio. He sits cross-legged and pulls Yuuri onto his lap, holding back a whimper
when the man shifts on top of him, hands grasping at his forearms for support. Makkachin barks at
them. It takes Victor a moment to comprehend the sound. Yuuri laughs, turning his head to look at
the dog.

Victor laughs breathlessly, the moment breaking, but his heart still pounding, his skin still tingling.
He’s already embarrassingly hard, and he wonders if Yuuri is, too. “Should we go inside?”

“We didn’t do much swimming,” Yuuri points out, not protesting but teasing, kissing Victor on the
corner of his lips.

“Mmm, but we could continue this inside. I’d rather not continue it in a pool.”

“It’s weird kissing like this—with Makkachin watching us.”

“What, like he’s going to take photos?”

Yuuri smiles, shifting on his lap again, and Victor moans without meaning to, hips moving of their
own accord. Yuuri blinks at him, surprised, but just kisses him again. “Let’s go inside,” Yuuri
agrees. “Towels first, though.”

Victor hums in agreement, though regrets it when Yuuri gets off of him to go find towels. They dry
off quickly, still dripping a bit when they enter the house, and Victor presses him against the kitchen
island counter the moment they’re inside. He kisses him—hard, this time—and has a proper view of
his chest, now, so he pulls away after a brief moment, needing to look.

He’s muscular, unsurprisingly, and Victor finds himself drifting his hands across his abdomen, the
skin he had gotten a glimpse of so many times in the past but had never really had a chance to
admire. There are a few marks on either side of his navel, and he drifts his fingers across them,
curious. He considers asking about them, but just kisses them before moving on. Victor works his
way up to his left nipple and kisses it as well, eliciting a gasp from the man in front of him.

“Yuuri,” he breathes.

Yuuri hooks one leg around his hips as he sits back against the kitchen counter, sighing, letting
Victor make his way up to his collarbone, then back down to his other nipple, as though testing.
When he scrapes his teeth across it gently, Yuuri whimpers, other leg wrapping around him, nails
digging into his back. Victor moans in response, the feeling of Yuuri’s legs around him too much to
handle, his thoughts dissolving into pure bliss, the world around him incomprehensible.

“Do that again,” Yuuri begs.

“You’re gorgeous,” Victor whispers against his skin before repeating the action.

He pushes Yuuri back against the kitchen counter so that he’s laying on top of it, Victor moving on
top of him, kissing him, palms pressing down against the marble on either side of his head. Yuuri
keeps his legs around his waist, lips parting, water dripping off of his body and onto the counter. “I
don’t… I don’t think this is very sanitary.”

“This is the best thing I’ve ever done with my kitchen counter.”
Yuuri nods, eyes shut. “I have to agree.”

Victor kisses his temple. “Bed?”

“Okay,” Yuuri agrees.

They scramble off of the kitchen counter and Victor falls trying to make his way up the main staircase. Yuuri asks him if he’s okay, concerned, and Victor answers by pulling the skater on top of him, kissing him again, injury clouded by pleasure. Then, by the time they’ve made it to the bedroom, Victor lowers Yuuri onto the sheets, which are now wet from the pool water, and climbs on top of him.

“Tell me what you want, Yuuri,” Victor pleads, kissing his hairline.

(Because he wants everything, but he doesn’t want to be greedy.)

“I don’t know,” he admits, eyes wide. “What do you want?”

“You.”

Yuuri blinks at him, licking his lips. Nervous. “As in…?”

“All of you.”

He’s not even sure what he means. Just knows that he wants Yuuri. Knows that his words are true. Kisses him again. Addictive. Makes his way down to his neck, sucks on his pulse point, is rewarded with a soft moan. He needs him more than he had ever thought possible. His hips are level with Yuuri’s, and he thrusts desperately, needing something, anything, anything. He can feel Yuuri is hard underneath his swim trunks, too, and Victor groans, eyes shut.

“Listen, Victor…”

Kisses his shoulder, nips at it. Touches his chest, hands lowering to his navel, to the waistband of his swim trunks, slipping underneath it and touching his thighs. He’s alluring. Soft and warm and his skin is still damp from the pool and his hair…

“Victor?”

Victor glances up, notices for the first time the way Yuuri is looking at him. His eyes are wide, and his hands on Victor’s arms had stilled at some point. As though…

He pauses, moves his hands back up. “Yuuri?”

“I’m sorry,” the skater blurts, eyebrows drawn together with concern.

(Victor wonders what he looks like right now. Pupils dilated, hair tangled, hips slowly and subconsciously still moving against Yuuri’s, desperate for any kind of friction. He puts in mental effort to stop himself, puts in mental effort to try and corral his logic, which had, at some point, left in a frenzy.)

But Yuuri’s lips are still there, and his chest, and he’s only wearing a swim suit, and what is happening? Yuuri is talking, there are words leaving his mouth and entering the air, but they’re not reaching Victor’s brain. He tries to focus, squints his eyes, but it doesn’t help. All he knows is that Yuuri looks sad, upset.

(Why would he be upset?)
“What?” he asks.

“I said that I’m sorry—really sorry. I didn’t… I don’t… I’m not sure I’m ready. For that. And I shouldn’t have let it go this far and I’m really sorry—really, really sorry. This was… I’m… It’s just that…”

Victor gets off of him.

Yuuri wasn’t ready for this.

Right, right, right. Okay. Victor was okay with that. More than okay with that. Understanding. Completely understanding. Perfectly okay. They had gone too far. Victor had gone too far.

“Oh, I… I… You’re not… Yes.”

“I’m sorry,” he repeats, looking heartbroken. There’s a shakiness to his voice. “This is my fault, I shouldn’t have—”

“No, no, that’s okay,” Victor hurries, and he has a problem. A serious problem. Not Yuuri. Yuuri isn’t his problem. It’s what Yuuri has done to him. “I’m going to, um, take a shower.”

Yuuri stares, mouth opening slightly. “Oh.” His eyes drift down…

Victor hurries into the bathroom. Yuuri stares after him.

The water is cold.

Very cold.

(Not cold enough.)

When he’s done, the other man is gone. He had probably left to shower in his own room, or left with embarrassment, or left because he now hates Victor. (One of those three options.)

And Victor completely understands Yuuri not being ready. Completely understands.

And now that he can think, he collapses on his bed, trying to picture anything other than the way Yuuri had felt in his arms, the way he’d pushed him down on the kitchen counter. He’d never look at that kitchen island the same way again.

(How is he supposed to eat breakfast from now on?)

(That counter is now a sacred location.)

~

Yuuri feels horrible.

Every time he shuts his eyes he remembers the look on Victor’s face when he’d told him he wasn’t ready. So desperate to be understanding, so disappointed. And he feels horrible. It’s eating away at him as he washes the chlorine off of his skin, gnawing at him as he gets dressed into pajamas, pacing around his new bedroom.

What the hell had he been thinking?

He wants Victor.
Obviously.

(Obviously.)

(He is Victor, after all. From a physical standpoint, who wouldn’t want him? And from a personality standpoint, he’s kind, respectful—everything Yuuri could want.)

And yet.
Here he is.

(Feeling horrible.)

(So why? What was wrong with him? What is wrong with him?)

For a moment, he stands by his door, ready to march into Victor’s room and explain himself thoroughly and provide a proper apology. But he doesn’t. Just pulls out his phone, stares at the home screen, doesn’t know what to do. How’s he supposed to sleep now? When Victor had just taken a cold shower because of him, and when he had just taken a cold shower because of Victor?

And why isn’t he ready, anyway?

As was previously stated, this is Victor.

And yet when he’d moaned against Victor’s mouth, hands clinging to him desperately, heat pooling in his stomach and his hips just as desperate for friction as the man on top of him, he hadn’t been ready. A mental block, maybe? Something holding him back?

(Deep down, he suspects all of this boils down to the same reason that he wakes up in shock sometimes, remembering that it’s Victor who is sleeping beside him. The same reason that he forgets about Victor’s wealth and then has to remind himself that Victor could probably purchase an island if he fancied doing so on a Tuesday afternoon.)

(It’s Victor. That seems to explain it all.)

(From the very beginning, this was Victor. A man he had worshipped.)

Perhaps the worst part about all of this was the way that Victor had tried to cover his disappointment.

Yuuri hates himself.

Buries his face in his pillow.

There’s a knock on the door.

It swings open—he doesn’t say anything.

“Yuuri?” Victor sits on the edge of the bed and Yuuri props himself up by his elbows to look at him, squinting in the dark without his glasses.

“I’m sorry,” Yuuri blurts, because the moment he sees him he doesn’t know how to say anything else. “I feel terrible and I’m terrible and I shouldn’t have done any of that if I wasn’t willing to follow through with it. It was cruel and I don’t know what I was thinking. And I’m just sorry above everything else. And if you don’t like me anymore, or if you want to break up with me, I completely understand.” He says it all in one breath then bites his lip, dreading the other man’s reaction.
Victor blinks. “I just came in here to say goodnight.”

Yuuri stares.

“Why would I want to break up with you?” he asks, taking Yuuri’s hand. “And why are you upset?”

“You’re not upset,” Yuuri realizes slowly, and it’s a question as well as a statement, his eyes searching Victor’s own. How was Victor not upset? How was Victor acting as though nothing had happened?

“No,” Victor confirms. “Should I be?”

“We just… You just…”

“You, I don’t care that you’re not ready for… All of that. Is that what this is about?” Yuuri nods. “I mean, I do care, but not in the way that you think. I’ll be waiting for you whenever you’re ready.” He kisses the back of his hand. “Or… If you never are, that’s okay, too.”

Another moment of silence.

Yuuri wonders if this is really happening or if some masochistic part of his mind is making it up, tempting him. “So you’re not disappointed?”

Victor licks his lips. “I’m not going to lie to you, I was a little disappointed, but I don’t care. I want everything to be on your terms. And I’m sorry if I got, er… If I was… Well, you know.”

“No, no,” Yuuri assures him, squeezing his hand. “Victor, I don’t want you to get the wrong idea. I do, um… Want those things.”

He can tell those words pique Victor’s interest, his eyes widening. “You do?”

“Just not now. I don’t know when.”

Victor smiles warmly, wrapping him in a hug. “Just let me know when?”

“You’ll be the first to know.”

He laughs. “That’s a relief.”

~~

The routines aren’t bad.

They still aren’t perfect, but they’re not bad. He’d recorded Yurio performing one, Mila performing one, and Victor performing one. He’s currently sitting in Yakov’s office, phone in front of the director’s face as he watches the videos. His expression is unwavering. Reveals no emotion.

Yuuri swallows thickly. Yakov raises an eyebrow at something on the screen.

“Good.”

Yuuri stares, shocked. “Really?”
“What, do you think they’re bad?”

“No, no, I just… I didn’t… Thank you?”

Yakov smiles sort of like a shark, Yuuri has noticed. “You did well, Yuuri. Be proud of yourself.”

“Thanks, Yakov.”

He leaves the room, taking a breath as soon as he does, and starts down the hallway, attempting to find the restroom. When he turns a corner, he’s faced with a giant framed poster of Victor on the wall. The words ‘Serenade for Two’ are written in blocky letters along the bottom. Victor is kissing a blonde actress, one of his hands sensually tangled in her hair.

It’s huge.

His face is airbrushed slightly, but Yuuri can’t figure out why, seeing as he’s even more attractive naturally. The blonde’s face is mostly hidden, but her arms grip his biceps, the wind sweeping her red dress off to the right. Yuuri can’t remember her name, though he’d seen the movie several times before.

“Are you gonna start drooling?”

He spins around on his heels. Yurio.

Yuuri blushes, shaking his head. “No, I just got lost looking for the restroom.”

The Russian looks unimpressed, folds his arms across his chest. “They need more posters of me around this place. I don’t know why Victor’s face is pasted everywhere. Oh, did you make him that piroshki recipe that I translated for you?”

“Yeah, he liked it.”

“I’m not surprised. It’s a good recipe,” Yurio answers simply. “Bathroom is that way, by the way.” He points. “But if you want I can leave so you can keep staring at the poster.”

Yuuri glances up at it again. “I just… I noticed that they airbrushed him.”

“They do that,” Yurio answers. “I’m sure they airbrushed the girl, too. It’s stupid, I think. Yakov thinks so too, but they tell him that airbrushing makes him more money, and Victor doesn’t really care, I guess. Why would people be more inclined to go see a movie where the people don’t even look real?”

Victor doesn’t look real airbrushed or not, Yuuri thinks, but he doesn’t add that. “I don’t know. I’ve seen this movie, though.”

“How many of his movies have you seen?”

(All of them.)

“Oh, I don’t know. The famous ones.”

Yurio doesn’t look like he believes him. “Right. Well have fun drooling over him, Katsuki. I’m going home. I’ll see you when filming starts.”

“See you, Yurio.”
Yuuri had sort of forgotten that filming would, at some point, actually start.

He had gotten so caught up in choreographing and teaching and Victor that he hadn’t remembered that one day, the actors would actually perform the routines he had put together. That the movie would actually be made. That there would be an actual film crew with cameras and lights…

The main set is in Santa Barbara, California. It’s Victor’s character’s home rink.

(It’s a one and a half hour drive.)

(Somehow, Yakov ends up driving them, with Yurio in the passenger seat and Victor, Yuuri, and Makkachin in the back.)

(The trip, unsurprisingly, is a nightmare. Especially when Victor’s singing begins.)

(But they all make it there alive. Barely.)

~

Equipment is already set up near the rink they’ll be filming at. It’s an old rink, not very popular these days, and the owner was ecstatic to have it be used in a film.

“I’m Victor Nikiforov,” Victor introduces himself, shaking the owner’s hand.

The owner looks him over, smiles, a bit puzzled by the emphasis that Victor puts on his own name. Not even a minuscule sign of recognition.

(Yuuri can tell Victor is slightly perturbed. Almost everyone he meets fawns over him. He’s used to attention.)

Then the owner looks at Yuuri.

“You’re Katsuki Yuuri!” he exclaims, wrapping him in a tight hug. “I’m a huge fan! Your performance at last year’s Grand Prix Final? Incredible. My entire family watched it together. We rooted for you.”

Yuuri smiles. “Thank you, I’m flattered.”

Victor wraps an arm around Yuuri’s side, smiling proudly.

~

“Okay, I get the biggest trailer,” Yurio announces a few minutes later as they make their way to the parking lot where the trailers had been set up.

“Why do you get the biggest trailer?” Victor asks suspiciously, raising an eyebrow.

They stare at each other, then Yurio presses his palm to his forehead. “You don’t remember, do you?” He glances at Yuuri, who shrugs, looking between them for answers.
Victor rubs the back of his neck. “Remember what?”

 “…Victor. We had a deal.”

“A deal?”

“If I endorsed Yuuri as our coach, you’d give me the biggest trailer on the movie set. Now you two are dating and I want my trailer.”

Yuuri blinks. “You what?”

Yurio rolls his eyes. “Victor wanted you as our coach, but Yakov had already picked some other skater. So he promised me the biggest trailer. A good deal on my part.”

“Oh. Maybe I do remember that,” Victor admits, glancing between the trailers. “Well, it looks like the one on the right is bigger.”

Yurio marches towards the trailer on the right. There’s a sign on it with Victor’s name. He takes it off and hands it to Victor, then marches to the trailer on the left and takes the sign with his own name. “Perfect. See you two tomorrow.” He closes the door to his new trailer.

Victor stands there, the nameplate in his hand. “You gave up having the big trailer so that I’d be your coach?” Yuuri asks, surprised.

“It worked out, didn’t it? I make good choices.”

He smiles and reaches up to kiss him on the cheek. “Do I have a trailer like these?”

“Probably, but I’d rather you just stay in mine.” Victor takes Yuuri’s hand and leads him inside his own trailer, Makkachin following behind them.

It looks bigger on the inside than it had on the outside. There’s a bed in a room off to the right and a small kitchen and living area in the middle. To the left is a bathroom. “Hmm. Not an en suite bathroom. But it’ll do,” Victor muses. “What do you think, Makkachin?”

The dog has already made himself at home on the small couch. Yuuri smiles and sits down beside him, petting his fur. “I think he’s tired from the car ride.”

“Probably. I know I am.” Victor lays down across the couch, resting his head on Yuuri’s lap. “Good thing I brought a personalized pillow.”

“Oh, so that’s all I’m here for, is it?” Yuuri teases, touching Victor’s hair with one hand. It feels softer than usual. Perhaps he’d done something special to it in preparation for filming.

“Oh no, you figured me out.” Makkachin leans over and licks Victor’s face and he scrunches up his nose. Yuuri laughs. “You’ll come on the set tomorrow, won’t you? Even though I’m not skating?”

“Sure,” Yuuri answers. “I’ll get to watch you in action for the first time.”

“I should warn you, it’s very unexciting. It looks much better in the final cut, with the music and lighting all finalized. Before post-production, it’s just a video clip of me talking to someone with the wind blowing through my hair.”

“I’m sure it’ll be great,” he assures him.

Victor yawns, cuddling into him. “Can I post another photo of us on Instagram?”
“What photo?”

“I don’t know yet. A good one.”

“I should post one,” Yuuri points out. “Put something on my account.”

“Ooh, okay. Or we could both upload the same photo at the same time. That’s a thing that people do, right?” He reaches blindly for his pocket and produces his phone, flipping through his photo album. “Maybe this one?”

He shows Yuuri a selfie they’d taken back at Victor’s house. “Sure, that works.” Yuuri takes the phone out of his hands and goes to the photo album, surprised by how many pictures there are of them. Selfies, candid shots, posed photos galore.

“What photo?”

“I don’t know yet. A good one.”

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“Ooh, okay. Or we could both upload the same photo at the same time. That’s a thing that people do, right?” He reaches blindly for his pocket and produces his phone, flipping through his photo album. “Maybe this one?”

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“Can I just sleep here?” Victor asks. “You’re so comfortable.”

“We could… I mean… I could sleep here tonight.”

The actor looks up at him with wide eyes.

“Just to sleep,” Yuuri clarifies. “Sorry, that was misleading.”

“I’d like that,” he confirms, leaning up and kissing him on the lips.

~

Yuuri wears sweatpants.

(Victor loves it.)

The bed is smaller than his at home, but it’s comfortable, the duvet crisp and white. Yuuri yawns the moment he gets under the covers, rolling onto his side and tucking his arms against his chest. Victor finishes getting ready then slips in beside him, wrapping an arm around the younger man and grinning ridiculously as he cuddles against him.

Dating Yuuri is still new.

(Dating Yuuri.)

(Dating Yuuri.)

But it’s an exciting and scary sort of new, the sort of new that has him on edge at all times. Because how would Yuuri react to the filming, and was he still planning on going to Japan, and what was he thinking, and how did he feel about the movie itself? Would he go see it, if he didn’t know Victor? Maybe with Phichit back in Detroit?

One of Yuuri’s legs makes its way in between both of his, and Victor smiles, kissing him on the forehead gently, lips lingering there.

He doesn’t sleep.

Can’t sleep. The filming starts tomorrow and, though he’s not nervous, there’s a lot on his mind. Costumes and lines and coworkers and cameras. So he stares at the ceiling of the trailer, listens to the soothing sounds of Yuuri’s breathing.

(Yuuri drools a little.)
(Victor has never loved him more.)

He takes out his phone and pulls up Instagram, debates whether or not to post the selfie they’d spoken about earlier. But then he remembers the last photo he’d posted, the one that had, according to Phichit, ‘broken the internet.’ Remembers that Yuuri had asked him to talk to him before doing anything like that again.

So he decides against it. Instead, he turns on the camera and points it at Yuuri, taking a picture of him drooling on Victor’s chest. It’s adorable. Probably his new favorite photo.

(He makes it his phone background, figures Yuuri will make him change it later, but it’ll be lovely for the time being.)

~

When he wakes up, Yuuri is gone.

Victor looks around the trailer in a haze. His bags are gone—he must’ve moved them to his own trailer at some point, Victor notes grimly—and there’s no evidence that he was ever here. There’s a text from Yakov, and Victor yawns, answering it while making his way into the bathroom.

He showers and gets dressed before heading over to the rink early. There’s a crowd gathered outside, cameras and microphones already being prepared. “Georgi wants to see you for makeup,” Yakov tells him.

Victor opens his mouth to ask something.

Yakov answers preemptively, “Yuuri is inside the rink.”

(He pauses, looking towards Georgi’s makeup trailer. Then looks back towards the rink.)

“I’ll tell him you’ll be a minute late,” Yakov tells him.

He enters the rink, pausing at what he sees. Yuuri is gliding across the ice, wearing black track pants and a purple t-shirt. Victor leans against the wall—the building is smaller than the one in Los Angeles, more intimate, though the space it does have is mostly open. It’s perfect for filming, he thinks. Good lighting, pretty decor, though it also has an antiquated aura to it, which fits the beginning of the movie well.

Yuuri doesn’t see him. Just keeps skating. There are earphones in his ears and he jumps up into the air. A quad flip. Victor could stay here all day, he thinks. The sight is mesmerizing. The gracefulness, the precision.

He does another jump, a salchow, maybe? It’s impressive all the same. Then, Yuuri turns in an arch, a leg drifting behind him as he does so, and catches Victor’s eyes. Immediately, he stops, eyes huge.

“Victor?”

“Good morning,” he greets as Yuuri skates across the ice, grinning at him, now. Victor can’t help but grin back. They both start laughing, and it’s stupid how they keep doing that, but it’s a thing now, he supposes, and he loves it.
“Good morning,” Yuuri answers.

Victor picks up the skater’s glasses off of the half wall and puts them on him. “How’d you sleep?”

“Good. Shouldn’t you be… I don’t know, filming yet? Or getting ready?”

“Georgi is about to do my makeup,” Victor says. “Have you met him?”

He shakes his head. “No, I haven’t.”

“He’s… Passionate about his job, I suppose.”

Yuuri laughs. “Can I watch him put on your makeup?”

“It’s not that interesting. Yurio, though, doesn’t let Georgi get a brush within two inches of him. That’s interesting to watch.”

~

When Georgi has done his hair and makeup, and the costume designer, Lilia, has given him an outfit—a blue jacket and black pants, he makes his way to the set. Georgi follows closely behind him, reminding him every twenty seconds or so not to touch his hair, which was, according to him, a ‘masterpiece.’

(To Victor, it looks the same as always. Perhaps slightly shinier.)

Yakov gestures for him to come over, and Victor eyes a cameraman who definitely does not look old enough to be a cameraman. He has black hair that is short on the sides and a solemn expression, eyes focused on the device in front of him as he fiddles with it.

The director begins talking the scene over with him. A few minutes later, he’s in front of the crew, and they’re testing the lighting and camera angles. He can spot Yuuri in the corner of his eye, talking to someone.

“Alright, scene one, take one, action,” Yakov says, leaning back in his chair.

There’s something about the first act of a performance that is different than the rest.

It’s as though he’s diving into the character, as though it’s a fresh start. It’s a scene from the middle of the movie, a phone call between him and Mila. Mila is off camera, delivering the lines that would be re-recorded later, anyway. He looks out across the town, the camera panning behind him.

“That was a great first take,” Yakov praises. “Now another.”

They do it again. Then again. Then Yakov says something about checking the lighting and angles and film quality and they’re on a minute-long break.

“Well? Is it a blockbuster?” he asks Yuuri, elbowing him in the side.

Yuuri looks genuinely impressed, nodding. “You said that it’s unexcited before post-production. But that was…” His voice trails off. “It was interesting.”

(And why does he look uncomfortable?)

(No, not uncomfortable—off.)
Victor decides to ignore it, figuring that maybe he’s reading too much into it. “Doesn’t that guy over there look young to you?” he asks, nodding his head towards the cameraman.


“An intern?” Victor asks. “Since when does Yakov take on interns?”

Yuuri shrugs.

Santa Barbara is a beautiful city, and the rink is located up on a hill, giving a perfect view of apricot-colored roofs and vibrant treetops. There are a few boats out on the water, drifting out towards the sea. Yuuri runs a hand through his hair as he looks out over it.

“Are you bored?”

(Because that makes sense. He would understand Yuuri being bored on a set with nothing to do. And that’s going to be a recurring problem for the next few months, probably.)

“What? No,” Yuuri insists, shrugging. “And if I get bored there’s plenty to do here. Don’t worry about me.”

Victor smiles, wrapping his arms around Yuuri’s waist and resting his chin on top of his head. The skater smiles and turns around in his arms. “I’d kiss you but I don’t want to risk messing up your makeup.”

He chuckles and kisses Yuuri anyway, tilting him back slightly, the sun beaming down on them—

“Vitya! Get over here!” Yakov calls.

“Coming,” Victor answers before turning back to Yuuri. “Will you be here for every break? I think that doing this every time will help sharpen my skills.”

Yuuri laughs, pushing on his arm. “Get back to the set.”

“I’m serious,” he complains, pouting. “Kissing breaks every ten minutes—I’ll make Yakov put that rule in.”

“You’re ridiculous.”

~

That night, Victor is bored.

Can I come over?

Yuuri answers almost instantly. Sure.

It’s a cold walk from his trailer to Yuuri’s, and he hadn’t brought a jacket, wrapping his arms around himself as he makes his way over. Yuuri’s trailer is smaller than his, though it does have a nice bed and a television, just like Phichit had asked. When he knocks on the door, Yuuri grins at him.

Victor hugs him.

(It’s sort of inevitable, hugging Yuuri. It’s like he has to. Like he wouldn’t be able to live with himself if he didn’t.)
Yuuri laughs, hugging him back, and Victor smiles idiotically, lifting him off of his feet. “Hello.”

“What did you think of your first day on a movie set?”

“A lot more camerawork, a lot less acting,” Yuuri muses, keeping his hands on Victor’s arms even after they pull away, something that Victor loves.

Victor hums. “That’s true. You should know, I noticed that on the schedule I’m not needed on Tuesday. Which means I’ll have part of the day free, and it’s not a skating scene, so you should be free, too.”

Yuuri licks his lips. “Yeah?”

“Yeah. And, well, there are beaches here.”

“You don’t say?” Yuuri jokes, shifting closer to him, pressing his lips against Victor’s neck.

Victor hums, tilting his head back. “We could go to one?”

“Okay, let’s do it. It’s a date.”

“A date?” Victor questions, keeping his voice teasing.

“You’re asking me out, aren’t you?”

Victor moves his hands to the other man’s hips, finds his lips with his own, kisses him gently, softly. “I am. I’ll pick you up at six? Where do you live, exactly?”

He laughs and kisses Victor back, his eyes falling shut. “We should probably sleep.”

“Probably.” Victor shifts a hand to his back and leans down, putting his other hand behind Yuuri’s knees.

“Victor, what are you—”

He picks Yuuri up, and the skater yelps, wrapping his arms around Victor’s neck. “I’m taking you to bed.”

The trailer is small, and Victor struggles to navigate both of them through the tiny doorway that leads to the bedroom. Yuuri’s legs bump against the wall. “Ouch.”

“Sorry,” Victor says, laying him down on the bed before crawling on top of him.

Yuuri kisses him but yawns as he does, and pulls away, laughing. “I think I’m too tired.”

“That’s okay, you just lay there and I’ll just…” Victor touches the bottom of Yuuri’s t-shirt and lifts it up a little, eyes asking for permission.

Yuuri lifts up his arms in response and Victor grins, pulling the fabric over his head and tossing it to the side. He kisses his way down to Yuuri’s nipples and the man sighs underneath him, hands weaving through his hair. “This isn’t going to help me sleep.”

“Are you telling me to stop?” he asks.
“No.”

~

There’s a noticeable difference in Victor over the next week.

And Yuuri starts to get bored.

(Just a little.)

He still practices skating with the actors when the rink isn’t being used for filming—Yurio especially. He teaches jumps and goes over routines and keeps their skills sharp. But when he’s not doing that, or when a scene involves multiple actors being on set, he’s bored.

Victor comes back to his trailer when there’s no longer usable daylight for outdoor scenes or when there’s no more energy among the film crew for indoor scenes. Or sometimes Yuuri goes to his trailer. It’s the same difference, because Victor is always exhausted, too tired to hardly say a word to him, collapsing on the bed and curling up against Yuuri or falling asleep on the couch.

It’s understandable, really. Yakov is a picky director and will sometimes have him repeat the same lines endlessly. They haven’t filmed any skating scenes yet, but Yuuri can only imagine what a nightmare those will be for his health.

Needless to say, he’s excited for Tuesday.

He hadn’t been to the beach since they’d gotten here—he hadn’t done much, really—but from what he’d seen, it was beautiful. And it’s something to do.

So Monday night, when Victor comes back to his trailer, Yuuri hands him a nutrition bar and watches as he devours it in about ten seconds flat. “Have you been skating with Yurio?” Victor asks, glancing at him.

“A little, why?”

“We filmed a scene together today, and I noticed something off about him. So I tried to ask him about it and he practically sprinted away from me. I think it has something to do with the intern.”


Victor nods, folding his arms on the table and laying his head down. “Yakov tried to have Otabek do a lot of the filming for this scene, and whenever he said something to Yurio, he’d listen.”

“He’d listen? What’s so weird about that?”

“Well, he listens to Yakov sometimes, if he likes the advice. But with Otabek, he was attentive, took everything he said into account right away. It was impressive.”

Yuuri sits down beside Victor and places a hand on his back, rubbing it. Victor sighs and rests his head on his shoulder. “Maybe he has a crush?”

Victor laughs. “I think so. But he’d never admit that to me. Maybe you should talk to him?”
“You want me to ask Yurio if he has a crush? I didn’t know you wanted me dead so badly.”

“He listens to you, even if he won’t admit it.”

Yuuri shrugs, brushing off the topic. “We’re still on for tomorrow, right?”

Victor yawns. “What’s tomorrow?”

Oh.

(It hurts, just a little.)

(Just a little. Because he knows that Victor has been busy and caught up in scripts and meetings and acting. And Yuuri’s life contrasts that so sharply because he has been sitting around, training, skating.)

(But what does he say?)

(Victor isn’t even looking at him. Probably already half-asleep.)

(And he deserves a day off. It has only been a week, but it has been a hellish week. And how can Yuuri possibly ask him to spend a day at the beach with him on his one day off? It wouldn’t be fair, really.)

“Nothing,” he mumbles, standing up. “Are you ready to sleep?”

Victor answers by yawning again and nodding, heading into the small bathroom. “I need to shower first. Be right back.”

~

Victor had forgotten to turn off his alarm. It’s blaring at six in the morning and he groans, rolling onto his side. Yuuri leans over and turns it off. “You’re not filming today, remember?”

His voice is groggy, still muddled with sleep. “I forgot. Are you skating?”

“No,” he says.

The man beside him shifts and wraps an arm around his side, tugging him closer. “I could sleep forever.”

Yuuri smiles and turns, kissing him on the cheek. “You keep sleeping, I’ll go make breakfast, okay?”

“You’re too good to me, Yuuri Katsuki,” he mumbles sleepily. “What did I ever do to deserve you?”

It’s cute, seeing Victor like this. “I could ask you the same thing.”

Victor laughs and shakes his head. “You’re the best thing that has ever happened to me.”

Yuuri isn’t sure what to say.

His chest hurts. His thoughts drift endlessly towards the sea only a few miles away from them. But it’s not true. Can’t be. But then, why would he say it? Was it the sleep talking?
“You’re the best thing that has ever happened to me, too.”

(And he means it.)

~

He makes breakfast, just some toast, and they sit beside each other at the miniature kitchen table to eat. “How is the filming going?”

“Good. Yakov is happy with it so far. He thinks it’ll be a hit. Everything is on schedule. How is the training going with everyone else?”

“Good,” Yuuri answers, staring down at his toast. It’s burnt, butter smeared across it unevenly. He’s not very hungry. “Phichit has another qualifying competition soon, in Canada.”

“Canada,” he repeats, thinking. “That’s good. So that’ll determine if he gets into the Grand Prix Final?”

“Right. It’s on Saturday.”

Victor takes another bite of the toast. “I’ll be filming all day.”

“Oh, yeah, that’s okay,” Yuuri responds, smiling.

“I hope he does well.”

“So do I. The Grand Prix is being held in Barcelona this year, and it’ll overlap with when we’re there. So it’d be perfect for him to film his cameo, if he were to stay an extra night afterwards or something.”

“You could go watch,” Victor suggests.

“I could. That’d be nice.”

They finish eating and then watch television, though Victor quickly falls back asleep on the couch. Yuuri is fairly certain his body is trying to catch up to the sudden shock to his sleep schedule. Back in Los Angeles, he’d woken up at ten at the earliest, and now he was up at the break of dawn every morning.

So Yuuri pulls a blanket over him and watches as he cuddles Makkachin against his side, burying his nose in his dog’s fur. Yuuri pulls out his phone and goes on social media, exploring the Victuuri tag because it’s far too tempting, then checking out what his friends had been posting.

A lot of photos of Phichit in Detroit—a selfie of himself on the rink, a picture of Celestino and him, a photo of some flowers. Yuuri likes all of them, then moves on. JJ had posted a picture of himself practicing a jump, his fiancée off to the left, clapping for him. Yuuri likes that one, too.

Then he leaves the trailer, goes for a walk. A scene was currently being filmed with Mila outside of the rink, and in the distance he can see the crew and lights and microphones being held high in the air. He sees Yurio, which is odd, because Yurio wasn’t on the schedule for the day, but he’s standing near the intern, Otabek.

Interesting, Yuuri thinks.

He ends up in the rink. It’s sort of inevitable.
He didn’t bring skates but there are skates there, and the owner who had been a fan of his is smiling at him as he hands him a pair roughly his size. The balance of them is a bit off-putting, but he makes his way onto the ice anyway, doing lazy figure eights. He wonders how different his life would be if he was training for the Grand Prix Final right now. Wonders how hard Phichit is working, how badly JJ is striving for it, who will be victorious this year.

(Wonders if it could’ve been him.)

(Yuuri is happy with Victor, but, objectively, he probably doesn’t have much time left before he retires from skating.)

So he just skates, tries to clear his mind. All of the anxious thoughts are like little insects that just won’t leave him alone, that itch and annoy. He wonders if he’ll even be on the news this year during the Final, if he’ll be forgotten about or if his absence will be mentioned. Yuuri jumps up into the air, does a flip, lands back down flawlessly.

Thinks about the beach.

Thinks about the pool, only a week or so ago, Victor…

“A lot on your mind?” the owner of the rink calls.

Yuuri pauses, not realizing that the man had been observing him. He offers a smile. “Sort of.”

~

The following day, Mila approaches them as they walk to the rink. Yuuri was planning on skating with Yurio, who had wanted to practice some more of his jumps. Victor had some scenes to film with Christophe.

“Did you guys have fun at the beach yesterday?” Mila asks, smiling.

Yuuri remembers telling Mila about their plans ages ago.

He sees Victor pause beside him, confused. Yuuri licks his lips and glances down towards the ground, unsure of what to do or say. “The beach?” Victor asks, and Yuuri can feel the actor’s gaze on him. “We didn’t…”

Mila shifts her weight from one foot to the other. “Oh, sorry, I thought you two had gone.”

Nobody says anything. Yuuri knows Victor is looking at him and hates it. Wishes he would stop. Mila mutters something about going to see Georgi to talk to him about her costumes for the day and then is gone in a flash.

“We were supposed to go to the beach,” Victor remembers.

Yuuri shrugs. “It’s fine. You were tired, and I didn’t want to remind you because I figured you could use the day off.”

“But you told Mila about it?” he asks quietly.

“A while back.”
Victor seems to realize what that means, seems to realize that Yuuri must’ve been looking forward to it. Which isn’t a lie. He had been. But right now he desperately wants to act like he doesn’t care, because he hates Victor trying to comfort him, hates being the one who needs comforting in the first place. He knows Victor is trying to help, but it makes him feel weak, fragile.

(Which perhaps he is.)

(But that doesn’t matter. Shouldn’t matter.)

“Yuuri…” Victor starts, tilting his chin up to force Yuuri to look at him. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s not a big deal. We can go some other time.”

His distress doesn’t look alleviated. “No, hang on, wait here.”

Yuuri blinks as Victor starts walking away. Towards the set. Towards Yakov. He winces and darts after him, grabbing his arm. “No, Victor. You’re not going to request the day off just to go to the beach with me. That’s not… You don’t have to do that.”

The actor looks surprised. “How did you know that’s what I was going to do?”

“Because I know you. Now it’s fine, go do your job. We’ll have plenty of time in the future to do stuff like that.”

Victor glances back at Yakov, then back at Yuuri, as though trying to decide. “But it’s my fault for forgetting, and I—”

“Go,” Yuuri tells him firmly. Then he offers a smile, hoping it’ll help. “Another time, okay?”

“But you’re probably bored and you’re alone all day and I—”

“Victor, it’s really not a big deal. Please don’t worry about me. I’d much rather you didn’t.”

Victor reaches out and laces their fingers. “But I do worry about you.”

Yuuri isn’t sure what to say to that.

(Isn’t sure if it’s true.)

But he looks serious, concerned, and Yuuri just smiles a little more, squeezing his hand. Yakov is yelling at Victor from over on the set, telling him to come over there. “You shouldn’t,” Yuuri assures him. “Why would you worry about me?”

Victor brings his hand to his lips and kisses the back of it. “Because you’re important to me.”

“And you’re important to me.”

They smile at each other.

There’s a pause.

(Victor starts laughing first.)

(Then Yuuri.)

(But this time Victor hugs him and buries his nose in his hair. Whispers something to him in Russian.)
Yuuri doesn’t understand it, but it makes his heart hurt in the best possible way.

When they pull away, Victor gives him one last, longing stare before making his way over to Yakov. “You’re not even in costume yet, Vitya?” Yakov growls.

“Sorry, Yakov,” he apologizes. “I got sidetracked by my gorgeous boyfriend.” Victor swirls around on his heels and winks at Yuuri, who, if possible, would sink into the ground and bury himself alive with embarrassment.

“Tell your ‘gorgeous boyfriend’ to distract you on a day when we don’t have a full day of work ahead of ourselves,” Yakov warns.

“Yes sir. Did you hear that, Yuuri? You need to stop distracting me.”

Yuuri looks unimpressed, but is laughing anyway.

Yakov sighs, “Don’t call me sir. It sounds sarcastic.”

“It kind of is. Kind of.”

~

Wednesday morning, Victor wakes up to see the man next to him on his phone, black bangs falling in front of his eyes, glasses perched on his nose. Victor rests his head on Yuuri’s chest and glances at his phone. “What are you looking at?”

“Nothing. Good morning.” He locks the phone.

Victor wraps an arm around him and pulls him closer. “You’re not gonna tell me?”

Yuuri smiles. “You’re affectionate in the mornings.”

(He’s avoiding the topic. Obviously.)

“Mmm,” he agrees. “Now what were you looking at?”

The skater sighs and opens his phone, showing Victor an article. A photo of him in the hotel, hands covering his face as he tries to block out the paparazzi. Messy hair, a wrinkled shirt. Victor, of course, always finds Yuuri attractive, but objectively, it’s not a good photo. Yuuri locks the phone again and tosses it on the pillow beside him.

“Yuuri, you shouldn’t look at those,” Victor tells him.

“How come?”

He kisses his shoulder. “It’s bad for you. Every time you read an article like that, you lose an IQ point.”

Yuuri laughs. Success. “Okay, I won’t anymore. Oh, and I do have something to tell you.”

“What?” Victor asks.
“I talked it over with Yakov, I’m going to fly to Hasetsu on Monday, and I’ll come back on Friday. All of the skating scenes are being filmed before and after then, so it should work out perfectly.”

He doesn’t like the idea of Yuuri going anywhere without him.

Also doesn’t like the idea of being here without Yuuri.

But he does want Yuuri to see his family. Does want Yuuri to be happy. “That’s good. Maybe I’ll sneak out and come with you.”

Yuuri smiles and kisses him briefly. “I might let you.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, by the way, there’s something I should tell you, too. There’s a gala in Los Angeles coming up. Yakov is making me go. It sounds very, very boring. Go with me?”

“You’re really trying to sell me on it, huh?” Yuuri comments.

Victor laughs. “It doesn’t have to be boring if we go together. We could make it fun. However, I’m not above begging you.”

“Begging?” he asks, raising an eyebrow. “Victor Nikiforov begging?”

He kisses him. “Please?” Then moves to his cheek. “Please?” Then his ear, his neck, his shoulder, his chest…

Yuuri shivers. “You might need to keep doing that. But I’ll go. Who will be there?”

“I don’t know—celebrities, business owners. Mila and Yurio are going, so you’ll know them. Plus, if we get bored, we can leave early.”

“Leave early? Don’t you think people would notice?”

“Oh, absolutely.”

Yuuri laughs. “We should probably get out of bed.”

“You always ruin the fun,” Victor complains lovingly.

“No, I always save us from Yakov’s wrath.”

“Let him wrath us.”

“I don’t think wrath can be a verb, Vitya,” Yuuri tells him, poking him in the chest.

Victor slips a hand under the back of his shirt. “You’re smart and beautiful, you know that?”
Glass and Steel

Chapter Summary

When Yuuri leaves to visit Japan, Victor gets an idea. Afterwards, they attend a gala and begin filming the pair skate.

Chapter Notes

I'm just gonna... leave this chapter here...

Be sure to leave me a comment & let me know what you think! :D :D (We hit 1,000 comments I am more shook than Phichit after seeing Victor and Yuuri's rings in ep 10 you feel me??? And we're also about to hit 3,000 kudos is this real life??)

WARNING: Mentions of anxiety / anxiety attacks in this chapter!

Phichit wins bronze at Skate Canada.

Yuuri can’t stop smiling when he realizes that his friend qualifies for the Grand Prix Final, can’t stop texting him long rants about his accomplishments and endless strings of emojis. He texts Victor, too, even though he’s on set—and Victor, unsurprisingly, finds the time to text him back, probably at the expense of Yakov’s sanity.

As for filming, Victor is no longer the only exhausted actor.

Yurio had filmed all of his skating scenes over the past four days with Yuuri on the set, helping and adjusting his motions and jumps. He leaves for Japan on Monday, and he’s returning late Friday night. Then they’ll get to work on the pair skate and one of Mila’s solos, Victor’s solos following suit. Eventually, in the rapidly approaching future, they’ll leave for Moscow and film there.

Everything was happening so quickly, yet Yuuri could hardly keep up with his day-to-day schedule. Yurio’s skates had gone well—Yakov had been satisfied with the takes. He had started to notice what Victor had been saying about Yurio and the intern, Otabek. There was definitely something going on there. Yuuri had never seen Yurio be quite so warm towards someone.

Yuuri’s plane leaves at four in the morning on Monday.

Sunday night, Victor is reluctant to let him leave, and though it’s adorable, Yuuri can’t help but wish that he was going with him. Can’t help but wish he could show Victor around Hasetsu, show him the sea, the sand, the hot springs. He had a feeling he’d enjoy it.

“I’m going to miss you,” Victor mumbles from beside him in bed. The blankets are caught at the bottom of the mattress, their hands joined as they stare up towards the blank, white ceiling together.

“I’ll miss you, too,” Yuuri admits, squeezing his hand.
Victor smiles at him. “You’ll have fun, though. And you’ll call me?”

“I’ll call you.”

“Oooh, or we could video call, and then you could show me around anyway,” he suggests. “The time zones would make it hard, but we could figure it out.”

Yuuri yawns. “That’d be nice.”

Victor pulls Yuuri on top of him, wraps both arms around him and sighs, nuzzling his hair. “Good night.”

“Good night, Vitya.”

~

It’s physically painful, watching Yuuri leave.

After he’s gone, Victor makes his way straight to Yakov, who is currently talking something over with a cameraman. “Yakov, I have an idea.”

Yakov doesn’t look impressed. As per usual. “No, you’re not going to Japan.” (Why is that everybody seems to know what he’s about to say before he says it?)

“Let’s talk this through,” he pleads.

“Vitya, who is the star of this movie?”

He purses his lips. “Me.”

“Therefore…”

“Right, I need to be here, but couldn’t you just film some of Mila’s scenes? She has plenty of scenes!”

Yakov rubs at his forehead, gives the cameraman he had been talking to an apologetic glance. “You’re in most of her scenes, last time I checked. It’s not as easy as you think to rearrange things like that.”

“But you’re saying it could be done?” he asks, extending his lower lip. “Listen, I’d only go for a little while, I could surprise him! And I’d pay for all of it, obviously—I could even pay you back! Compensate you! How much do you want? Two hundred dollars? Five hundred?”

“You’ve got to learn that money can’t solve everything.”

Victor gives him his best, most pleading eyes. “It can solve most things. Come on, Yakov, please? I know Mila and Yurio will back me up on this.”

“Yurio would not back you up,” Yakov argues. “But I tell you what, if you can get them to agree to take some of your slack and work on their scenes earlier than scheduled, then you can have two days. Two days.”
“Two days as in, I fly there and then spend two days there, or…?”

“Two days as in, you fly there, then fly back the next day.”

Victor sighs. “I need three days. It’s an eleven hour flight. You know that two days isn’t enough—that’s as good as not going.”

“Fine, three days. But only if you get Yurio to agree.”

He grins. “I’ll go talk to him right now.”

~

“Are you joking?”

Victor rubs the back of his neck. “Are you expecting me to say yes?”

Yurio groans. “You seriously expect this entire crew to drop everything and rearrange the shooting schedule because you want to fly to Japan to see your boyfriend, who you saw yesterday?”

“When you say it like that…”

“Victor. No way. This is crazy.”

Victor pouts. “Yurio… You know how much I care about him.”

“And I know that he comes back on Friday, and you’ll be able to care about him then. Mila might be softhearted, but I’m thinking things through.”

(But it’s not just about caring for Yuuri. It’s about the pained look Yuuri had gotten after Victor had forgotten about their trip to the beach, about the disappointment that had painted his features when Victor had told him he wouldn’t have time to watch Skate Canada with him. He wants to do something for him. And this is a perfect opportunity.)

Otabek comes over, hands shoved in his pockets. Victor hasn’t gotten to know him very well, but he had spoken to him a few times on set. He’s extremely smart for an eighteen-year-old, good at his job. Victor admires him, can see why Yakov had taken him on as an intern. “What’s going on?” he asks.

Yurio glances at him. “Victor wants us to rearrange the shooting schedule so that he can go to Japan and surprise Yuuri.”

“That’s a good idea,” Otabek says casually, shrugging. “I’m sure he’d love that.”

Yurio frowns, glancing between them.

(Victor loves Otabek in that moment. Could hug the life out of him.)

“You think it’s a good idea?” Yurio asks, contemplating.

“Sure, if it could be done. I mean, most of the scenes are shot in the same couple of locations on the set, so I don’t think it’d be that hard to rearrange the schedule. Plus, there’s still a lot of scenes we have to film without Victor in them. I’m sure there’d be enough content to fill the time, as long as
you aren’t gone for too long."

Victor holds his breath.

Yurio folds his arms across his chest. “You’d owe me one, Nikiforov, you get that?”

“Absolutely,” Victor agrees.

“Fine. Tell Yakov I approve.”

Victor grins and gives him a hug, lifting him off of his feet. “Thanks, Yurio!” Otabek watches them, amused.

Yurio growls, “If you don’t put me down in the next five seconds, I will rescind every statement I just made.”

He sets him down. “Okay, okay.”

~

The first thing Yuuri notices about Hasetsu are the posters.

They’re everywhere, splattered all across the airport.

(But he hadn’t even won the Grand Prix Final, and he wasn’t even competing this year. So why are there posters of him on quite literally every flat, vertical surface?)

“Yuuri, you’re home!” his mother calls the moment he steps inside the door of the hot springs, wrapping him in a hug. “Oh, we’ve missed you!”

“Hi,” he greets happily, hugging his father, then his sister, Mari.

“Tell us all about your foreign boyfriend!” his mother begs, taking his hands and pulling him to sit down by the table.

Yuuri blushes, shaking his head. “Um, there’s not much to say…”

His family stares at him expectantly. Even Mari looks curious.

Perhaps visiting his family without any mental preparation hadn’t been the best idea.

~

“Victor, try it again,” Yakov demands.

He sets up the scene again, performs it. Does better this time. Everyone looks satisfied with it, including Yakov. Otabek gives him a thumbs up from behind the camera. Victor sighs, walking off to grab his water bottle, Christophe coming up next to him.
“You’re missing Yuuri?” he guesses.

Victor nods, shrugging. “A bit.”

“Do you have any plans for how you’ll surprise him?”

“I haven’t thought about it that much. Should I do something?”

Christophe thinks. “Make it romantic. You two could go skinny dipping. It’s an oceanside town, right?”

Victor blinks. “Your idea of something romantic is skinny dipping?”

“Yours isn’t?”

He swallows as he thinks about possibly skinny dipping with Yuuri. No, no, that is definitely not what he’ll do. He could buy him something. What would he want, though? Anything? Nothing comes immediately to mind.

“What’s something that people bring to houses?” Victor asks. “Like, normal people, normal families. You know, to be polite?”

“Appliances?” Christophe suggests. “You could get them a toaster.”

“Flowers? Is that weird?”

“Maybe decor for the hot springs?”

“What about food?”


“But what food? Should I make something?”

The other man winces. “I’ve seen your cooking. Don’t cook for them.”

Victor is about to retort when Yakov calls them over for another take.

~

“Are you having fun?” Victor asks over a FaceTime call, yawning.

“Yeah, it’s nice seeing everyone again,” Yuuri answers. He had angled the camera in his bedroom perfectly so that none of his Victor Nikiforov posters were visible, and that the background was just a white wall. However, above the phone screen with the FaceTime call are several posters that Yuuri keeps glancing at nervously, as though the real Victor would somehow be able to look around and see them.

Makkachin jumps on Victor’s lap, and Yuuri laughs, waving to him through the camera. “Look Makkachin, it’s Yuuri,” Victor says, and Makkachin glances around the trailer, confused.

“Hi Makkachin,” Yuuri tries, but the dog just gets desperate, getting off of Victor’s lap and running
to the door to look for him. The skater winces sympathetically.

“Sorry, Makka, he’s not here,” Victor apologizes. Makkachin barks at him.

“I’ll talk to you again tomorrow?” Yuuri suggests, yawning.

Victor nods. “Bye, Yuuri.”

“Bye, Victor.” There’s a pause. He wants to tell him that he misses him, but it has only been a day, and that’s clingy, isn’t it? But he has grown so accustomed to Victor’s constant presence by his side that to not have him near is unfamiliar, uncomfortable.

But he sleeps alone—somehow simultaneously homesick and glad to be home.

~

Victor’s flight is ridiculously late on a Tuesday night.

He has first class seats, luxurious, comfortable, and falls asleep for a long portion of the trip, perfectly content to catch up on sleep.

It’s evening when he arrives in Hasetsu. And the first thing he notices are the posters in the airport.

(Of which there are many.)

All of Yuuri, his 2D form staring at Victor as he skates in different poses. Some depict him doing jumps, some depict him standing still, some depict him grinning at the camera. All are gorgeous. He’s wearing different costumes, all from various events throughout the past few years. Victor hadn’t realized Yuuri’s town was quite so proud of him, and it warms his heart. Yuuri deserves a town like this to support him.

He finds his luggage and then leaves the airport. It takes about two minutes before he realizes that, really, he has no idea where he’s going. Luckily, a young woman stops and stares at him, looking as though she’s about to spontaneously combust. “Victor Nikiforov!” she shouts, then speaks in quick Japanese, saying this and that and this.

Victor stares. “Um, English?”

The lady looks sad, shakes her head. Then she pulls out pen and paper from her purse, handing it to him politely. She makes a writing gesture, and he smiles, giving her an autograph.

“Right, do you know Katsuki Yuuri?”

She nods enthusiastically at the name and points. Victor smiles and heads off in that direction, luggage dragging behind him. It’s getting darker out, and the town is beautiful—the sea is visible off to the right and it’s reflecting the moonlight perfectly, gentle waves splashing against the shore.

Another citizen recognizes him, another citizen directs him. Eventually, he has found his way to the hot springs purely due to his and Yuuri’s fame. However, he takes a quick stop by a bakery that he finds and buys a cake with some Japanese currency he had obtained at the airport.

Surely Yuuri’s family would like a cake?
Yuuri yawns on his way home from Ice Castle.

It’s later than usual, and he’s exhausted. He had spent the day with Minako, who he hadn’t seen in a long time. He had skated for hours while they spoke, and his body is protesting the walk back to the hot springs, feet dragging behind him.

Nobody greets him on his way in, which is odd. He makes his way up to his room and stretches out his arms behind his back. The door is slightly ajar.

(Who had been in there?)

(Maybe Mira, for some reason? Or his mother?)

Yuuri opens the door slowly. The lights are on. And…

“Yuuri, you didn’t tell me you had so many posters of me!”

He slams the door shut.

Stays outside.

(No.)

(This could not be happening.)

He sinks to the floor.

Victor tries to open the door, but Yuuri’s back is pressed against it. “Yuuri? I came to surprise you.”

Yuuri doesn’t answer, burying his face in his hands. This can’t be real. This can’t be real. He’ll wake up any moment now—surely, any moment. Because this is his every worst nightmare come to life.

(Because Victor Nikiforov is in his bedroom. Actual, real, Victor Nikiforov.)

(No, no, no.)

Victor pushes on the door again, so Yuuri shifts out of the way. Victor opens it and steps outside, concern washing over his features when he sees him sitting on the floor. “Yuuri, what’s wrong?!” Then concern turns to fear. “Oh. You didn’t want to see me, did you?”

Yuuri looks at him, wide-eyed. “No, no! That’s not…” He looks inside his room. Victor is everywhere. On every wall. Every movie he has ever made. Every last one. Even the ones that hadn’t been released in America, the ones that had only been shown in St. Petersburg.

He wants to die. Wants to sink into oblivion. Wants the carpet to swallow him whole.

(Why isn’t the carpet swallowing him whole?)

(Why isn’t he waking up yet? Hadn’t his sadistic mind tortured him enough?)
Worst of all, Victor is sitting beside him and talking to him, innocuously confused, placing a hand on his back to try and console him. “Yuuri, talk to me. I’ll leave if you want. I’m sorry.”

“Victor, please stop talking.”

The other man blinks at him, surprised, but shuts up nevertheless.

Yuuri needs a minute. To think, to breathe. He shuts the door to his room, remains outside beside Victor. Doesn’t want to see the posters anymore. Stares at the wall in front of him. Wonders if there’s anything he can do to remedy this situation.

“I know you just told me not to talk, but I did bring cake.”

“How did you get here?” Yuuri asks.

Victor shifts. “I… I asked Yakov if we could rearrange the shooting schedule. I wanted to surprise you, I thought it would be nice. But now I’m starting to think it wasn’t a good idea.”

“No, no, Vitya,” Yuuri hurries to assure him, resting a hand on his arm. “I’m happy to see you, but you… You just…”

“Just what?” Victor asks, surprised.

“Did you… You just saw…”

“Saw…?” he starts, shaking his head. Then realization dawns over him. “Oh! Your room?”

Yuuri bites his lip and nods.

“Well, I’ll admit, I didn’t know you were that big of a fan, but it’s cute. Would’ve been nice to know. You should’ve told me.”

There’s a pause.

“I didn’t know I had such an attractive fanbase,” Victor jokes, nudging him in the shoulder.

Yuuri stands up and walks into his room, shutting the door behind him and locking it.

“Yuuri? Where should I sleep?”

~

“You don’t have to be embarrassed, you know,” Victor tells him later, after Yuuri has taken down the posters and finally opened the door. It had taken several hours of begging on Victor’s part. They sit down on his bed together.

Yuuri presses his forehead against the wall. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

He shrugs. “Because I found it endearing?”

“For some reason that makes it worse.”

Victor pulls him down so that they’re laying on the bed together, and he looks around the room. “I like your room.”

Yuuri sighs and rests his head on Victor’s shoulder. “Because of the posters?”
“No, no, not because of that. I don’t know. I could picture you growing up in here,” he comments. “Little Yuuri.”

He smiles and glances at him. “I’d like to see your home in St. Petersburg.”

“Maybe one day. I’m sorry to say I don’t have a poster collection of you, but I could start one.”

Yuuri winces. “Could we please just pretend that never happened?”

Victor wraps an arm around him. “Yes, we can. Sorry.”

“Thank you,” he mumbles, turning and burying his face in Victor’s chest, sighing. He’s warm, his black hoodie is soft, and he smells like the same cologne he always uses. Familiar. Inviting.

“I had to convince Yakov to let me come here, and he told me I had to convince Yurio first. And guess who helped with that?”

“Who?”


“Good for him.”

“Yeah, good for him.”

“I can’t believe you came here, though.” Yuuri pulls away to meet his eyes. “You’re insane.”

Victor kisses him. “Only for you.”

“That was cheesy. Like, really bad.”

~

“It’s beautiful,” Victor comments as they sit on a wooden step beside the beach, looking out over the ocean. His hair is falling in front of his eyes and he tugs his black trench coat tighter around himself.

They sit in silence for a while, and Yuuri places his hands on his knees, wanting to ask something. They’d never talked about their future together, had never thought about what would happen after filming was over. And now, having Victor here in Hasetsu… This means something, right? Him coming here?

“Victor?”

Victor turns and looks at him, concerned. He reaches up and runs his thumb along Yuuri’s cheekbone. “Yes?”

“What happens after this?”

His hand stills, then falls away. Victor casts his gaze back towards the ocean. “After what?”

(Yuuri can tell by his tone of voice that he knows.)

(He elaborates anyway, wonders if Victor needs to hear it said out loud.)
“After the movie.”

Victor rolls his shoulders back, focuses in on one ship in particular. “Well, there’s the premiere, and then I’ll do some press with Mila and the others…”

“No—I mean what happens to us.”

He turns to him, offers a sad smile. Then he takes Yuuri’s hand and traces shapes along the back of it. “Do we really need to talk about that? Can’t we just enjoy the moment?”

“Victor…”

“Please?”

Yuuri meets his eyes, doesn’t expect what he sees—there’s sadness, concern, fear. A concoction of swirling emotions that Yuuri feels is dangerous to even glimpse at. He looks down at their hands, squeezes his palm. “Okay. We don’t need to talk about it.”

(But he wants to.)

(Because is this a rejection of some sort? Victor sounds regretful, is he planning on planning on casting Yuuri aside as soon as the movie is over? Had Yuuri been foolish to believe that he would want to stay with him?)

Victor kisses him on his hair. “The seagulls remind me of St. Petersburg.”

“Maybe we should post a picture.”

The actor grins and pulls out his phone, posing for a selfie. He takes several, then flips through them, selecting the best one. “Which filter?”

“That one,” he suggests, pointing.

“And what caption?”

Yuuri hums, thinking. “Is there an ocean emoji?”

He finds one. “Perfect.”

~

While they’re in Hasetsu, Victor suggests they go shopping for a suit for the gala on Sunday.

Yuuri points out that he already owns a suit, and shows it to Victor.

Victor, in the most polite, loving terms possible, gives Yuuri a very detailed explanation of his opinions on that suit.

(And they’re not good opinions.)

So he watches as Yuuri speaks to a woman in Japanese in the middle of a store, and she takes them to look at many different possible suits. Victor points at one, a blue suit jacket with black buttons—
simplistic. There’s a crisp white button-up underneath it. “This one is perfect,” he tells Yuuri.

Yuuri says something to the clerk, who goes into the back. “She’s going to find one for me to try on and fetch a tailor,” he explains to Victor.

“How long does it take?” he asks.

“Oh, I don’t know—that could be a problem, actually.”

When the woman comes back, there’s a man standing with her. She hands Yuuri a suit jacket, pants, and a button-up, and says something to him. Yuuri asks them something and then turns to Victor. “He says it’ll take a few days. We could always just buy one that’s—”

Victor waves a hand, dismissing the notion. “Ask him how much money he needs for it to be done by tomorrow.”

Yuuri blinks at him. “Victor, I probably can’t afford that.”

“Oh, I’m paying for it,” Victor confirms. “My treat.”

“I can’t let you—”

“Yuuri, please?”

He sighs. Speaks in Japanese. The tailor looks surprised. Gives him an amount. Yuuri repeats it in English. If Victor is being honest, he doesn’t have a very good grasp on the exchange rates between American and Japanese currency, so he just nods, not particularly caring how much it is. “That’s fine.”

He heads into the dressing room and Victor waits outside, scrolling through social media.

And then Yuuri steps out of the dressing room.

(Victor had sort of forgotten that that part would happen.)

(And…)

“Well?” Yuuri asks shyly, looking in the mirror. The lady says something to him in Japanese, happy, and walks away, leaving them with the man who Victor presumes is the tailor.

Not that he needs a tailor.

Because the suit is…

It’s…

(Firstly, it’s probably the luckiest suit in the world.)

(Secondly, Victor wants to push Yuuri back into the dressing room, lock the door with both of them inside, and never come back out.)

(Thirdly, the tailor is looking at Yuuri far too closely.)

(Yes, he’s a tailor. Yes, that’s his job. But he’s not supposed to look at Yuuri like that. Victor understands why the tailor is looking at him like that, of course. In fact, Victor is probably looking at Yuuri like that as well, with that same dumbfounded expression. But the difference is that Victor is
allowed to look at him like that, whereas the tailor is absolutely not allowed to. Because Yuuri is only dating one of them.)

“It looks great,” Victor praises.

The tailor says something, and Yuuri lifts his arm. He touches his sleeve. Victor swallows, perturbed. They keep conversing in Japanese. Victor watches as the tailor touches the suit jacket on his sides, a measuring device in his hand, then, after a moment, bends down and touches his ankles.

(Victor has a feeling the tailor is not a trustworthy person. Just a feeling.)

“So you like it?” Yuuri asks.

Victor tears his eyes away from the offending man. “Definitely. I have a dark blue one, too—we could match.”

He smiles at that. A gorgeous smile. “That’d be nice.”

The tailor has Yuuri lower his arm by placing his hand on it. Victor uses every last morsel of his willpower to keep himself sitting peacefully. Since when did tailors need to use so much physical contact, anyway? Surely this went beyond the necessary duties of his job?

Eventually, though, he says something to Yuuri and then leaves the room.

Yuuri heads into the dressing room. Victor follows him.

“Victor, what are you—”

He kisses him, hard. Yuuri’s eyes open wide with surprise, but he doesn’t resist, a hand weaving through Victor’s hair and another gripping his back. The door is still slightly open, so Victor shuts it, locking it. “Remember when I said I liked this suit?” he asks, keeping his voice low and running his hands down the front of it. “That was an understatement.”

Yuuri ducks his head, laughing. “Really?”

“The only issue,” he starts, unbuttoning the suit jacket, “is that I might have a hard time keeping my hands off of you at the gala.”

“That’s… You’re…” Yuuri starts, eventually settling on kissing him again in lieu of words, pushing him against the opposite wall, hands gripping his arms.

There’s a voice.

Yuuri pulls away, responds in Japanese, tries to act normally. His voice comes out squeaky. Victor starts laughing, and the skater slaps a hand over his mouth. He darts out his tongue and licks it. Yuuri grimaces and wipes it on Victor’s chest.

Victor starts to unbutton Yuuri’s white dress shirt. Simply assisting him. They hear footsteps going off into the distance. “I bet people can see your feet,” Yuuri points out.

“So what?” he asks, kissing his upper chest.

“So they might—ah, Victor—get the wrong idea.”

“The wrong idea being…?”
Yuuri slips the oxford off of his shoulders. Victor kisses his nipple, circling it and then grazing it with his teeth. “I guess it’s not the wrong idea but… But…” He pauses, eyes half lidded. “You know I can’t talk while you’re doing that.”

Victor hums, delighted, sitting down on the far-too-small bench in the dressing room and pulling Yuuri onto his lap, hands running up and down his chest, exploring. “What do you think they’d think if you never came back out of this room?”

“They might come check on me,” Yuuri warns, gasping when Victor kisses his neck, hands latching onto his hips.

“Are you saying you want me to stop?” he mumbles against his skin.

Yuuri shakes his head desperately, leaning his head back. “No, definitely not.”

~

They fly back on Friday.

Yuuri says heartfelt goodbyes to his family, and Victor is surprised when he’s wrapped in a tight hug from Yuuri’s mother, who tells him to visit again soon. Over her shoulder, he sees Yuuri blushing and a warmth runs through him.

They had bought the plane tickets separately. Therefore, Victor had gotten a first class seat, and Yuuri had gotten an economy class seat. Which Yuuri was fine with, but Victor was not.

(Victor tells Yuuri he’ll be right back when they’re sitting in the airport, insisting he’s just going to the bathroom for a moment. Yuuri grabs his arm, begging him not to make a scene, but then Victor is gone.)

(Then Yuuri hears a grown woman screaming in the distance, then a few more women, then a crowd of people—and, yes, that’s most likely Victor’s doing.)

(The next thing he knows, he has a first class seat.)

“You’ve got to stop doing that,” Yuuri complains, taking a bite of the bagel a flight attendant had given him.

Victor raises an eyebrow. “You’d rather sit in economy?”

“No, but… It always feels wrong.”

“I’ll handle that horrible, guilty burden for you,” Victor teases.

Yuuri laughs, shaking his head. “I’m serious. Don’t you ever feel bad for throwing your money and status around left and right? I don’t know. It’d be like if I showed up to a rink and asked to skate alone because I’m a competitive skater.”

“You’ve never done that?”

“Of course not,” he says.
Victor shrugs. “I mean, it’s up to the business, in my opinion. As long as you’re not forcing them… All I did a few minutes ago was smile. Am I really such a malicious person for smiling at some nice young women and asking for something very, very politely? Do you really hate me for that, Yuuri?” He pouts at him.

“You’re impossible,” Yuuri sighs lovingly, giving up and leaning his head on Victor’s shoulder.

“Does ‘you’re impossible’ mean ‘you’re an incredible boyfriend’ in Japanese?”

“It actually means ‘you’re stupid’ in Japanese.”

“Yuuri!”

~

“So what is this gala for, exactly?” Yuuri asks. A limousine is taking them all the way from Santa Barbara to the outskirts of Los Angeles, where the gala is taking place. Yuuri can only imagine what sort of a fortune Yakov had had to pay the driver to get that sort of trip covered. He knows that they’re going for the publicity, but surely there’s some point to the whole event.

“A nonprofit organization,” Victor answers.

“Oh, that’s nice.”

Then, Mila enters the taxi. Carrying something.

(More specifically, someone.)

“Set me down, you hag!” Yurio shouts.

“That was fun!” Mila says, setting him down on the seat. “You’re so small and light.”

Yakov rolls his eyes at them.

“You didn’t invite Otabek?” Victor asks.

Yurio glares at him. It’s a silent threat, yet it feels more real than any audible threat Victor has ever received. Sara gets into the limousine, sitting beside Mila, and then Christophe joins them, too.

Victor’s suit is dark blue, and he and Yuuri do match—something that Mila points out, calling it ‘adorable.’ His dress shirt underneath is black, as opposed to Yuuri’s white one, though their ties match, too. Victor takes his hand at some point during the car ride, and Yuuri squeezes his fingers, nervous.

Though he had been dating Victor for a while, there was something different about presenting their relationship over social media and tabloid covers versus the real deal. Walking out with Victor by his side, projecting their relationship to the world, surrounded by a crowd of celebrities and philanthropists…

(So he’s nervous. It’s understandable, he thinks.)

(Victor seems to understand. Doesn’t even say anything, just shifts closer to him, their shoulders
pressing together.)

Yurio is talking loudly to Mila and Sara, and Christophe is discussing something with Yakov. Yuuri turns to look at Victor, keeping his voice low. “Could you… Would you mind not leaving me tonight?”

Victor smiles warmly. “You couldn’t get rid of me if you tried.”

~

The event is intimidating.

It’s held at a palace, essentially. Some large conference center with giant windows lining the outside, bright lights shining outwards. There’s a crowd outside, people gathered around and speaking, all dressed formally. Yuuri tugs on his blue tie. Victor takes his hand. “I have a feeling everybody is going to be looking at you,” he mumbles in his ear as the limo pulls up closer.

Yuuri blushes. “I doubt that.”

“I know I won’t be looking at anyone else. Besides, the whole world is curious about us.” He plays with Yuuri’s fingers, smiles at him. “Everybody wants to know what’s going on in the lives of Victor Nikiforov and Katsuki Yuuri, global power couple.”

“Global power couple?” Yuuri repeats.

“Has a ring to it,” Victor teases.

The limousine stops. Yakov steps out first.

A quiet drifts across the crowd. Whispers of St. Petersburg and Yuuri Katsuki and it’s them ripple like waves. There are reporters snapping photos, but it’s nothing like the paparazzi Yuuri is used to. These people are respectful, trying to get flattering angles instead of ugly ones.

(But Yuuri notices something.)

(The eyes aren’t on Mila, aren’t on Christophe, aren’t on Yurio.)

“They’re all looking at us,” he whispers to Victor.

“What did I tell you?” Victor asks, waving to someone in the distance. “Everyone is curious about us.”

He smiles, a little nervously, as Victor leads him towards the main entrance. There’s a shift as soon as they enter the room, gazes casting towards them and people silencing their conversations. He’s not sure if it’s real or if it’s his overactive imagination. Yuuri bites his lip as they weave through the crowd. He thinks he hears Yakov calling after them, but they’re already gone.

“Where are we going?”

“Drinks,” Victor answers, taking two glasses of champagne off of a tray and handing one to him. He has to let go of Yuuri’s hand to do it, and Yuuri is embarrassingly shaken by the loss of contact. Victor feels like his anchor in this scenario, the only thing keeping him from succumbing to
agoraphobia. “Isn’t this place great?”

He glances around the room. There’s a large, golden chandelier hanging from the ceiling, and there are balconies on the second and third floor above them, people milling up there as well. There’s hardly an inch of free space, and they’re currently cramped against the nearest wall.

“It’s big,” Yuuri answers.

“Oh, here, let me introduce you to some people.”

Yuuri doesn’t have time to answer before Victor is already walking across the room. Then he’s surrounded by a crowd.

Name after name after name. Director of this or that. Actor or actress in this movie, that television show, that broadway production. Some of whom Yuuri recognizes and some he has never seen before in his life. Victor grins brightly at him as he introduces each person, greeting old friends and new.

Women, men, young, old.

All rich or famous or both.

His head hurts.

“Victor! Come over here!” somebody calls.

Victor glances at Yuuri, concerned. Yuuri smiles, approving. “Go on, I’ll be fine.”

“I’ll be right back,” Victor promises before heading off.

The instant Victor is gone, an actress walks over to him, hand on her hip. Her dress is short, dark green. And her hair is blonde…

(Yuuri swallows, recognizing her.)

(The woman from the poster. Right. From Serenade for Two. The movie with the sex scene. The movie that Yuuri had teared up at when he saw it in theaters with Phichit. He can’t remember the actress’s name for the life of him, but somehow that only makes her more intimidating.)

“So you’re the famous Yuuri Katsuki? A figure skater?” she asks him, sipping from her glass.

Yuuri nods, glances around. He’s not sure where Victor had ended up. Probably lost in the crowd somewhere. “Yes, I’m a competitive figure skater.”

“Are you going to be in the Grand Prix, then? I have a friend who follows it closely,” she explains politely, though Yuuri has a feeling it’s not genuine civility.

“No, not this year, I’m… I’m busy working on a project.”

The lady raises an eyebrow. “A project? With Victor, I’m assuming? Victor is great. Such a flirt, isn’t he? We had great times together.”

He shifts uncomfortably. “Er, yes, with Victor.”

“I’ve seen you on his Instagram,” another woman adds, walking over and joining the conversation, clutch purse in her hand. Her dress is blue and sparkly, hair long and brown. “A lot of people are
calling you the man who stole him from the world, you know.”

“Oh, don’t listen to her, honey. Most people don’t even believe that Victor Nikiforov would fall in love with a figure skater. It’s sort of like him falling in love with a fan.” She starts laughing, and the second woman laughs with her.

Yuuri feels sick.

“What has he told you?” the brown-haired woman asks quietly, glancing around, as though checking to see if Victor is nearby. “I just don’t want you to be disappointed by him. Some Hollywood actors will lead you on, you know? It happened to me once. I was out of the dating scene for years. I wouldn’t want the same thing to happen to you.”

“I…” Yuuri starts, mouth refusing to work, hands clammy. The empty champagne glass in his hand is burning hot, suddenly. He wants to set it down but there’s nowhere for it to go.

“What’s wrong, sweetie? You can talk to us,” the first woman tells him, touching his arm. “Listen, I remember Victor. We did a movie together, you know. He’s a nice guy, but most of it is an act. First, he’ll impress you, he’ll buy you lavish things, spend money on you… Just like the rest. He’ll try to win your favor, maybe to get you to sleep with him.”

Yuuri doesn’t know what to say, the heels of his shoes sinking into the floor, sticking. He stares at the woman’s hand on his arm, wants to move but isn’t sure he remembers how. Like he’s paralyzed. Mind numb and useless.

“He won’t tell you he loves you, though,” she sighs regretfully. “That’s where he draws the line.” Then she gives Yuuri a once over, smiles sympathetically. “Oh, I’m guessing I’m right so far?”

He yanks his arm back violently. They both stare at him, confused. “I’ve got to go,” he blurts. And he walks.

There’s too many people, too many people.

They’re everywhere.

Every inch of space covered by a foot, a purse, a hand, a voice. Laughing, shouting, talking, whispering, stepping, tapping, too many noises. Far, far too many noises.

There’s a bathroom in the corner of the first floor, he finds it. There are stalls. He goes into one. Lowers the toilet seat, sits down on it, buries his face in his hands.

(A flirt.)

(Victor had never told him that he loved him.)

(Just a figure skater. Just a fan. Like those women had known.)

(Attention, spending money…)

He can’t breathe.

Can’t feel.

It hurts.
It all adds up. All of it. It makes sense, now.

(It’s almost a relief, isn’t it?)

(He’s just another in a long line, probably.)

His phone buzzes, he picks it up as though it’s a bomb, hurrying to check it.

**Where’d you go? x**

He stares at it.

Victor had made him feel special. But everyone here was rich, everyone here had something to their name, and here was Yuuri, not even a gold medal winning figure skater. Only silver.

(There isn’t room for silver in this building, is there?)

He’s a plaything.

(It makes sense.)

(Get the attention of the press. Everything makes sense.)

His breathing is high-pitched, his heart struggling to catch up with the rest of his body. He clutches at it through his shirt, the fabric bunching up. Air won’t reach his lungs fast enough. Thoughts won’t leave quickly enough.

(A lie, a lie, he was living a lie.)

(And he’d known, hadn’t he?)

Since the beginning, there was the Victor on the pedestal and then the kind Victor he had come to know, and they were the same person, of course. They always had been. And he’d started to separate them, his worship had started to fade…

(But by getting rid of that worship, he’d missed an important fact, a fact with points A, B, and C.)

A. He’s not good enough to be here.

B. He’s not good enough to be with Victor. The person everyone had been staring at. The person who had won the hearts of so many both on the big screen and off of it.

C. There should be someone else with him, someone better-looking, someone who wasn’t intimidated by some paparazzi outside of their hotel, someone who didn’t start crying when they thought they were rejected, someone who could have sex without panicking at the last minute and needing comfort.

Someone not made of glass.

(Steel.)

(Someone made of steel.)

(Like Victor, like Victor.)
He’s nothing like Victor, despite his pathetic attempts.

He wonders what Victor had thought when he’d seen his poster collection. Wonders how he’d laughed. For minutes, hours? Wonders if he took photos.

The beach.

It all clicks.

(How could he have been so blind?)

(So in love?)

(How could he have let himself fall in love with Victor Nikiforov?)

Covers his breathing with a hand.

It makes it worse, but it covers the noise.

There’s shaking and sweat, and he can’t tell if the sweat comes from the shaking or the shaking comes from the sweat, but they’re the only things that are real anymore.

Digs his palms into his eyes. Tears don’t stop. They drip down onto his suit pants. That Victor had bought for him. Like a toy for a pet.

(Like a toy for a pet.)

He shivers, unbuttons his suit jacket and throws it on the hook on the inside of the stall door. Digs his fingers into his hair. Nails scrape across his scalp. And the breathing, the breathing—he can’t stop the breathing. Someone is going to hear, somebody has probably heard already.

Another text.

He doesn’t read it.

Another.

A call.

He puts his phone on silent, it buzzes again and again and again, incessant.

Yuuri wonders how long this event lasts, wonders if there’s a window anywhere in the bathroom, wonders if he could weave back through the crowd unnoticed. Then he remembers the eyes that had been glued to him, Victor Nikiforov’s latest plaything.

(Pity?)

(This whole time?)

(Yakov, had he pitied him?)

(Mila? Yurio? Sara? Christophe?)

(Everyone he had started to consider a friend?)

He needs to get out of here. That should be his focus. Focus on the rest later.
He hooks his suit jacket over his elbow, rubs at his eyes, exits the bathroom stall. There’s a few men off to the left, conversing—drunk, probably. He examines himself in the mirror. He looks like a mess. Takes a paper towel and dabs it under his eyes, but it’s a useless effort when the tears are still free-flowing, when his breathing is still high-pitched, still quick.

Yuuri ducks his head down, heads towards the door. The crowds cover him, he keeps himself low.

Silver hair in the distance. He goes the other way.

“Yuuri?” Yurio asks from nearby.

He keeps moving past him.

Prays he isn’t chased.

There’s a back door. He hopes it’s an exit but it turns out to be a balcony. He steps out onto it. Private, secluded. Better than the front entrance, anyway—that was where the photographers were. Yes, they’d seemed respectful, but they wouldn’t hesitate at the sight of him crying, would they? No, they’d sell their respect for a moment of fame and a pocketful of money.

He breaks.

Sits down on the corner of the patio where nobody can see him from inside. The building is on a hill, and the balcony looks out over Los Angeles. But it’s too high to climb down from. The air is biting. Cold. He considers putting his suit jacket on, but Victor had bought it, so he hangs it over the balcony, stares at it.

His phone buzzes again.

He wishes the tears would stop.

Wishes he’d never met Victor Nikiforov.

Wishes Phichit had never signed him up for this stupid job.

Then another call.

He looks at the caller ID, this time.

It’s Yakov.

(Yakov?)

He clears his throat. Picks up. “Hello?”

“Yuuri—Vitya is worried sick about you. Where are you?”

“I wasn’t feeling well. I’m…I’m fine. I just took a taxi back to…Back to Santa Barbara.”

Yakov doesn’t sound like he believes him. “You’re on your way back to Santa Barbara?”

“Stomach ache,” he explains.

“Can you call Victor and tell him that?”

Yuuri rubs at his eyes again, tries to control his breathing, which is threatening to run rampant again.
“You’re not with him?”

“No, he’s looking all over for you, worried out of his mind.”

“I’ll text him.”

“Good.”

Yakov hangs up.

Yuuri pulls up his texts with Victor, stares at the empty field.

(There’s nobody around to hear, so he lets himself sob.)

(Grabs the suit jacket and cries into it, because there aren’t many options.)

(Chest wracked with wave after wave of pain.)

(This had always been coming, hadn’t it? Everything over the last few months had always been leading to this moment, to this exact scenario.)

**I’m fine. Got sick.** He hits send.

The reply is immediate. **Where are you?**

**Doesn’t matter, have fun without me.**

Victor types, then erases it. Then there’s a call. He watches each ring. Guilt eats away at his insides. Then a text. **Please pick up. I’m worried.**

**I’m fine.**

Victor keeps trying. **Yuuri, pick up.**

And again. **Are you still at the gala??**

And again. **Is it something I did?**

And again. **Please call me.**

A pause.

There’s a pain in the pit of his stomach, nausea swirling, a headache, a need to breathe. A mental breakdown, thoughts flashing, emotions jumbling into a nonsensical mess. He continues to stare at the phone as Victor’s bubble appears again, indicating that he’s typing something.

**Darling?**

~

Victor looks everywhere.
He scans the crowds on the first floor, no sign of Yuuri anywhere. The second floor, no luck. Third floor, just as useless. He runs to Yakov. Begs him to help. Finds Mila and Yurio. Yurio had seen Yuuri earlier, walking around, head ducked down, not responding to him.

He finds the group that he and Yuuri had been around earlier. No information.

It’s an out-of-body experience.

His legs move of their own accord, he’s only aware of the pain in his chest and panic flooding his mind, his thoughts, like a tsunami. Yuuri is nowhere. Victor heads out to the front of the building, to the reporters. Still no sign of him. He calls, texts, calls, texts.

Then Yuuri texts him. Says he’s sick.

But won’t say where he is.

Which is how Victor knows he’s not sick.

(And it hurts more, then.)

(Yuuri wouldn’t lie to him.)

(Couldn’t. Could he?)

(No, no, of course not.)

(Why would he?)

(His Yuuri?)

“Have you seen Yuuri Katsuki?” he asks a stranger, who looks at him like he’s mad before shaking his head.

Repeats the question. Rinse and repeat, rinse and repeat.

Yurio catches up with him at some point, grabs him by the arm. “Victor, you look like a mess.”

“I still don’t know where he is.”

“I thought he was sick,” Yurio answers. “Relax, he probably had bad pasta or something. It happens.”

“He’s not sick.”

The blond frowns. “How do you know?”

“He’s just… He’s not sick. Please, Yurio, believe me.”

(Yurio does.)

They both search.

~
Yuuri’s phone rings. Phichit.

He picks it up, doesn’t say anything.

“Yuuri, Victor called me. He doesn’t know where you are. He sounded worried.”

Doesn’t answer. Why can’t he answer? This is Phichit. He can trust Phichit.

“Hello? Yuuri? Are you listening to me?”

“Phichit,” he starts, but before he can get another word out he’s sobbing again, hugging his knees to his chest with one arm. “Phichit, I’m…”


“At a gala, these people… Everyone’s… I don’t know what to do. I can’t get to the main entrance, too many people. There are big crowds. Big, big crowds.”

“I can hardly understand you. Where are you, then?”

“Don’t tell Victor?” His voices come out higher than he intends, more desperate, and he’s going to make Phichit hate him now, too, isn’t he? Going to make the whole world hate him because he’s stupid and emotional.

“I won’t.”

“There’s a small balcony out back.”

“Okay, are you safe?”

Yuuri sniffs, nods before he remembers that Phichit can’t see him. “I’m… I’m safe.”

“Okay, just… Is there anyone you’d be okay with who could come? Mila? Or Yurio? Or Yakov?”

“None of them. They’re all…”

He shivers, cries again. Phichit tries to console him through the phone, but it’s to no avail. “Okay, okay, that’s fine. No Russian actors, actresses, or directors. Got it. Umm, do you know anyone else there?”

He thinks of Christophe, thinks of Sara. No, neither of them.

“No.”

“Okay… Do you want to just stay on the phone with me? And maybe we can talk through it together?”

“I don’t know if… I can’t…” he starts uselessly, and hates that he can’t finish a single sentence, hates how pathetic he must seem right now, hates that he can’t stop crying. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t say sorry.”

“I’m sorry,” he just repeats, clutching the phone to his ear, and the breathing is back, now, high-pitched and fast and uncontrollable.

Phichit sighs, “Yuuri…”
“I’m okay,” he promises. “You don’t need to sit here with me, Phichit.”

“I’m not leaving you alone.”

“I’m sorry for worrying you.”

“Wait, Yuuri—”

He hangs up. Buries his face in his hands. Now Phichit probably hates him, too.

But maybe he should.

(Maybe it’s better that way.)

His best friend.

He loves Phichit, more than anything. Phichit had been with him through thick and thin back in Detroit, through good times and bad. He was dependable, lovable, supportive. And Yuuri had just hung up on him.

The breathing wracks his lungs, which are starting to ache. His legs and hands tremble uncontrollably. He lays down, hoping it will help, and curls up into a ball, cold nipping at his skin. And then something picks him up.

(Something picks him up.)

(Something, someone?)

(He’s not strong enough to fight it.)

He doesn’t look around. But there are voices—a hushed roar that’s barely audible over the blood pumping in his ears. He’s carried through the building, through the crowds. Yuuri grips the suit jacket tight, the only thing he can currently count on in the world, and cries into it harder, sneezing.

Then he’s in a car. The back seat.

There’s a blanket drawn over his shoulders.

“Yuuri, I’m taking you to my house, okay?”

“No,” he argues.

Victor doesn’t listen to him. Puts his seat belt on for him and drives. Yuuri digs his fingernails into his thighs and puts his head down. “Yuuri?” Victor asks.

He doesn’t answer. Breathing, breathing, focus on breathing. Every breath is shaky, trembling, but it’s a breath all the same, it’s progress all the same. His head hurts, every movement making the entire world swirl around him and making his forehead threaten to collapse in on itself.

(Whose car is he in? Victor hadn’t brought a car. So whose car?)

“Do you need to go to a hospital?” Victor asks. “Are you really sick?”

“No.”

Eventually, the car stops moving.
Victor gets out of the car and Yuuri wonders, if he were to try and sprint, how far he’d get. Wonders if he should call Phichit or just insist on being left in the car all night. Wonders what he can do to get out of this situation. Because he has to.

“I’m going to pick you up again, okay?” Victor says gently.

Yuuri shakes his head and undoes his seat belt, scrambling towards the other end of the car, away from Victor, tears staining his vision.

(But he can still see Victor. The whites of his eyes are rimmed with red, his hair is unkempt and his suit wrinkled, tie undone. There’s pain written across his features, and it reaches through the space between them and pierces Yuuri in the chest. Because it looks real.)

(Real?)

(But how could it be real?)

“Can you follow me, then?” he suggests quietly.

Yuuri doesn’t have much of a choice, so he gets out of the car. His legs collapse beneath him and he falls to the brick driveway, catching himself by his palms, which scrape across the surface. Victor is beside him in an instant, gently taking his hands and looking them over to make sure he’s not hurt. (And it’s such a Victor thing to do that Yuuri just cries harder.)

“Come inside, please,” Victor begs.

Yuuri makes his way into the house, sits down on the floor of the mudroom, shaking from the cold and the hyperventilation. He looks at his hands, which are scraped, bloody. Victor hurries into the kitchen and then comes back with bandages, sitting down next to him. He reaches out for Yuuri’s hand and Yuuri pulls away immediately, wincing. (And there’s that look again.)

(That look of fragility, pain.)

After a moment, when Yuuri has composed himself, he extends his hand, lets Victor bandage each one carefully. The bandages aren’t tight enough, but he doesn’t say anything. The other man’s voice is nearly a whisper. “Do you want food? Water? To go to bed?”

He doesn’t want anything from Victor right now. Doesn’t want to be here. Wants to be back in Detroit with Phichit, or alone—anywhere but California. “No.”

Victor clears his throat. “Do you want… Want me to bring someone else? Mila is… She’s good with…” He makes a vague gesture towards him, setting the bandages aside.

Yuuri sniffs and finally looks up at him, meets his eyes. “What? She’s good with emotions?”

The actor nods, shrugging.

“And you’re not, are you? Because you never cry,” Yuuri points out. His hair is sweaty, stuck to his forehead, and his entire suit is ruined—tear-stained and rugged.

Victor licks his lips. “Yuuri… I don’t know what’s happening.”

He stands up, and his legs are wobbly but he catches himself on the nearest wall. He can’t stay here
any longer. Can’t look at Victor another second without his heart shattering. Can’t stop remembering the words of the women at the gala, can’t stop remembering that Victor is better than Yuuri in every possible way. That he had been deluded. “I’m going.”

(Going where?)

(How is he going to get anywhere? There aren’t taxi drivers drifting through the middle of Victor’s neighborhood.)

(He starts sobbing again.)

It’s uncontrollable. And then there’s an arm around him, and he doesn’t want it to be there but he doesn’t fight it as it leads him to and up the staircase, gently pushing on his back. There are soothing sounds that don’t soothe and then there’s a bed that he collapses in, pulling the covers up and over his head and crying into them, probably ruining them.

And then Victor is talking in Russian. On the phone, maybe.

And then there’s more Russian, except it’s directed at him, this time. Soft and gentle. Melodic words that feel like icicles piercing his skin.

His body is exhausted from the evening, exhausted from the thoughts and the tears. His phone is buzzing in his pocket—probably Phichit—but he just curls in on himself and shuts his eyes. His breathing eventually starts to smooth out, his thoughts eventually begin to turn to white noise, his mind protesting the overexertion from anxiety.

(Somebody kisses his hair, he thinks, right before he falls asleep.)

~

“I don’t know what happened to him,” Victor tells Yakov, sitting on Yuuri’s bedside and staring at him. “He’s… He’s not well.”

“Maybe he really is sick,” Yakov points out.

“No, he’s not. I know he’s not. I mean, sick in a way, maybe, but not sick. It’s not a cold.”

Yakov sighs. “Well, I don’t know what to tell you. We’re going back to shooting tomorrow.”

Victor grips the phone tighter. “Yakov, if you think I’m driving back to Santa Barbara with Yuuri like this then you—”

“Vitya, Vitya, it’s not me you’re upset with, so don’t take it out on me. I understand that you’re not going to come back. Take the day. Figure things out with him.”

He nods, sucks in a breath. “I will. Tell somebody to take care of Makkachin, please. Bye, Yakov.”

When he puts his phone back in his pocket, he stares at Yuuri desperately. Or, more specifically, Yuuri’s balled-up form underneath the covers, He’s still shaking. Shaking less, but still shaking. Victor doesn’t know what to do. And he’s quieter, now. Is that good or bad?

He tries speaking to him in Russian, comforting words, but that doesn’t seem to do anything. More than anything, Victor wants to touch him, but he remembers how Yuuri had backed away from him in the car earlier, like Victor was some sort of predatory animal.

Which had hurt.
(Had hurt more than if Yuuri were to stab him in the chest with a knife, probably.)

(Had hurt more than if Yuuri were to run him over with his own car, probably.)

He doesn’t leave the room, though. There’s a chair in the corner, small and not particularly comfortable but it had come with the house, and he sits down on it. Yuuri falls asleep eventually. Victor kisses him on his hair, because he has to see his face for a moment, has to make sure that he’s okay. His cheeks are bright pink and his skin is wet, forehead sweaty, hair messy, but he’s okay.

(But he’s okay.)

His breathing has evened out. The shaking has stopped. And he’s okay.

Victor falls asleep in the chair.

～

He wakes up early in the morning—Yuuri is in the exact same position he’d been in last night. Victor would think that he’s dead if not for the gentle sounds of his breathing. He decides to make breakfast, keeps his ear turned towards the stairs in case he hears any signs of life.

Victor makes pancakes, and they’re terrible quality but they’ll do, so he puts some on a plate and puts the plate on a wooden tray. He sets up silverware nice and neat around it and gets some napkins, some maple syrup… Tries to think of what else would make Yuuri happier. He gets some orange juice, puts it in his nicest glass. Adds a straw, in case he wants to drink from a straw.

He brings the tray to the bedroom and sets it down on the nightstand.

Sits back down on the chair.

Waits.

(Isn’t sure how long he’ll wait for, but he waits.)

But then, eventually, movement. Yuuri rolls over onto his side and yawns, the blankets coming down to his shoulders and revealing a mess of black hair. Then, he catches sight of the tray of food and freezes, posture stiffening. He sits up, sees Victor, face pale.

“Good morning,” Victor tries weakly.

He doesn’t say anything. Takes the tray of food and sets it in his lap.

Victor watches, hopeful.

Yuuri picks up the glass and examines it before setting it back down.

“It’s orange juice,” Victor tells him.

“I don’t like orange juice.”

“Oh, I didn’t know,” he blurts. “I’ll get you water, do you want water? Or apple juice? Or I have milk, or soda, though it’s a little early for soda. Coffee, or tea, maybe? Or… Or…” He trails off
when he sees Yuuri’s expression.

(Solemn, objective. Not the same man who had been crying in his arms last night.)

He shrugs. “Water, if you don’t mind.”

He gets the water in record time, hands it to him, watches as he drinks it.

“Yuuri, would you talk to me?” he asks quietly. Yuuri stares at him blankly. “You don’t have to say anything you don’t want to say, I just want… I want to know what happened. Please?”

He realizes, then, that seeing Yuuri emotionless is worse than seeing him upset.

“I think that we should end this.”

His chest constricts.

His mouth moves, no words come out.

(As an actor, it had been hard for Victor to learn to cry on command.)

(It just wasn’t something that had come naturally to him. Mila, on the other hand, learned it the moment she had moved to Los Angeles, and she could produce tears with the flick of her wrist. But for Victor, he’d had to draw together every negative emotion he’d ever felt, focus solely on the relationship between mind and body. To this day, he still hasn’t mastered the ability.)

The tears start falling immediately. It’s as though the inevitability of it made it pointless for them to wait.

But his heart.

(His heart.)

(He should have known that it would be a bad idea to let Yuuri parade it around underneath rain and sleet and snow and hail. It’s a cheesy line, to keep one’s heart on one’s sleeve, but Yuuri had once told him that he could make cheesy lines work.)

(Was that no longer true?)

What had he done wrong?

He had loved him, was that wrong?

(Probably.)

(He remembers a time when he was eighteen years old, back in Saint Petersburg. Yakov had come to the studio one day, upset. Victor had asked him what was wrong. Yakov had told him that lasting love didn’t exist. Victor would find out later that he had just gotten divorced.)

And is it naivety or heartbreak that brings on the tears?

(Or, worse, are they one and the same?)

“Are you crying?” Yuuri asks, food still untouched. His eyes are wide, sparkling, though they look curious, now.
(Curious.)

(Like Victor is some sort of museum exhibit. Like his emotions are meant to be trampled on.)

The worst part is, if Victor could go back in time, he’d do it all again.

(Because Yuuri is worth it. Is worth anything. He’d let Yuuri walk all over him, tear him to pieces, break him apart only to put him back together again, if it meant spending time with him, if it meant having the privilege of loving him.)

He nods.

Yuuri moves off of the bed, leaves the tray behind, and kneels in front of him. Brings his thumb to Victor’s cheek and swipes away some tears, as though testing. “Why?”

“Because I love you.”

The man in front of him pauses, meets his eyes, parts his lips. And for a second, for a second… (Just a second, a flicker.)

A hand between them.

Yuuri places it on his heart.

And it’s racing, racing.

Victor cries fully, then, without restraint, ugly sobs and ugly tears and sniffing and everything that makes a mess a mess. “You’re the best thing that has ever happened to me.”

“We have different lives.”

“So what? I’ll give up my career,” he snaps. “I have plenty of money, I don’t need this job. We could quit the movie right now—it doesn’t matter. Can’t you see that? It doesn’t matter.”

He blinks, surprised. “Vitya, you can’t just throw your money at every problem that—”

“Don’t call me that.”

Yuuri pauses, and this time, when he blinks, there are fresh tears. Victor hates seeing Yuuri cry. Hates it more than anything in the world.

(But he’d just caused it.)

(On purpose.)

(What kind of a boyfriend is he? Was he?)

(Was.)

(Surely he doesn’t deserve Yuuri, anyway?)

“Did you ever love me?” he asks Yuuri, because he needs to know, needs to know if this was fake, if this whole thing had been fake.

He doesn’t. Isn’t sure what to think about. “Did I do something wrong?”

“No,” he says, and touches his cheek. Victor leans into the touch automatically, desperately. “It has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with me.”

“I don’t understand.”

Yuuri nods, takes his hand away. Victor darts out and grabs it, lacing their fingers. “We’re supposed to be on set today,” Yuuri tells him, resigned.

“I’m not going back to set.”

“You’re supposed to film the pair skate.”

“I’m not filming the pair skate.”

“Victor…” Yuuri starts, sighing. Then he squeezes his fingers. “Would you do it for me? Finish the movie for me?”

(For him?)

It’s hardly a question. He nods.

“Then can you drive us back to Santa Barbara?”

Victor hesitates, swallowing thickly. “I… I don’t have a car. I borrowed one.”

“Borrowed one?”

“From an old coworker. I was… I was scared, so I asked them…” It’s pathetic to admit, and he bites his lip. “I’ll return it and we can rent a taxi.”

Yuuri offers a smile.

It’s fake. Doesn’t reach his eyes.

Victor feels nauseous.

~

Yuuri doesn’t have clothes stored at Victor’s house, but he can’t drive back in his dirty suit. So he has no choice but to wear some of Victor’s. A t-shirt and baggy jeans.

(And the sight of Yuuri in his clothes, combined with the feeling of not being able to talk to him… Of not being able to touch him…)

They drive. Yuuri texts someone during the entire trip—Phichit, probably. Victor glances over at him constantly to make sure that he’s still there. Because if he’s still there, there’s still a hope. The silence that hangs over them is heavy, thick, choking, blinding.

They make it to the set.

“Great, you’re here. Now we can all start—”
Yakov stops, glances between them.

Victor has one hand in his pocket, and one by his side, where it would normally be holding Yuuri’s. A palpable void between his fingers. Yuuri’s arms are folded across his chest, making him as small as possible. He figures that neither of them look presentable, or even close.

Mila comes up behind the director and then freezes, seeing what’s wrong. She runs forward and hugs Yuuri, then Victor, then Yuuri again. “We were worried about you at the gala, Yuuri,” she tells him. “And Victor, you…”

“We can start filming the pair skate,” Victor says quietly.

Yakov looks unsure. “Okay, we’ll start setting up.”

~

“Your back leg was sloppy during the lift.”

Victor stares at him.

His trainer.

Katsuki Yuuri.

(His trainer.)

“Okay.”

Mila looks uncomfortable. They try the lift again, three different cameras filming it. Yuuri is on the ice, off camera, bags visible under his eyes. “Better. And now you twirl, Mila…”

She does.

Yakov clears his throat. “Cut.”

Otabek winces.

Everyone in the room turns to face the director, who glares at Victor and Yuuri. “Both of you, get over here. Now.”

Victor rubs the back of his neck as he and Yuuri skate their way over to Yakov.

“Get off of my set until you’ve worked out your problems. Because this pair skate is supposed to make people cry of happiness, not melancholy.”

They walk off of the set, go to their individual trailers.

~
“You broke up with him just because you don’t think you have a future together? Yuuri, he was willing to quit his job for you,” Phichit points out over the phone.

Yuuri sniffs, grabs another tissue. “I can’t believe anything he says. The people at the party told me…”

“Don’t think about them. Are you really going to trust some random people you’ve never met before over Victor? Listen, you know that I’ll back you up on any decision that you make, ever, but I think you’re making the wrong one here.”

“I’m just another in a long line,” Yuuri mumbles. Phichit just doesn’t understand him. “He’ll get over me way sooner than I’ll get over him.”

Phichit sighs. “Yuuri, you’re selling yourself short. Do you want to know what I think?”

“What do you think?”

“I think that you look at him like he hung the stars in the sky, I think you hold him on a pedestal because he’s attractive and famous. But guess what?”

“What?”

“He’s doing the exact same thing! And both of you idiots—sorry, but not really sorry—are too busy being lovestruck and thinking you’re not good enough for the other that you can’t notice! You’re both in the exact same situation!”

Yuuri licks his lips. “You think Victor thinks that he’s not good enough for me?”

“Yes.”

“That’s not possible.”

“It is possible. Go talk to him?”

He lays down on the bed. “I don’t know what I’d say.”

“Maybe say, hey, I messed up, but my best friend told me that I messed up, and could you please actually communicate with me about how you’re feeling instead of using vague lines and cheesy comments like you have been since we met?”

“I… I don’t know. I think I need a while.”

“Alright, well, think about it, okay? And if you need anything, don’t hesitate to call me back. I just… I want you to be happy. I really do. And I think that he makes you happy.”

Yuuri shuts his eyes. “He does.”

“Then go be the man who took Victor Nikiforov from the world, and own it.”

~

There’s a knock on Victor’s door.
He runs to open it, is already thinking through what he’ll say and do and—

“Nikiforov, we need to talk.”

(Not Yuuri. Yurio. Just a few tragic letters off.)

“What?”

“Otabek told me that you were a mess on set. Is that true?”

Victor wraps Yurio in a hug and squeezes him tight. “Yurio, he doesn’t want me anymore. But he told me that he loves me and I told him that I love him but he said that we lead different lives and then we came back to Santa Barbara but we tried to film the pair skate and Yakov told us to leave until we’ve fixed our problems but I can’t fix my problem because I don’t know how and I miss him.”

Yurio pulls away and blinks at him. “Um…”

“Please help me,” he pleads.

“I seem to remember telling you not to screw this up.”

“But I didn’t do anything,” Victor insists.

Yurio rolls his eyes. “Then why aren’t you with him right now?”

“I… He ran away! I didn’t know what to do.”

“Look, Victor, you’ve got to stand up for yourself. You love him, and he loves you, right? That much you know?”

Victor nods sadly.

“Then go do something about it.”

He stares at him blankly. “But I don’t know what to do.”

“Give me your phone.”

“My phone…?”

“Shut up and do it.”

Victor pulls his phone out of his pocket and hands it to Yurio. Yurio swipes it and the passcode screen appears, so he points the phone at Victor, waiting. Victor enters the digits. The phone is unlocked.

Yurio looks up at him. “Have you ever heard the saying, ‘If you ever want to know what somebody is afraid of losing, look at what they take photos of?’”

“No.”

He opens Victor’s photo album. “Look.”

Victor looks.
And Yurio is right.

There are hundreds of photos of Yuuri, sleeping and smiling, laughing and skating, every moment imaginable, every moment bringing back memories that used to be blissful but now just burn like hot coal. And some contain Victor, but there’s a difference—his gaze is almost always set on Yuuri, he looks entranced in almost every photo.

“I am afraid of losing him. After the gala, he was…” His voice trails off as he clicks on the photo he had put on Instagram, the one of Yuuri wearing his jacket, the television off to the right… Makkachin…

The blond sighs. “Well, when you were with him, you were happy. And when you were happy, we could actually work on this movie, which is going to make me money. So go talk to him, please?”

~

A day passes.
No sign of anyone.
Yuuri calls Phichit a few more times. Phichit, who only wants to help, who is subtly frustrated when Yuuri won’t take any of his advice, won’t leave his bed.

He looks out the windows of his trailer. Like he’s waiting. But he doesn’t know what for. A realization, maybe? An epiphany coming to him in the form of a deity yelling down at him from the clouds? Yakov telling him to come back to set?

There’s a knock on the door.
He doesn’t have to look to know that it’s Victor. He doesn’t move from the bed, thinks that maybe Victor will leave and he can avoid this encounter. The encounter that he had seen coming since they’d come back to Santa Barbara. The encounter that he’d been dreading, because he’s not sure he’ll be able to look Victor in the eyes without breaking down.

“Yuuri, I know you’re in there,” he calls from outside.
Yuuri turns his face into his pillow, hugging it. The door is unlocked, and the fact that Victor hadn’t tried opening it yet tugs at his heartstrings, brings forth the emotions that he had so desperately been trying to push down over the past day. “Come in.”

Victor does. He stands by the foot of the bed. “I want to talk to you.”
He glances up at him, turns and props himself up by his elbows. Keeps his pillow on his chest, a protective barrier. “Victor…”

“Please. I want to. Will you listen? That’s all I’m asking for.”
Yuuri nods.
That’s when Victor pulls out a piece of paper.
Yuuri can’t see the other side, but he can see that it’s folded, that there’s black ink smudged on the
back. “What’s that?”

“I didn’t want to forget anything,” he explains, offering a sad smile. “I don’t have a very good memory.”

Yuuri feels tears stinging at his eyes as Victor takes in a deep breath. Then, he continues, “Okay, first of all, I love you.”

He glances up at Yuuri from his paper, briefly, before swallowing and continuing.

“Um, then… I want to address everything I’ve done wrong. Because I still don’t know what upset you, but there’s a lot to apologize for, anyway. So first of all, back in the motel room, a long time ago, I should’ve told you and Phichit that you didn’t really have the job of being our trainer yet. Because I remember you looked sad and that was the first time I had ever seen you sad and I really, really didn’t like it, and I still don’t like it.”

“Victor…”

“No, let me continue. Then there was that time that I came to the rink and accidentally scared you and you fell on the ice. And then, after that, on Sunset Boulevard, I was trying to impress you by getting us into that restaurant, and I’m sorry. And then we ended up in the tabloids, and I’m sorry about that, even though I’m not sorry about holding your hand, because that was easily one of the best moments of my life.”

“And then I’m sorry about the paparazzi showing up outside the rink. And when we were working on the pair skate for the first time I’m sorry about dropping you—I was trying to impress you again, and I was stupid and jealous. I’m sorry for not realizing that you missed competitive skating right away because I was busy being narcissistic.”

Yuuri pushes his glasses up, eyes watery.

Victor sits down on the bed and puts a hand on Yuuri’s knee. “And… I’m sorry for avoiding talking about our future. I did that because I was scared of losing you, but it was wrong of me. And then, hang on, I can’t read this one…”

He squints at the paper. “Oh, right. I’m sorry for distracting you all of those times you were trying to choreograph routines or get work done. And I’m very, very sorry for that time I made you cry because I wasn’t sure how to tell you that I’m not good at relationships—which I’m still not, obviously. Sorry about that, too.”

Victor swallows, his hands shaking as he holds the paper. “I’m sorry for posting that Instagram photo without asking you first, that was wrong. And then I’m sorry for not answering you when you called and the paparazzi had come to the hotel. And I’m sorry for forgetting about the beach. And I’m sorry for surprising you in Japan.”

They stare at each other, then.

“Is that it?” Yuuri asks quietly.

Victor glances over his list, then nods. “I think so. Oh! And sorry about all of my horribly cheesy lines.”

Yuuri laughs—a blubbery, pathetic laugh, but still a laugh. Victor laughs, too, ducking his head. He realizes that this is the first time he has laughed since the gala, realizes that it’s the first time he has seen Victor laugh since then, too.
“You didn’t need to apologize for any of that,” Yuuri tells him. “And I don’t have a list, but I have a lot to apologize for, too.”

“No, you don’t,” Victor insists. “But can I keep talking? I have something else I want to say.”

Yuuri nods, licking his lips and sitting up, cross-legged.

Victor takes both of his hands in his, their knees touching, the sheets bunched up underneath them. “I should’ve told you this a long time ago. But Yuuri, I don’t know how to… You’re…” He swallows, tries again. “You are so…”

It’s useless.

Impossible to define.

The skater squeezes his hands comfortably. “I’m what, Vitya?”

“Heh… Do you… Do you remember when you called me after the paparazzi had come to the hotel?”

He nods.

“I remember… When I turned on my phone and saw the missed calls… There was this cold. Cold, like a current, it ran through me, and I thought… I think… If anything were to happen to you… Ever…” Victor begs him to understand with his eyes. “I don’t know what I’d do, Yuuri. You’re so important and you don’t even… You can’t even begin to understand.”

Yuuri swallows. “I didn’t know.”

“And sometimes, when you were over at my house, or when I was at the hotel, you’d fall asleep and… You’re just so beautiful, and I’d think… I’d wonder what I had done to deserve you. And I think that’s why I didn’t ever want to talk about our future, because I’ve always been afraid that you’ll wake up one day and realize that you can do better, that I’m no good for you, that you don’t want me anymore.”

Yuuri looks at him, lips parting as he shakes his head. “You really thought that?”

Victor nods. “All the time.”

“Victor, I’ve always thought the same thing about you.”

“What do you…?”

“You’re famous,” Yuuri begins, sniffing, “and I’m just me, so I thought that you’d find someone better, someone much better, someone at your level. And when we were at the gala, I looked around, and everyone was wearing name-brand clothes and was special in some way and I’m just… I’m just…”

“You’re you.”

“I’m just me.”

Victor laughs. “No, no, Yuuri, you’re you. And that’s better than any stupid actor or actress in name-brand clothes, don’t you understand? Please, you have to understand. I didn’t know that you thought… Oh, Yuuri, I had no idea.”

Yuuri wipes at his eyes desperately. Victor cups his cheek.
His voice is pleading. “I don’t care about any of them, I only care about you. What can I do to make you believe that? Please, you have to believe that.”

“But you’re Victor Nikiforov,” he mumbles, dejected. “I don’t get it. What could you possibly see in me? It doesn’t make sense, Victor, don’t you see that? Haven’t you thought about that?”

“What could I see in you? Yuuri, you’re kind, smart, funny, a horrible tease…” Yuuri cracks a smile and Victor kisses the back of his hand. “What wouldn’t I see in you? I’ve always been in shock at how lucky I am to have you.”

“Are you saying that we’ve both been having the exact same problem since we met?” Yuuri asks.

“I think so.”

He leans forward and hugs him.

Victor hugs him back. Tight. Not planning on ever letting go. He ducks his nose into his shoulder, pulls him onto his lap so that they’re as close as possible. “I never want to see you upset again.”

“I love you,” Yuuri tells him. “But you are crushing me.”

“Sorry,” he mumbles, loosening the hug. “And I love you too. So are we okay?”

“I think so. But what about after the movie?”

Victor swallows nervously. “I… You’ll go back to skating… And I could just… I don’t know, live with you?”

Yuuri licks his lips. “What about your career?”

“I can’t really act and travel the world at the same time, as much as I’d love to.”

“We could do long distance,” he suggests.

Victor shakes his head. “Not happening if I can help it. Could you move your home rink to California?”

“I would, but Phichit and Celestino…” Yuuri starts.

“They could move here, too. I could pay for all of their moving fees. In fact, we could just take the entire city of Detroit and plop it down next to Los Angeles. Easy.”

He laughs, reaching up and kissing his cheek. Victor hugs him again, his heart soaring. “Remember what I said about throwing your money at your problems?” Yuuri mumbles.

“Sometimes it works,” Victor points out. “Maybe… We could film from Detroit. I could convince Yakov to make it the set for his next movie. Besides, it’ll be a while before that. After filming is over, we still need to go through post-production and do press and all of that. During that, I’ll go wherever you go, if you’ll have me.”

Yuuri smiles, remembering something. “In a little apartment building along the Detroit River?”

Victor laughs, nodding. “I’d pitch a tent if it meant being with you.”

“I might make you do that. You wouldn’t last five minutes living in a tent.”
“Not true, I enjoy camping,” Victor tells him, kissing his hair. “But please don’t make me live in a tent.”

Yuuri pulls away to meet his eyes. “Can I apologize for some things now?”

“You really don’t have anything—”

“No, I do,” Yuuri insists. “I mean, I don’t have a list, but…” He glances down, focuses on Victor’s hand in his, plays with his fingers. “I’m sorry for not talking to you about any of this, about my anxiety… And I’m sorry for being overdramatic and for ruining the gala.”

“You didn’t ruin anything. And don’t ever apologize for your anxiety. I just wish I’d known,” Victor promises. “You can tell me anything.”

Yuuri sniffs and blinks away fresh tears. “Really?”

“Of course.”

“I’m sorry that I’m a lot of work. That I’m emotional and that I overthink things.”

Victor hums and pulls him down so that they’re laying together, brushes his fingers through Yuuri’s hair comfortingly. “You don’t need to say sorry about that, either, but I accept your apology anyway.”

Yuuri relaxes against him—Victor puts an arm around his side and brings him closer. And for once, Yuuri doesn’t feel like the man behind him is going to disappear at any moment, doesn’t have fear biting away at the back of his thoughts.

“Please never scare me like the gala again,” Victor whispers against his hair. “I was ready to kick everyone out of that building to find you.”

“I never told you what happened.”

“What happened?”

Yuuri sighs, a shaky breath. “Two women started talking to me… Actresses. They said that you’re a flirt and that you wouldn’t ever really love me. And… And they said that it was fake—our relationship, all of it. I don’t know why I believed them. It was stupid.”

“Oh, Yuuri, they were both wrong. Who were they? I’ll make sure Yakov never hires either of them again, if he ever did in the first place.”

“One was the woman from Serenade for Two. She said that you… She said that you dated her before. That you led her on.”

Victor winces. “She lied. She asked me out during the filming, wanted to date me for the publicity, but I said no, and she never really got over that. I’d bet she was trying to take it out on you. I’m sorry that you had to hear that.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Yuuri points out. “It’s all over now, right?”

“Right.”

They lay there for a while, Victor playing with his hair. It’s peaceful, quiet.

“Let’s run away together,” Victor suggests, his voice sleepy. “We’ll go to Venice. Become tour
“Tour guides?” Yuuri asks, laughing. “Where did that idea come from?”

“I don’t know,” he admits. “But it’d be fun. Imagine that: ‘Have a tour of Venice with Victor Nikiforov and Katsuki Yuuri.’”

Yuuri hums, thinking about it. “We might make a lot of money, actually. We’d pull in both movie fans and figure skating fans.”

“Double target market,” Victor jokes, kissing the back of his neck. “Let’s do it. We could leave right now. Ooh, or we could go to Paris. Or London.”

“You don’t want to finish making this movie?”

“I like acting, but I’d much rather spend time with you right now.”

Yuuri turns around in his arms and kisses him. Victor’s lips are soft and warm. “I’m convinced.”

“Good. Because I’d take you with me, anyway.”

“Is that a threat?” Yuuri asks.

“Maybe.”

Yuuri tries to roll off of the bed and Victor catches him, grabbing him by his sides and pulling the skater on top of him. He tickles him and Yuuri laughs, trying to get away, throwing a pillow at him. Victor picks up another pillow and attacks him relentlessly, Yuuri blocking it with his arms before pinning Victor down by his wrists, smiling down from on top of him.

“Well, now you’ve caught me,” Victor teases.

“Are you ticklish?” Yuuri asks.

Victor shrugs.

Yuuri tries tickling him, but the man underneath him doesn’t react. “That’s not fair. Don’t you have any weaknesses?”

“I’m just invulnerable.”

“Impossible. I’ll find out,” Yuuri threatens, poking him in the chest.

Victor kisses him, flipping them over so that he’s on top. “I look forward to that. But for now…”

Yuuri’s eyes fly open. “Don’t you dare.”

He tickles him again, all while peppering kisses down his neck. “Please, please Victor,” Yuuri begs in between spouts of laughter. “Stop!”

Eventually, Victor does stop, laying beside him and pulling Yuuri onto his chest, kissing his forehead. “It’s too hard to resist. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

A few minutes pass.
“Vitya?”

“Mmm?”

“Our relationship is still platonic, right?”

“I’m not falling for that.”

“It was worth a try.”
Moscow

Chapter Summary

Victor and Yuuri travel to Moscow to film, and Victor discovers that they'll be there during Yuuri's birthday.

Chapter Notes

A shorter, mostly fluff-filled transition-y chapter, sorry! (Also sorry if there are any grammatical errors I edited it a bit quicker than usual).

I'm afraid we're approaching the end of this story! :( However, there's still some things that need to be sorted out so it'll probably be ten chapters total! (The tenth probably mostly being an epilogue of some sort). Thanks so much to everybody who has stuck with it thus far & I hope you enjoy!

Also, some mentions of stretch marks in this chapter, very very minor but just fyi. And some milddddd adult content, so skip the part surrounded by the ~~ if you want to avoid either of those things! Smut next chapter, probably.

p.s. I've been writing some Victuuri prompts on my tumblr lately in case anybody wants to read some / leave me some! (Wow, another shameless self-promo???) whOOPS

Victor and Yuuri go to the rink early.

And, somehow, unsurprisingly, they end up on the bench.

Yuuri’s fingers weave through Victor’s hair as Victor shifts closer to him, one leg hooking over both of his. The kiss is lazy, all tongue and teeth, and Yuuri can hardly catch his breath, eyes shut as his chest becomes flush against Victor’s own. He slips one of his hands under the bottom of the other man’s shirt, fingers splaying against his abdomen, and Victor shivers on top of him.

“Well, I guess you two made up.”

Yuuri freezes, but Victor doesn’t seem to hear the voice, sucking on his bottom lip and pressing a palm against Yuuri’s thin shirt. He tries to pull away but Victor just chases his lips, completely oblivious. Yuuri puts a hand on his arm to still him, and Victor’s eyes flutter open, adorably confused. “What’s wrong?”

“Turn around,” Yuuri whispers.

Victor does, then gapes. “Oh, hi, Yurio. Nothing to see here.”

Yurio buries his face in his hands. “Seriously? In the rink? I have to sit on that bench.”

“I blame Yuuri,” Victor teases, kissing the corner of his lips.
Yuuri rolls his eyes and gently pushes Victor off of him. “Are you filming any scenes today, Yurio?” he asks, trying to change the topic.

“No, I’m just… Stopping in.”

Victor and Yuuri glance at each other. It isn’t like Yurio to show up on set unless he’s filming. How odd. But there’s a silent conversation between them, and neither of them comment on it. Yuuri smiles.

A few of the crew members begin to walk into the rink, setting up equipment. “You should probably go see Georgi and Lilia,” Yuuri says to Victor.

Victor stands up and stretches out his arms. “You’re right. I’ll see you in a minute?”

Yuuri nods as Victor leans down and kisses him one more time before going.

Yurio begins walking towards the set, then pauses and turns around on his heels. “Hey, Katsuki?”

(Yurio had been kinder lately. Not the same person that Yuuri had met several months ago. He is softer, now, more understanding, even if sometimes it’s hidden behind a hard exterior. And Yuuri appreciates that. He hasn’t known Yurio long, of course, but it is easy to see the change in his character.)

“Yeah?”

“You have a huge, gross-looking hickey on your neck.”

(Or not.)

Yuuri tugs up the collar of his shirt, pulling out his phone so he can use the front-facing camera to see it. Silently curses Victor. “Uh, thanks.”

“Whatever.”

~

“Okay, Victor, when you do this part…” Yuuri glances at Yakov for approval, who nods, before he skates over to Victor and Mila. “Try… Hang on, I’ll show you. Could you come here, Mila?”

He demonstrates the lift with Mila. “See? Watch my leg.”

Victor nods. “Okay, my turn.” He grabs Yuuri’s sides and lifts him up, causing him to laugh and struggle to get out of his grasp. “Come on, Yuuri, I’m trying to practice,” he teases, pulling him closer and kissing him.

“Vitya, you’ve got to focus.”

“I am completely focused.”

“Both of you!” Yakov calls.

They wince. Victor gives him his best puppy dog eyes, but Yakov has built up an impermeable
shield over the last several years. “Sorry, Yakov.”

“Do another take.”

They do. Yuuri slides to the edge of the rink, watching. The difference between this attempt at the pair skate and the earlier attempt after the gala is dramatic. This time, it’s happy, cheerful, beautiful. Mila’s hair is down, her costume a gorgeous dark blue dress. Victor is wearing a white dress shirt with a few buttons undone, a pink and purple blazer on top of it and long, dark gloves. There is gold woven across his torso, connecting the pieces of the blazer, and also on his shoulders. It’s a great costume, Yuuri thinks—Georgi is excellent at his job.

There is a matching outfit in Georgi’s costume racks in blue that had almost been picked instead. Yuuri had told Victor that he preferred him in the purple one, and that was that. Victor’s skates are gold, the same ones that Sara had gotten him eons ago, and the entire scene is filmed beautifully. Yuuri gets to sneak behind Otabek’s camera to observe the process, and it’s lovely.

“The film crew probably hates us,” Yuuri tells Victor later, when they’re on a ten minute break.

Victor brushes some of Yuuri’s hair back behind his ears. “What makes you say that?”

“You’re less productive when I’m around.”

“But Yakov liked the scenes,” he points out. “He said it really looked like I was in love.”

“Hmm, suspicious,” Yuuri teases, wrapping his arms around Victor and looking up at him.

Victor narrows his eyebrows, pretending to look serious. “Very suspicious. Any guesses for what I was thinking about during that scene?”

“Katsudon?”

“Definitely katsudon,” Victor says, grinning.

~

*Yuuri Katsuki gets sick during gala event.*

Yuuri winces at the article, at the photos of Victor carrying through the room at the gala. Luckily, his face is covered by the suit jacket that he’s clutching in his hands, but the photos don’t look good, anyway. Victor looks concerned, rushing towards the front door. It’s funny, how Yuuri hardly remembers that moment. Like the memory is numb.

The article points out that, according to its sources, Yuuri is now in good health. Yuuri wonders what sort of sources those are. He sighs and lays down on the couch, Makkachin jumping up next to him. “Hi, Makka,” he greets, petting him. The dog looks at him happily, and Yuuri yawns, curling up on his side.

He remembers Victor telling him not to read articles about himself. He turns off his phone and tries to fall asleep, too lazy to make his way to the bed.

~
Makkachin jumps on Victor when he gets home and he grins, scratching him behind the ears. “Hey, Makkachin, how have you—Oh.” He sees Yuuri sleeping on the couch and instinctively slaps a hand over his own mouth. Luckily, though, Yuuri doesn’t stir, glasses pressing into the couch in a manner that hardly looks comfortable.

Victor takes them off for him and sets them on the coffee table. He looks around for a blanket, but there aren’t any, so he takes the sheet off of the bed and drapes it over him instead. He decides to heat up a microwave dinner—mac and cheese—and then sits down on the arm of the couch, watching the muted television.

It’s HGTV. Either that channel is Yuuri’s guilty pleasure or he had just been flipping.

Victor picks up the remote and changes it. One of his movies comes on—Stay Close to Me. He raises an eyebrow, curious. Mila is crying in an office room, slamming a drawer shut and then slumping down into her chair, burying her face in her hands. The scene is emotional, heart-wrenching. Victor can’t quite remember what in the plot had caused her to become so upset, but he does remember what happens next.

“I like this movie.”

Victor turns, looks at him. Yuuri yawns and rolls over onto his back, stretching out an arm before glancing at the sheet on top of him. “Is this the bed sheet?”

“We don’t have any other blankets, tragically.”

“Thanks,” Yuuri mumbles, tugging it up to his chin before yawning again.

Victor stares at him.

(He’s adorable.)

(Surely it’s impossible for someone to be so adorable and not know it.)

“I liked your long hair,” Yuuri says.

He turns to the television. Sure enough, Victor is on the screen now, having a dramatic phone conversation with another character, looking out of a window. His hair is long, drifting past his shoulders. “Should I grow it out again?”

Yuuri reaches up to take his hand and pulls Victor down in front of him, touching his short hair. “I like it like this, too.”

He decides then and there that sleepy Yuuri is too good to be real.

Then Yuuri glances back at the television screen and his expression turns thoughtful, eyes watching Victor on the television screen, who is sighing dejectedly. “It’s different now.”

“What?” Victor asks gently.

“The movie. Now that I know you, it’s… You called this the cheesiest movie you’ve ever made once.”

Victor shrugs. “I still think that it is.”

“And I remember being upset when you said that, because it’s my favorite movie, but now I see what you mean.”
He hums, too lazy to pretend to be offended. “Are you calling my movies cheesy?”

“I don’t mean it like that, I just mean… It’s like I see you differently. Not in a bad way.”

“A good way?” Victor asks, kissing his temple.

“Yeah.” Yuuri smiles. “A good way.”

The scene cuts to Mila back in her office, the door swinging open. Victor hurries into the room, sees her and pauses, lips parting. Then, he approaches her slowly, and she stands up. Victor walks around her desk and raises a hand to her cheek, wiping away her tears before leaning forward slowly, kissing her. The shot zooms outwards to a silhouette, the window behind them displaying New York City, bright lights and zooming traffic.

“I always thought that scene was nice,” Yuuri tells him quietly.

“Yeah?”

“Mhmm.”

Victor slips a hand up the back of his shirt—Yuuri’s skin is warm and he shivers a little, snuggling closer into him. “What if I told you that that view was a green screen?”

“Was it really?” Yuuri asks curiously. “I always thought it was real.”

“And Mila and I couldn’t stop laughing while kissing. You know, she said I tasted like rhubarb.”

He laughs, ducking his head into Victor’s shoulder. “Rhubarb? Why rhubarb?”

“I don’t know,” he responds innocently. “But I wasn’t sure whether to be offended or flattered. Either way, it took a lot of takes to get the scene right.”

On the television, they’d just pulled away from each other and were now gazing lovingly into each other’s eyes. Victor rolls over to face Yuuri and pulls the younger man on top of him. Yuuri buries his face in his chest and bunches his hands in Victor’s shirt. “I’m tired.”

“I can tell.”

“Sorry.”

“No, no, don’t be. You’re cute when you’re tired.”

He can’t see Yuuri, but he can imagine his blush, his smile. Makkachin lays down beside the couch, curled up against it.

Victor yawns. “I think you’re making me tired, too.”

“Too bad you don’t have a comfortable pillow like I do,” he mumbles.

“Oh, but I have a good blanket,” Victor points out.

“How was filming today?” Yuuri asks quietly, one hand moving underneath the hem of Victor’s shirt, tracing nonsensical shapes across his skin.

“Good. I liked filming the pair skate the best, though,” he responds, shutting his eyes. “We’re on a tight schedule. We’ve got the set locations booked in Moscow in just a week so Yakov is trying to
get everything back on track.”

Yuuri pulls away and meets his eyes, concerned. “That’s my fault. Because of the gala and because —”

“No, no, not your fault,” Victor promises. “Besides, it was my idea to visit you in Japan. And Yakov has worked under stricter schedules before.”

“But if I hadn’t—”

He kisses him.

Yuuri relaxes a bit, hand pressing down on the couch to keep himself supported and his weight almost entirely on Victor, their chests flush. Victor touches his hair, cards his fingers through it, and Yuuri hums contentedly. “Is that your way of making me be quiet?” he asks, breath hot against Victor’s lips.

He nods. “Worked, didn’t it?”

“Worked,” Yuuri agrees before kissing him again. A second later, he’s yawning and leaning back. Unconsciously, Victor yawns, too, and the man on top of him starts laughing. He laughs second, pulling Yuuri back against him so that he can pillow his head on Victor’s chest once again. “I love you.”

(Is this serenity?)

(He thinks so.)

“I love you, too.”

~

“Who are you texting?”

Yuuri glances up from his phone to where Lilia is currently powdering Victor’s face with a look of concentration that could kill. She snaps at him in Russian and he turns his head back towards the mirror. “Oh, Phichit,” Yuuri answers, glancing down at his phone.

“And what’s he saying?”

“Just talking about my birthday, he wanted to come visit but I told him he should focus on his programs. The Grand Prix is in less than a month.”

(Yuuri’s birthday?)

(Why would Phichit and Yuuri be talking about Yuuri’s birthday unless…)

“You’re birthday?” He turns his head to look at him. Lilia tells him to look straight ahead again, but he ignores her, and she sighs, continuing her work anyway.

Yuuri shrugs. “We’ll be in Moscow during it.”
“What day?”

“November 29th. It’s a Tuesday, I think.”

Yuuri’s birthday is in six days.

And Victor hadn’t known. He stares blankly. Lilia is applying something to his hair, now—some sort of spray.

“It’s not a big deal,” Yuuri hurries to add.

(A party in Moscow?)

(Would Yuuri want a party?)

Obviously the last party they had attended together hadn’t gone well, but that had been full of strangers. Surely he’d enjoy a party just with the cast and crew? And how big would the cake have to be? What’s the size of the biggest cake in Moscow?

And…

A gift.

(What would he buy Yuuri as a gift?)

(Only six days to decide? Ridiculous.)

“Victor?”

He shakes his head, blinking. “Yes?”

“You just looked out of it for a second there,” Yuuri explains, rubbing the back of his neck.

“No, no, I’m fine. Just…”

“Lovesick,” Lilia tells him in Russian, ushering him out of her chair. “Now go to set.”

He takes Yuuri’s hand as they exit her trailer, smiling at him. “A birthday in Moscow?”

“We’ll be done with the movie before your birthday, won’t we?” Yuuri asks.

And he stops walking.

(Yuuri knows his birthday? But Victor hadn’t known his? And why is Yuuri staring at him like he’s mad? And is he mad? Because why aren’t his feet working? And why isn’t his mouth working?)

“Vitya,” Yuuri tries, shaking his shoulder. “Vitya, what’s wrong?”

“You know my birthday,” he answers, offended.

(Except he shouldn’t be offended. He should be flattered, probably.)

“It’s on Christmas,” Yuuri responds simply, rubbing the back of his neck. “Right?”

“Right.”

Yuuri gives him another funny look before they start walking again.
He’ll make Yuuri’s birthday perfect.
Guaranteed.

~

“I have no idea what to buy for him.”

“You’ve been talking about this forever,” Yurio complains. “Literally, I don’t think any other words have come out of your mouth.”

“It has to be perfect, Yurio,” Victor pleads. “As perfect as possible. I need a way to show him how much he means to me and how much he—”

“Okay, okay,” Yurio stops him. “I get it. You love him. I also understood it the last thousand times you told it to me.”

“And it needs to be thoughtful. What’s something thoughtful? I don’t know what he wants. Should I ask him? Or, is it less fun if I don’t ask him? Surely it’s less fun if I don’t. But what if he doesn’t like what I get him? What if he hates me, Yurio? What if he ends up hating me?”

Yurio groans and presses his face against the wall of the rink. “Yakov, can we film this scene later?”

“No,” Yakov replies, taking his place in his chair.

~

Moscow is big.
Huge, actually.
As in…

Victor comes up beside him and takes a selfie with him, a large building in the background. “Is that a famous building or something?” Yuuri asks shyly, looking at the photo.

“No, I just thought you looked nice,” Victor answers.

He ducks his head, blushing. “You look nice, too.”

(And he does.)

(He’s wearing a black trench coat that Yuuri had seen him wear before, along with jeans that make him look…)

“I’ll show you sights, though!” Victor promises.

Victor’s hand brushes against his, but their fingers don’t join. Yuuri looks up at him.
The actor seems to understand, pursing his lips regretfully. “Moscow isn’t… They’re not very… Well…”

“In the hotel room, then?” Yuuri asks hopefully.

Victor grins. “Oh, absolutely.”

~

He plans a party.

Big, but not too big.

(The cake is big. Too big? Is there such a thing as a cake being too big? Surely not?)

He invites the entire cast and crew—even Yuri had agreed to come. Primarily because Victor had told him that Otabek would be there. (Even though Otabek hadn’t actually told Victor that he’d be there. But Victor would deal with that tiny problem later.)

It’ll be at the hotel. He reserved the lounge area. There’s a bar, a dance floor, plenty of space—it won’t be too crowded for Yuuri. He had made sure of that. And there will be decorations, too, decorations galore.

It had been difficult to set it up in between filming and being with Yuuri. He’d had to work out the plans in between takes or when Yuuri had fallen asleep. They had to bump up the filming schedule, too, fitting more scenes into each day until the schedule was packed so tight that Yakov was pulling his hair out.

It’s convenient, in a way, to be in Russia. Victor can talk to people without Yuuri understanding what he’s saying. He takes phone calls about the cake order and the lounge reservation and Yuuri just blinks up at him, oblivious.

(If only he knew.)

Victor is good at keeping secrets, but this one makes his heart feel like it’s about to burst. Every time he looks at Yuuri the anticipation comes back, flooding his lungs and making his toes curl. Yuuri, on the other hand, has no idea what is wrong with him—he occasionally looks at him like he’s concerned for Victor’s mental health.

There’s just one problem.

The gift.

(The gift.)

(The dreaded gift.)

(Nothing feels right. Absolutely nothing.)

He ends up on the Amazon page for trampolines. Trampolines. Why trampolines? He’s fairly certain he has never had a conversation with Yuuri involving the word ‘trampoline.’
Yuuri has skates, and Victor knows nothing about skates. He knows nothing about nothing.)

(Though, the trampoline does look bouncy…)

He shuts the laptop.

Yuuri shifts beside him, hugging Makkachin against his chest. Victor glares at his dog. Yuuri should be cuddling him, not his poodle. Not that Yuuri doesn’t look lovable cuddling Makkachin, because he does—they both do, in fact. But he still feels left out. However, it doesn’t feel right for him to hold Yuuri when he still hasn’t bought him a birthday gift and his birthday is two days away.

Two days.

(Forty eight hours.)

“Yuuri, help me,” he whispers as he lays down next to him, burying his face in the back of the other man’s shoulder.

Yuuri doesn’t answer.

Victor can’t bring himself to be mad.

~

He gets desperate.

Eventually, he breaks and sends him another text. Another in a long line. In theory, what is your favorite type of chocolate bar?

Yuuri takes a minute to answer back. My favorite type of chocolate bar in theory or my actual favorite type?


Snickers, I guess.

There’s a 32 inch Snickers Bar available for $50 on eBay. A steal, Victor thinks, but it wouldn’t make it here in time, and it’s hardly thoughtful, is it? And would they even ship it to Moscow? And how would one go about eating a 32 inch Snickers Bar in the first place?

~

Yuuri has been receiving odd texts from Victor lately.

Your favorite color is blue, right??
What are your top three most used apps?

In theory, if you were trapped on a desert island and could only bring three things, what would you bring?

What are your most recently used emojis?

If you had to choose between butterscotch and cinnamon, what would you pick?

Phichit asked me if I could ask you what your favorite tv show of all time is. I told him I’d let him know as soon as possible.

Blood type?

And Victor still acts like his secret is so well kept, acts like Yuuri couldn’t possibly know that his internal struggle to buy him a perfect birthday present is eating away at him. And, honestly, the struggle is stressing Yuuri out more than Victor. He wants desperately to tell him that he doesn’t really have to get him anything, and even if he does, he’ll love it no matter what.

Because it’s true.

Yet he uses Victor’s laptop one day and sees ‘Largest Snickers Bar’ in the search history. Guiltily, he clicks away before he sees anything else, but those three words stick in his mind as Victor kisses him later, a hand on his thigh. Sometimes he wonders what goes through his mind.

~

They’re filming on Tuesday.

Victor wishes him a happy birthday in the morning, followed by an endless amount of birthday kisses (twenty four, but he loses track two or three times, so it ends up being many, many more). He promises that they’ll celebrate after they film, doing whatever he likes. Yuuri isn’t sure what to say—back in Detroit, he usually just hung out at the rink with Phichit. Maybe go out to a nice dinner.

When Yuuri gets dressed, Victor suggests that he wears jeans instead of his usual skating outfit. Even though they’re skating today.

Suspicious.

Yuuri figures it has something to do with his gift, and he’s dying to know what it is. But why would he need to wear jeans to receive a birthday present? Unless it’s a date or something? That’d be nice, and it’s starting to make more and more sense.

“Victor, you’re acting weird.”

“No I’m not,” Victor insists, as though saying that erases all of his previous actions. “I’m just happy for you on your birthday.”

He plans on arguing more, but Victor kisses him and pins him against the bed. Yuuri can’t help but grin, kissing him back and thinking that this is possibly already the best birthday he has ever had.
“Okay, are you ready to go downstairs?” Victor asks.

And that’s weird, because he says ‘go downstairs’ instead of ‘go to the set,’ and because he’s smiling a little, holding Yuuri’s hand and squeezing his fingers, and because Victor is never nervous. Never.

Yuuri frowns. “I don’t know, am I?”

“Why wouldn’t you be?” Victor asks, eyes widening.

“You’re… I…” His words trail off and he shakes his head. “Sure, let’s go.”

He can practically feel Victor’s panic in the elevator, it fills the enclosed space. His hand is sweaty in Yuuri’s, an unfamiliar feeling, and he lets go to wipe it on his own jeans. Then he fixes his hair. Twice. Then taps his foot. Then glances at Yuuri and then his eyes immediately dart downwards towards the floor.

“Vitya, are you…?”

“Come on,” he urges the moment they’re on the ground floor, leading him in the wrong direction.

Yuuri raises an eyebrow, tugging backwards on his hand. “Where are you going? The front doors are—”

“Surprise!”

And it’s…

There’s…

Yuuri stares blankly. His eyes move around, unseeing.

People. A lot of people.

Smiling at him as he stands in the doorway.

There’s Mila, and Yurio, and Christophe, and Lilia, and Yakov, and Georgi, and Otabek, and everyone.

It’s perfect.

Until…

“Oh god, I’m crying.”

“Yuuri?” Victor asks, concerned. “Yuuri, what’s wrong? Oh no, you didn’t want a party, I’m sorry, we can—”

“Be quiet,” Yuuri commands. Then he looks up at him, tears stinging his eyes. “You did this?”

He looks horrified. “Are you upset?”

“No, I’m happy. I’m so, so happy. Vitya, I can’t believe you did this for me,” he blubbers, throwing his arms around the other man’s neck and burying his face in his shoulder. “Thank you, thank you, thank you.”
Victor hugs him back, squeezing him tight.

Yuuri pulls away first, gazing at everyone, eyes sparkling. “Thanks, everybody.”

“Happy birthday,” Mila tells him, running up and hugging him, lifting him off of his feet. Yuuri squirms at first, surprised, but then laughs and hugs her back. She kisses his cheek and he flushes.

Christophe hugs him, too, the touch lingering just a little too long for it to be completely normal. Georgi smiles at him and wishes him a happy birthday. Yakov wishes him a happy birthday, too, and though there’s no smile there, Yuuri is certain his expression gets as close as it can get.

Yurio just looks at him.

(But it warms his heart anyway.)

Victor ushers him over to the table with the cake on it.

As in, there is nothing else on the table. Because the cake is practically devouring the table. The legs of it must definitely have some structural integrity if it’s still standing.

“Er… This is probably the largest cake I’ve ever seen.”

He rubs the back of his neck. “Right, well… I wasn’t sure what size you’d want, and there’s a lot of people here, so…”

“What oven did they put this in?” Yuuri whispers.

“I don’t… I’m not sure. But it’s chocolate.”

Yuuri smiles at him and squeezes his shoulder. “I love chocolate.”

Victor grins back brightly. Starts laughing a second later, happy.

Yuuri laughs, too.

(And Victor is so beautiful, he thinks. So surreal. He’d put all of this together for him, after all that Yuuri had put him through… The gala, the tears… He’s so thoughtful that it almost hurts to think about.)

“Why do we always do that?” Victor asks.

“I don’t know.”

(But neither of them are complaining.)

~

“Gift time,” Victor tells him happily after the cake has been cut.

If Yuuri thought the cake was huge, then the gift table is…

“All of these are for me?”

“Everybody brought one,” Victor explains.

It’s a mountain.
A genuine mountain.

He’s speechless. There must be dozens of gifts. He looks over his shoulder and sees the crowd watching him expectantly. Mila comes up beside him and squeezes his arm. “Open mine first, Yuuri!”

“Then mine,” Christophe adds.

Yuuri stares at them, both overwhelmed and flattered.

~

He’s not sure how he’s going to fit everything on the plane on the way home. It may or may not be a problem. Victor assures him that he’s willing to pay for the extra costs. Which is ridiculous, Yuuri thinks, but then again, Victor is ridiculous, so why is he surprised at this point?

And then there are no more presents left.

Yuuri looks at Victor, who shifts his weight from one foot to another. “Mine are… They’re in another room. I mean it. It’s in another room.”

He bites his lip, following Victor into a private room off towards the left, one that looks as though it’s usually reserved for smaller, more intimate events. Music is put back on in the lounge and through the door’s small window Yuuri can see people dancing, swaying to the tune.

There’s a small box on the table in the private room, wrapped in a sparkling, golden paper. It’s wrapped messily, the corners folded over wrong and the inside of the paper showing. “I wrapped it myself,” Victor explains. “Sorry.”

“Don’t say sorry,” Yuuri insists.

Victor pulls out a chair for him. Yuuri sits down on the ornate chair and the actor sits down beside him, bouncing his leg.

Yuuri picks up the gift delicately and unwraps the golden paper.

Victor grabs his arm. He jumps. “I… I want to say, before you see it, that… I tried to write this down in a card, but I couldn’t, and the one time I did Makkachin licked it and spread the ink so you wouldn’t have been able to read it. But Yuuri, I love you, and I want to be with you forever. No matter where we both end up, no matter what we end up doing, I want to be with you. And happy birthday.”

“I love you, too, and I want to be with you,” Yuuri tells him, smiling softly. He hugs Victor, who relaxes under his touch, tension leaving his body.

And he undoes the golden paper.

It’s a small, white box.

The type of box…

(No, no, of course not. They hadn’t known each other that long, and besides…)

He opens the box.

The gift is golden.
And it’s shining, too. The light in the room is dim and yet Yuuri feels as though it’s blinding his eyes, feels as though he’s about to pass out. His hand reaches up for his heart and Victor laces their fingers, looking at him with so much adoration that Yuuri can’t handle it, his throat going dry and his tongue darting out to lick his lips as he searches for words.

“Oh, Vitya…” he starts, barely a whisper.

“You like it?” the other man asks quietly.

Yuuri sniffs, tears pricking at his eyes. “Aren’t you going to say it?”

“Say what?”

He laughs breathlessly, taking off his glasses and discarding them on the table. “Aren’t you… I can’t believe this is really happening. This is really happening. I—I don’t know what to say, Vitya. I don’t know what to…” His voice breaks and his words trail off.

“Yuuri—”

Yuuri stares at Victor in disbelief.

Yuuri stares at him.

That’s the first mistake.

Because Victor doesn’t look happy anymore. He looks confused.

“Can’t believe that what’s really happening?” Victor asks innocently.

Yuuri’s smile falls.

And then the epiphany hits Victor.

Yuuri can practically see the physical blow.

“Oh no.” The words come slowly, as if his mind is still processing the situation as they leave his lips. He looks terrified, suddenly, his entire posture stiffening.

It stings, but the confusion is greater than the hurt, so Yuuri just shakes his head. “What do you…?”

“I didn’t…I am so sorry. Yuuri, we haven’t known each other that long.”

“Right, that’s why I’m surprised—”

“It wasn’t supposed to be an engagement ring.”

“Oh.”

“What do you mean it’s not supposed to be an engagement ring?” Yuuri asks slowly. Because he
wants there to be no more miscommunications here. He needs everything to be stated in the most explicit terms possible, because Victor has a tendency of getting mixed up in his own words and thoughts and Yuuri cannot keep up.

“I do love you!” Victor hurries to say. “But I just wanted to get you a ring because I thought… I got a matching one, and I just thought it’d be nice. Because… Well…”

Yuuri is speechless.

“Okay,” Victor starts, “now that I think about it, me saying that I want to be with you forever right before I give you a golden ring on your birthday might have been misleading.”

(And Yuuri laughs.)

Laughs so hard he cries. Laughs so hard he’s doubled over in his chair, forehead pressed against the wooden table and his sides hurting. He stops for a second, then looks up and sees Victor’s confused expression and just laughs harder, swiping at the tears that have fallen.

“Yuuri. Yuuri, why are you laughing?” Victor asks, grabbing his shoulder desperately. “Are you mad at me? Please, please don’t be mad at me. I know that I’m stupid but—”

“That is so cute.”

Victor pauses. “What?”

“You… Wow, Vitya, you’re the most ridiculous person I’ve ever met. You seriously went out and bought this ring, then gave me that monologue, then put it in this little box and never, not once, did you consider that it would seem like a proposal?”

“When you put it that way…”

Yuuri hugs him, tight. “Thank you. I love it. Though I have to admit, I’m glad you’re not proposing, because although I love you, it is a bit soon.”

“What would you’ve said?” Victor asks.

“Yes, probably,” he admits. “And I love you and your ridiculousness, you know.”

“I’m glad,” he mumbles against his shoulder. “But please never, never start laughing at me like that again, because I almost had a heart attack.”

“Sorry. That was just so you.”

“So me?” Victor asks, mocking offense. “Are you calling me dumb?”

“No, no, you’re just… I don’t know the word for it. You’re definitely something.”

“Ah, ‘something,’ exactly what I want to be called after giving Yuuri Katsuki a golden ring,” Victor teases, kissing his hairline.

Yuuri pulls away and looks him in the eyes, hands holding his. “And can I say something?”

Victor nods.

“I want to say thank you for not getting me fifty different extravagant and expensive gifts, because I love this. More than anything. It’s thoughtful and kind and you’re thoughtful and kind.”
He doesn’t smile, like Yuuri expects him to. Instead, he just rubs the back of his neck. “Er… Right, of course. I’m glad you liked my singular gift.”

Yuuri pauses. “Your singular gift?”

“My only gift. The only gift that I got you.”

“Vitya…”

Victor licks his lips and glances towards a cabinet in the corner of the room, the door slightly ajar. Yuuri stands up and walks over it, opening it. Sure enough, there are about seven gifts in the same gold wrapping paper, some larger than others. “Surprise?” Victor attempts lamely.

There’s another small one. Yuuri picks it up and turns back to Victor, raising an eyebrow. “Let me guess, this one’s the wedding ring?”

Victor shakes his head. “Open it.”

He does.

Keys.

“You did not buy me a car.”

Victor swallows. “Okay, I did not buy you a car. And it’s not in Los Angeles right now. And I definitely haven’t made arrangements to have it moved to Detroit after the movie is over.”

“Do I even want to open the rest of these?”

“Er…” He stands up and examines the contents of the cabinet. “Don’t open… These three. These three should be okay. Actually, wait, not this one either. Or this one. Just this one. By the way, it is a nice car, though. You’ll like it.”

“But that’s so expensive,” Yuuri mumbles, staring at the keys, waiting for them to disappear as the gravity of the situation hits him. “People don’t just buy people cars like that.”

“It has a sunroof, if that helps.”

“Listen—thank you, but you’re going to return it.”

Victor pouts. “No, you can’t want me to return it just because it was expensive. It was hardly expensive, anyway. Really, not a problem. It’d probably be more of a hassle to return it than for you to keep it. Therefore, you should keep it, if you want it.”

Yuuri cups Victor’s cheek and runs his thumb along his cheekbone. “How much was it?”

He doesn’t say anything.

“Victor, how much did the car cost?”

“Here, open this one!” He grabs another gift and shoves it into Yuuri’s arms.

Yuuri bites his lip and sits down again. It’s a large one, the largest in the cabinet. He sets it down on the table and tears off the paper, revealing a white box. He glances at Victor before opening the box and pulling out a large, bundled blanket.
“You liked the one I had at my house,” Victor explains. “It’s a replica.”

Yuuri presses it against his cheek and grins. “I love it.”

“Good.”

“It’s so soft,” he says, shutting his eyes. “I am never going to put this down.” He hugs Victor again, because he wants to, because Victor appears to enjoy it.

When he pulls away from the hug, though, he tugs Victor closer, their thighs pressing together. Yuuri licks his lips unconsciously and notes the way Victor’s eyes dart down to them, watching. The actor leans closer and Yuuri meets him halfway, eyes falling shut as their lips meet.

It’s a soft, slow kiss. Yuuri hums as they pull away naturally, foreheads resting against each other. “Let’s go back to the party?” he suggests quietly.

Victor nods, then kisses his temple and stands up. “Lead the way, Mr. Nikiforov.”

It takes a moment for Yuuri to get the joke. “You don’t want to be a Katsuki?”

“Mm, either way,” Victor promises. “I don’t care either way.” Yuuri looks down and sees that he had slipped on his matching ring at some point. They hold out their hands side by side and look for a moment, before Victor kisses him again.

~~

Yuuri drinks.

Just a bit.

(And then a bit more.)

“Let’s dance, Vitya,” he begs, tugging on his arm.

Yuuri is irresistible on a daily basis. Sleepy Yuuri is adorable, and even more irresistible. Teasing Yuuri, perhaps the worst.

But drunk Yuuri?

Drunk Yuuri is slurred speech, wandering hands, tousled hair, a slightly unbuttoned white shirt. Victor is certain if he were to look up ‘irresistible’ in the dictionary, the image of Yuuri nipping at his ear on the dance floor is what would come up.

“Is there a pole anywhere in here?” he asks, hands slipping under the bottom of Victor’s shirt.

Victor looks around them, horrified. Luckily, nobody seems to be paying attention to what the man in front of him is saying or doing. “Er, no.”

“Oh, too bad,” he drawls, disappointed.

His lower lip extends and Victor stares unabashedly.

Yuuri kisses his collarbone, yet somehow manages to keep the action subtle, and Victor simply stares in shock. “Let’s go get more champagne,” the skater suggests.

“I think you’ve had enough.”
“You haven’t,” Yuuri points out, trailing a hand down Victor’s arm.

It’s such an innocent movement, just a few fingers, but it tickles, and Victor feels goosebumps break out across his skin. He shivers. “Yuuri, I…”

Yuuri looks heartbroken. “It’s my birthday.”

(He has more champagne.)

(He doesn’t really have a choice.)

(Victor fears the day that Yuuri discovers the power he holds over him.)

And then his thoughts and skin are pleasantly buzzing. He stumbles back to the dance floor and there’s karaoke going on, he thinks, or maybe it’s just people singing, but he participates anyway. And Yuuri does, too, but he’s singing a different song in Japanese, and Victor is fairly certain he doesn’t notice.

“Yurio!” Victor shouts, grabbing a drink out of the blond actor’s hand and slamming it on the bar. “You are too young.”

“It’s Coca-Cola,” he complains, picking it back up. “You are wasted, Victor. You should head back to your room.”

“Our room,” he corrects, grabbing Yuuri and pulling him against his side. “Right Yuuri?”

“Do you know what ‘TMI’ means?” Yurio groans.

Yuuri starts giggling and buries his face in Victor’s shoulder. Victor doesn’t know what it means, but he wraps his arms around Yuuri and cuddles him while standing up, swaying from side to side. He’s not trying to dance, but he figures it looks like dancing, so that’s fine, then. Plus Yuuri is warm. Really warm. And lovely. And soft.

“Should we go back to our room?” he asks Yuuri, words slurring together as he takes his hand and spins him around.

Yuuri twirls, but almost loses his balance, falling on Yurio, a hand on his chest. “Woah, sorry Yurio.”

Yurio stands up and walks away, and Victor starts laughing. “You’re more gorgeous. Like, way more.” Then he yawns. “Bed?”

“Bed,” Yuuri agrees, stumbling to walk across the room. “Wait, Vitya, we’ve gotta get the stuff.”

Victor frowns. “The stuff?”


“Tomorrow,” he dismisses with a wave of his hand. “We’ll deal with those tomorrow.”

“And you got me a car,” Yuuri remembers slowly. “And oh my god, we’re engaged.”
Mila glances at them, then her eyes glue to their rings. “Engaged?”

Neither of them bother to explain, just exploding into a fit of giggles again, Victor pressing a hand on Yuuri’s back as they head towards the lobby and the elevator. At the last moment, he remembers to wave goodbye to everyone, his vision swirling as he turns around suddenly. Nobody waves back at him. Odd. Nobody’s paying attention.

“Thank you all,” Yuuri mumbles, far too quietly for anyone to hear him.

“How does it feel to be twenty four?” Victor asks him in the elevator.

Yuuri blinks at him. “You’re so attractive.”

He smiles, giddy. “Yeah?”

“Like…” Yuuri starts, reaching up and touching his face, fingers brushing against his cheek. “I don’t get it. You’re so attractive, Victor. Look at your hair.”

“Look at your hair.”

“And your eyes. They’re the lightest shade of blue I’ve ever seen in somebody’s… Um… Somebody’s…”

“Somebody’s eyes?” Victor suggests.

He nods enthusiastically. “Do you remember the poster for that one movie… The Lilac Fairy?”

“The Lilac Fairy? Oh yeahhh, I remember that one.”

“That was my phone background for a year.”

Victor kisses him hard on his lips, and Yuuri reaches up on his tippy toes to kiss him back. “You’re cute.”

“You’re cute.”

“Yuuri, stop, you’re cute. Okay, here’s our floor, be careful stepping out.”

Yuuri is fine stepping out, but Victor isn’t—he stumbles and falls on top of him, laughing manically. “Sorry.”

“Here, careful,” Yuuri says, trying to steady him, but that’s hard when his footwork isn’t so good himself. Victor takes the hotel room key and swipes it twice. The door flashes red.

The skater squeezes his arm. “Wrong room, Vitya. We’re number three fourteen. I remember.”

“You’re so smart,” Victor informs him, heading down the hallway to the next door and swiping the card. Surely enough, it works, and they open the door.

Yuuri takes off his shoes and then flops down on the bed, exhausted. Victor lays down next to him and brushes his hair out of his eyes. “I can hear your phone buzzing,” Yuuri informs him.

Victor tries to pull it out of his pocket and fails due to the current position. Yuuri reaches down a hand and takes it for him. He can’t stop laughing at the feeling of his fingers tickling his leg.

“It’s Mila,” he says, rubbing at one eye. “She said to text her when we get to the hotel. I mean the
hotel room.”

“Text her, then,” Victor answers.

Yuuri opens the message. He types something quickly and Victor hears the sound of a message being sent. Then, Yuuri is doing something else on his phone, and he leans his head to get a look. “You’ve never shown this to me before,” he mumbles, clicking on a video in his photos album.

Victor squints at the video. “What is it?”

It starts, and it depicts Yuuri and Victor doing the pair skate. Mila had sent it to him months ago, back when Yuuri had first choreographed it. “That is so old,” he says. “But I like it.”

“I like it,” Yuuri agrees. “So nice of Mila to film that.”

“Mila is a nice person,” Victor seconds. “Wait, I have an idea.”

“What?”

“A genius idea.”

“What is it?” Yuuri insists, shaking his arm and laughing. He gets dizzy and collapses back on top of Victor, glancing up at him through dark eyelashes.

“That video. Instagram.”

Yuuri gasps. “You’re right. It’s perfect.”

He grins. “Should we post it?”

“Perfect,” Yuuri repeats. “Post it, post it, post it.”


“Yakov?” he asks, scrunching up his nose. “Post it, Vitya. Please?”

To convince him, Yuuri frames his hips with his knees, missing with his lips and kissing him on the corner of his mouth instead. It’s sloppy and Victor sighs contentedly, Yuuri’s breath smelling of alcohol. He grabs his phone and holds it above Yuuri so that he can see it, tapping a few buttons. “Posted.” No caption.

“Posted!” Yuuri responds excitedly. “I love you so much.”

“I love you more.”

“I love you the most.”

Then Victor blinks. “I have an idea. We post a selfie on your account. Then we’ll have posted at the same time, or, like, near the same time. Which is good.”

Yuuri grins and searches for his phone, finding it on the floor and scrambling to pull up the front facing camera. They pose for a selfie together, one of Victor’s hands on Yuuri’s cheek, and he posts it quickly before kissing him again.

One of Yuuri’s hands tugs on the fabric of his shirt. Victor gets the message and lifts his arm up so that Yuuri can take it off, slipping it over his head. Then the younger man smiles and runs his hands
up and down Victor’s chest, kissing his nipple. Victor sighs and buries the back of his head in a pillow, looking up towards the ceiling. The lights are swirling. The world is swirling.

“Did you like your party?” he asks.

Yuuri hums and moves upwards, nipping at his neck. Victor jumps, hips arching without his permission. “Loved it. Thank you.”

One of his hands slips down to the top of Victor’s jeans. Victor grabs at Yuuri’s own shirt and tugs it upwards uselessly, where it gets caught underneath his arms. “Off,” he complains, and Yuuri struggles to figure out how to lift his arms while not falling on Victor.

Eventually, they figure it out, and Victor hums as he traces a finger down his side. He takes Yuuri’s arms and turns them over so that he’s on top, the younger man not protesting as he starts laughing, and Victor kisses his way down his chest and towards his abdomen. “What are these?” he asks, tracing some lines beside his navel. He’d seen them before, once, after the pool. Thin, little lines.

“What are what?” Yuuri responds, fingers weaving through his hair.

“Marks,” Victor explains.

“Stretch marks,” he mumbles. “I used to… I gain weight easily.”

He kisses them. “You’re beautiful.”

Yuuri starts laughing and tugs on his hair, bringing Victor back up to his lips where he kisses him again. It’s all tongue and teeth, Yuuri releasing a moan as Victor increases the pressure, one hand on the other man’s shoulder and the other bundled in the bedsheets.

That’s when one of Yuuri’s hands drifts lower. His thumb hooks in the waistband of his jeans. Victor pauses, staring at him. “Yuuri?”

“Off,” Yuuri pleads.

(Something in the back of his mind tells him it’s not a good idea.)

(Except he’s having a hard time remembering.)

(Something about that time at the pool.)

Yuuri’s hand moves from his jeans to his ass, and Victor jumps a little, the man underneath him giggling incessantly. “Vitya, take them off. Please?”

“But Yuuri,” he starts.

They kiss again. All of Victor’s previous thoughts fly out the window and he’s stuck starting over, starting at the pool. The pool. Something about the pool. Or, more specifically, the pool and then his kitchen counter. That beloved kitchen counter. And then his bedroom back in Los Angeles.

As Yuuri presses closer to him, Victor can feel something hard against his thigh. He smiles, because he can’t help it, and kisses his way down his neck again, sucking hard on his pulse point. Yuuri gasps and his eyes roll back in his head. “Vitya.”

“Say that again.”

He does, one leg hooking around Victor’s hips. Then another. It’s an awkward position, but Victor
moans against his skin. “I love you,” Yuuri tells him softly.

The logic hits.

(Sadly. Or not sadly? He can’t remember.)

“I love you too, but this isn’t a good idea.”

Yuuri bites his lip. “Why?”

“We’re drunk.”

“So?”

He hates having to be the logical one. Because normally that’s Yuuri’s job. But Yuuri is more drunk than him. But Yuuri is warm and hot and hard beneath him and his hips are moving unconsciously and his hair has been getting noticeably longer lately and his eyes, god, his eyes, the things that Victor could say about those eyes, his dilated pupils, his caramel irises—

Focus.

“If you still want to later, we will,” Victor promises. “But not now.”

Yuuri looks annoyed, kissing him again. Obviously not getting the message. But then he does, to some extent, because his legs fall away and he sighs breathily. “Not now?”

“Not now, my Голубушка,” he explains, kissing his cheek.

He yawns and Victor lays down beside him, wrapping an arm around his torso. “Tomorrow,” Yuuri decides.

Victor laughs. “Okay, tomorrow it is.”

“Don’t forget,” Yuuri warns him sleepily. He moves on top of him, face buried in his neck. Victor nuzzles his hair, yawning.

“I won’t.”

After a minute, he thinks Yuuri is asleep. But then he hears a whisper.

“Vitya?”

“Mmm?”

“You’re my favorite person.”

“You’re my favorite person.”

“That’s good.”

He kisses his hair. “It is.”

~~
BANG!

“Vitya?”

BANG! BANG!

“Yuuri?” he asks sleepily.

BANG! BANG!

Victor is behind Yuuri, his face buried in his hair and both arms wrapped around him. One is squished uncomfortably between him and the mattress and he slips it out, groaning at the numb feeling. His head aches. Burns. Sizzles.

“Hangover,” he complains weakly.

“Ouch,” Yuuri sympathizes.

BANG!


The man in front of him yawns and cuddles back against him. “Maybe it’ll go away.”

BANG! BANG!


“Why me?”

“I don’t think I can move.”

Yuuri sighs and rolls off of the bed, grabbing a shirt off of the floor and putting it on. Victor sits up slowly, the movement paining him, and watches as the younger man walks across the room. He hears the door swing open, and then Yakov is standing in front of him.

“Vitya. Look at me.”

He glances up. “Good morning, Yakov. Are we late to the set? Is that why you’re here?”

Yakov looks murderous. Yuuri looks concerned. Victor falls onto his side, trying to make sense of his own hair, which is tangled and messy. He still smells like alcohol, probably. His stomach aches. “Let me guess—you two don’t remember much from last night?” Yakov asks.

Yuuri bites his lip. “Why?”

The director death stares him, ignoring Yuuri. “Vitya, I’ve worked with you for many years, but this has to be the most idiotic thing you’ve ever done.”

“What’d I do?” he asks quietly, burying his face in the sheets. Surely it isn’t that serious. Surely
Yakov is over exaggerating.

He pinches the bridge of his nose, trying to contain himself. “Look at your phones.”

Yuuri pulls out his phone first, and gapes at the home screen. “I have twenty nine missed calls from Phichit. Twenty nine. And a bunch from my family, too. And a thousand texts.”

Victor stares at him, frowning. “Why?”

Yuuri swallows and reads the title of an article aloud, “Yuuri Katsuki and Victor Nikiforov engaged and making a figure skating movie together?”
History Maker

Chapter Summary

Victor has an idea.

Chapter Notes

I hope you guys like this chapter!! Definitely a plot-heavy one. But v important as well.

Please leave a comment & let me know what you think! Also, 100k words? What the heck happened? This is a novel now?
One thing that will make you hate this fic (stop reading now if you want to keep enjoying it) is the fact that there are 8,272 commas in it. 590 opening parentheses. 326 em dashes. I have a problem.

p.s. NOTE THE RATING CHANGE! If you'd like to skip what may-or-may-not-be smut (*coughs*), skip the part sectioned off by the double tildes (~~)!

Previously on all the world’s a stage

Yuuri swallows and reads the title of an article aloud, “Yuuri Katsuki and Victor Nikiforov engaged and making a skating movie together?”

“How do they know that we’re making a movie?” Victor complains as he presses his face into a pillow.

Yakov scrubs a hand down his face. “It’s not a hard connection to make when you’re an actor caught on video learning to how to skate a planned routine.”

Yuuri sits down beside Victor on the bed, worrying his lower lip with his teeth. “What should we do? Delete the video and photo?”

“No, no, don’t delete it,” Yakov urges. “That would just make it worse, make it look like it was an accident. Which it was, but we don’t want anyone to know that. Just get dressed,” he glances at Victor, “and make your way to the set. Sara is there. Get moving.”

Before either of them can reply, Yakov is gone, slamming the door behind him. Yuuri winces. “He seems mad.”

Victor rubs at his forehead. “He does. This is my fault.”
“It’s both of our faults,” Yuuri protests. “What were we thinking? I barely remember.”

“I… I don’t think we were thinking.”

He pulls out his phone and looks at the selfie he had posted. Victor’s hand is on his cheek, the ring just barely visible. Surprisingly, it’s not a bad photo.

Victor walks over to his suitcase and picks it up.

“Don’t put it on the bed,” Yuuri warns. “Bedbugs.”

“Oh, okay,” he answers, setting it on the desk instead. He picks out some clothes and then heads into the bathroom. “I’m going to shower. Be right back.”

Yuuri nods, keeping his head down.

Victor takes another look at him, then approaches him, clothes still in his arms, and kisses him on his forehead. “It’ll be fine. I’ve seen Yakov more mad than this before.”

“Really?”

“One time, Yurio put blue hair dye in his shampoo bottle. Who knew that Yakov even shampooed his hair?”

Yuuri smiles. “I bet he loved that.”

“Looked great, too,” Victor adds. “And another time he caught Christophe and a makeup artist on set… Er… Being intimate.”

He cringes. “That must’ve been awkward.”

“It was. Anyway, I’ll be right back.”

~

“Alright, so, damage control,” Sara says as she sits across from them on the set, her hands folded over her lap. “Everybody knows that we’re making a movie, now.”

Victor swallows. “Right. Sorry about that.”

“That’s fine, you guys weren’t thinking,” she assures him.

Yakov’s steely glare counteracts the assurance. Victor takes Yuuri’s hand and squeezes it.

“The issue is, people think that Yuuri is going to be in the movie,” Sara explains. “So now when it’s announced that it’s Victor and Mila…”

“Awkward,” Yuuri finishes, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Easy solution. We just be honest, say that he’s our trainer,” Victor suggests. “And explain that we’re not actually engaged.”

“You’re not engaged?” Yakov and Sara ask at the same time.
Yuuri blushes.

Victor runs a hand through his hair. “Er, no. You actually thought that?”

Sara glances from Victor’s ring to Yuuri’s, raising an eyebrow. “Were we supposed to interpret those differently?”

“It was just a gift,” Victor explains. “But now the entire world thinks we’re engaged.”

“That part is your problem,” Yakov says simply. “But the movie is our problem.”

“So what’s the problem with being honest?” Yuuri asks, voice quiet.

Yakov sighs. “Nothing—I suppose that’s our only viable option. We’ll put you two in an interview. Say that Yuuri was training you on a routine that will be put in the movie. Keep it vague, keep it interesting. We can put together a teaser trailer to play, there’s already one in the works, I believe.”

“An interview?” Yuuri blurts. “Like an actual interview?”

“Sure,” Sara says. “That’s probably the best way to handle this.”

Victor licks his lips, glancing between Sara and Yuuri. “Could you give us a second?”

Sara nods and stands up, walking away. After a moment, Yakov concedes and moves as well. Victor takes Yuuri’s hand in both of his and draws absent-minded shapes across his palm. “Would you be okay with doing an interview? You do them all the time for skating, don’t you?”

“Yeah, but that’s different,” he points out. “Those aren’t… I mean, figure skating is a big sport, but an interview with you would be like… And besides, in those interviews I’m just talking about skating, which is fine, but…” Yuuri swallows, then shakes his head. “No, no, I’ll do it. It’ll be fine.” He glances up at Victor. “Sorry, I changed my mind. Let’s do it.”

“I’ll do it alone,” Victor offers. “Would you prefer that? I don’t want you doing anything just to make me happy, okay?”

“No, I’ll do it,” Yuuri says again, firmer this time. “I can do it.”

“You’re sure? Don’t lie to me, Yuuri. It’s really not a big deal if you don’t want to.”

“I’m sure.”

~

They fly back to Santa Barbara within a few days, and then they film, and they film, and they film. The schedule only becomes tighter and tighter.

Word spreads like a forest fire about the movie, people talking and gossiping and wondering. Nobody denies it, but nobody speaks about it, either. And then it’s announced that Yuuri and Victor will be on a popular talk show hosted by a man named Guang Hong Ji.

(And it’s as though the world is just waiting.)
Yuuri speaks to Phichit and tells him what’s going on, and he’s speechless, albeit a bit upset that Yuuri hadn’t talked to him earlier. But Phichit understands that his life is currently a whirlwind, and is busy preparing for the Grand Prix, anyway. They’re planning on meeting up in Barcelona when Yuuri flies there to film and Phichit goes for the competition.

~

“Yuuri.”

He yawns.

“Yuuri—wake up.”

He’s on top of Victor, a leg intertwined between his. There are papers on him, though. Why are there papers stacked on top of him? Piles and piles of papers.

“Sorry, I was sort of using you as my table,” Victor explains. His voice is far, far too chipper for Yuuri’s tired ears to tolerate.

“What time is it?”

Victor glances at his phone. The light is too bright and Yuuri squints, burying his face in Victor’s neck. He’s warm. Impossibly warm. And Yuuri is exhausted. “It’s, uh, you don’t want to know. But I had an idea. I’ve been working on it for five hours.”

“Five hours? Victor, go to sleep. Give me your idea in the morning.”

“No, no, you have to see this now. We’re not filming today, right?”

“Right,” Yuuri confirms.

Victor strokes his hair, fingers gently weaving through it. It’s perfect until he starts talking again, barely-controlled fervor blazing in his words. “There’s an extra costume.”

“An extra…?”

“For the pair skate.”

He yawns. What is Victor going on about? And why won’t he sleep? “Right, the blue one.”

“The blue one,” Victor confirms happily. “I went through the script, Yuuri, and I had a great idea.”


Victor rolls his eyes and stops touching his hair, making Yuuri whimper in complaint, cuddling closer to him. “Please, Yuuri, this is important. We don’t have much time.”

(Much time?)

“Morning,” Yuuri insists.

“I want to put you in the movie.”
He pauses.

Looks up.

Because Victor has got to be joking.

“But you’re not going to act. Not a lot, anyway, maybe just a few lines. So that the plot makes sense.”

“How can I be in a movie and not act? You’re sleep deprived.”

Victor kisses his forehead. “No, I’m a genius, Yuuri. Come on, sit up. You can sleep more in a minute, I promise.”

He has to admit, his interest is piqued. So he sits up beside Victor, leaning back on the bed-frame, as the actor shoves paper after paper in his face excitedly. “Okay, explain it to me,” Yuuri mutters, reaching over to the nightstand for his glasses.

“This is complex,” Victor warns. “Think of the movie like a tiered cake. The bottom layer is chocolate, the top layer is vanilla.”

“What kind of a weird cake—”

“Just listen,” he begs. “Okay, now the movie revolves around my character’s relationship with Mila’s character, right? Now the basis of that relationship is based off of the skating. When I watch her skate, when she watches me skate, and most importantly, the pair skate. That’s the chocolate, the bottom layer of the cake.”

Yuuri nods.

“Now the top layer,” he starts, “is the dialogue. The sex scene. The extra fluff. The stuff that makes a romance movie a romance movie. The kiss in the middle of Barcelona. That’s the vanilla layer, right?”

(He’s gone insane. Certifiably insane.)

“Yes, I’m with you so far.”

“Mila is a great actress,” Victor says. “And a great person. In the beginning of the movie, she’s the skater that my character looks up to, right? My inspiration for skating? But there’s no romance—not yet. Sure, there’s a bit of tension, but it’s more of just a hero-worship dynamic, see? It’s more of an inspiration type thing. The only place that the romance starts is on the ice. It all comes back to the ice. All of it. The chocolate, Yuuri.”

Yuuri licks his lips, trying to figure out where he’s going with this.

Victor grins. “And it took ages to film Mila and I’s skating scenes. But I’d bet good money that you know plenty of routines. And that it wouldn’t be much of a hassle to have you perform some in front of the cameras.”

Yuuri gapes. “You’re saying…?”

“We take apart the cake. Mila stays in the movie as my character’s idol, but you’re the romantic interest. Throughout the movie, my character is still inspired by Mila, platonically, but I fall in love with you. Instead of serving a tiered cake, we just give the audience chocolate, and it’s great, stripped
down, one flavor. Look, read this part—this scene would still work.” Then he flips a few pages. “And so would this. All of it would work. Some of the most important parts are filmed in Barcelona, and we haven’t been there yet. And here, look, the sex scene.”

Yuuri stares at him.

“Oh, no, Yuuri—I’m suggesting that we take the sex scene out. I wasn’t trying to… Yeah. We take that out.”

Yuuri blinks.

“Unless you wanted to… I don’t know…”

“We’d take that out,” Yuuri confirms.

“Right,” Victor agrees quickly.

A pause.

“But here’s the best part,” Victor says. “We kill three birds with one stone. First of all, the pair skate video makes sense to the public. Second of all, you didn’t want to act. Well this way, you don’t act, you just skate, which you’re amazing at. We’ll have to sprinkle a few scenes of dialogue in there, of course, but that would be fine, and you’d be fine, and I’d help you through it. And third of all, I wanted this movie to surprise people.”

Victor leans in closer to him and presses their foreheads together. One of his hands comes up and touches Yuuri’s chin, his thumb drifting across Yuuri’s bottom lip. Their eyes meet, Victor’s sparkling with excitement and adoration, and Yuuri can’t help but wonder how he’d gotten this far. How he’d gotten from being in this exact same position in a dirty motel room with Phichit to this.

“And this will surprise people. Because it’s real.”

“You’re absolutely nuts.”

Victor smiles. “But you haven’t said no yet.”

“You really think this could work?” Yuuri asks quietly.

“I think… Romances have been done before. Dialogue, cheesy kisses, yada yada yada. And that’s all fine. But a love story built on the ice. A real, genuine love story about two people finding each other, a slow build. That’s new. That’s exciting. Everybody is always trying to stack the cake as high as they can, but we’re keeping it simple. And to raise it to the next level, to make it based off of real love?” Victor leans forward and kisses him chastely. “That’s even better.”

Yuuri kisses him back.

The actor begins lowering him against the bed, but then they hear a whimper. “Oh, sorry Makkachin,” Victor says, wincing. “Are you okay?”

The poodle jumps off of the bed and Victor looks heartbroken, dropping Yuuri down on the covers and crawling off of the bed. “Makka, I’m sorry,” he pleads as he chases after the dog.

Yuuri stares after him.

(Well.)
(That certainly ruined the moment.)

~

“This isn’t… the worst idea you’ve had.”

Victor breathes out a sigh of relief.

Yakov glances between them, then focuses in on Yuuri. “And you agree to this?”

He looks at Victor and it’s almost as though he’s able to absorb some of the confidence that he radiates. Yuuri nods. “I do.”

“I’ll talk it over with Sara,” Yakov promises. “And let Mila know.”

Victor grins. “Okay, but for now, can we film the pair skate? Because the interview is tomorrow and depending on how long this talk takes—”

Yakov’s expression stops him.

Victor doesn’t let his resolve break.

“You can have three crew members.”

“Including Otabek?” Victor asks hopefully.

Yakov thinks. “Fine. Take Otabek and two others. But do not, under any circumstances, post that footage anywhere. In fact, I’ll tell Otabek not to give you any access to it. And don’t even think about asking him for it.”

Victor shifts uncomfortably. “Don’t you trust us?”

(Yuuri doesn’t speak Russian, but it’s not hard to imagine what Yakov’s reply is.)

“All right, are you okay?” the skater asks a moment later, placing a hand on his arm.

Victor doesn’t reply—he looks like a ghost.

~

Excited is an understatement for Victor’s current mood.

Yuuri is getting dressed in the changing room right now, and Georgi is admiring his own makeup in the mirror. Victor sits in anticipation, not wanting to put on his own costume yet because he’s too thrilled to see Yuuri’s, first.

“Um, okay, it’s on,” Yuuri mumbles.

He resists the urge to run into the dressing room. “Can I see?”
“It looks kind of... I don’t know. I think it looked better on you.”

“Yuuri,” Victor pleads.

And he steps outside.

(And he’s breathless.)

(Because…)

(Because…)

“I think he short-circuited,” Georgi comments.

Victor starts at his legs. The pants are tight in all of the right places. A bit too long, but Georgi already seems to notice that, squinting at the fabric and making mental adjustments. And then the blazer… It’s sparkling, and the gold brings out the gold flecks in his eyes. The epitome of allure.

“What do you think?” Yuuri asks, blushing. Victor isn’t sure why he’s blushing, then he remembers that his eyes had practically just assaulted Yuuri’s figure.

“I…”

Georgi nods approvingly. “It looks good on you. I’ll just readjust... Well, actually, I’m not sure I’ll need to readjust anything but the pants. And that’s an easy fix. So keep the top on, take the pants off.”

The actor watches in silent protest as Yuuri goes back into the dressing room. And then he comes back out wearing jeans—still gorgeous, of course—and hands Georgi the costume. The designer sets to work immediately.

Victor clears his throat. “I think I changed my mind about the pair skate. It really won’t be fair for me to have to skate next to you wearing the same costume. It’ll be like one of those ‘who wore it better’ pages in magazines, except it won’t be a question, it’ll just say ‘Yuuri wore it better.’”

Yuuri blinks at him in disbelief. “You’re kidding, right?”

“Of course not.”

“Haven’t you thought about this from my perspective? I have to skate with a world famous actor who the world thinks that I’m engaged to after we’ve only known each other for less than a year, and who has won the title ‘Sexiest Man of the Year’ two years in a row.”

Victor licks his lips. “Actually, I’ve heard I’m going to win next year, too.”

“Not helping.”

“Yuuri, Yuuri, you’ll be great. And let’s not forget, only one of us is a genuinely talented skater. And besides, this isn’t about either of us, it’s just about us. Together.”

Yuuri raises an eyebrow. “Did you steal that line from something?”

“A famous man called Victor Nikiforov.”

“Mmm, never heard of him,” Yuuri teases, kissing him.
Yurio is there when they’re about to start filming the pair skate.

Victor isn’t sure why.

Then he remembers that Otabek is there. And it clicks.

“Yurio, you came to watch us skate!” Victor exclaims.

Yurio scoffs. “I can’t believe you’re making them change the script of the movie. You’re not even a writer.”

He shrugs innocently.

Then the blond looks at Otabek. And then back at Victor. “But… I guess… I mean, it doesn’t matter.”

“It doesn’t?”

“Like, it makes more sense to have Yuuri play your love interest. From an objective perspective.”

Victor gapes at him. Otabek looks impressed.

“Which means more people will see the movie, which means more money for me,” he adds quickly.

Yuuri smiles softly at him. “Thanks, Yurio.”

Yurio turns around in a slow circle. “Stop looking at me. I just want more money, okay? Geez. Since when do you people pay so much attention to everything that I say?”

Otabek clears his throat. “Okay, so who is going to lift who? One of you needs to play Mila’s part.”

“I know my own part better,” Victor points out. “So it makes sense for Yuuri to play Mila’s part in the skate.”

Yuuri shrugs. “That’s fine, as long as you don’t drop me.”

“I would never.”

He raises an eyebrow.

“I’ve… I’ve improved since that one time, I promise.”

Yuuri smiles and takes his hand. “Okay, then. Are you ready?”

Skating while filming is different.

He had known that already, of course—he’d helped with the filming of countless routines over the past few weeks. But to actually skate it is draining. No wonder Victor seems so tired all the time.

It’s repetition, really. They do a part of it, then again, then again.
Otabek is a great cameraman, concentrated and dedicated. He gives them clearcut instructions, the other crew members sometimes chipping in. The most surprising part, though, is how focused Victor is. Normally, when filming near Yuuri, he’s playful, distracted. But now he listens to each critique with caution, making sure that every movement is graceful and correct.

Yuuri isn’t sure what has gotten into him, but he approves, because in no time, they’re done. Otabek looks satisfied with it, and Yurio is leaning against the wall casually, one foot propped up.

“You did great,” Victor tells him.

“So did you,” Yuuri responds. There’s a pause. “Although, for future reference, during the lift, you may want to improve your posture.”

It takes Victor a second to realize that he’s joking.

Then he’s taking Yuuri’s hands and leading him into the locker room of the rink. Slowly, his hands drift down Yuuri’s sides to his hips, where they stay there, Victor’s eyes set on his. “You look great in this costume.”

Yuuri licks his lips unconsciously, and Victor mimics the motion. Yuuri’s gaze drifts down to the action, back pressed against the lockers. Victor moves closer to him, keeping him in place and kissing him. Yuuri hums contentedly, kissing him back, legs feeling weak.

“Are you excited for our interview tomorrow, now?” Victor mumbles in his ear.

Yuuri nods. And he is. Which is odd, because a week or so ago, the idea had horrified him. Now he’s… There’s something about it. Something about the idea of surprising the world that’s exhilarating. “What do you think people will say?”

“I think the world will fall in love with you as an actor, and then you’ll be typecast as my romantic partner, and then what ever will we do?”

Yuuri pretends to look offended. “Are you saying that this whole thing was a ploy so that we have to make several more romance movies together?”

“Absolutely.”

He trails a hand up to the spot where Victor’s shirt is unbuttoned, pressing his palm against his chest experimentally. Victor shifts under his touch. Yuuri takes control, turning them around so that the actor is pressed up against the lockers instead. It’s unfamiliar, being in charge this way, but Yuuri finds that he likes it. And judging by Victor’s expression, he figures he likes it, too.

(Words come back to him.)

(Tomorrow, he had said.)

(In his drunken stupor after his birthday party, the word ‘tomorrow.’)

(It had been a week.)

He hadn’t forgotten about the topic, certainly. No, he’d just been too afraid to broach the subject. Not to mention distracted by all the drama that had swept its way into their lives after that night. But…

He trusts Victor.

“Can we go back to the trailer?” Yuuri asks quietly.
Victor searches his eyes. His lips part. It’s as though there’s a question waiting, hanging in the air. “After we take off these costumes?”

Yuuri kisses him gently, takes his lower lip between his teeth. Victor leans back into the lockers, disarmed by the touch. “Yes.”

(And it’s as though it’s a silent conversation.)

(Because Victor’s eyes widen, search Yuuri’s own, and then he knows.)

“Yes,” the actor says, voice coming out an octave higher than normal. “Yes, right, then… Let’s go. Right now. Quickly.”

~~

Victor can’t undo the laces of his skates.

His fingers are moving so quickly that the knot won’t loosen. Yuuri can’t help but sit there and watch, laughing under his breath. Victor looks up at him, confused. “What’s so funny?”

“Do you need help?”

“No, I’m just trying to…” He tugs uselessly at the double knot. His hand slips and he starts over again.

Yuuri can’t resist.

He moves and sits down next to him, taking Victor’s ankle and bringing his foot up to rest in his lap. “Let me?”

Victor watches him.

(Awed.)

Yuuri unties the first skate, then sets it off to the side and gets to work on the next. He gives Victor a shy smile and keeps a hand on his ankle. Victor pulls away and scrambles to put his shoes back on. “Okay, let’s go,” he insists, putting a hand on the small of Yuuri’s back and guiding him out the doors.

“Are you looking forward to something?” Yuuri teases, trailing a finger down his forearm.

Victor swallows but doesn’t stop walking. “You’re going to kill me.”

“Just curious, Vitya.”

“You’re actually going to be the death of me.”

They get changed. Victor’s t-shirt is on backwards. Yuuri points it out, but the other man doesn’t seem to care as they exit the costume room together and head towards the cast and crew trailers.

Then, somehow, Victor can’t manage to get the door to his trailer open. “You’re sort of useless when you’re turned on,” Yuuri taunts.

That’s when Victor pins him against the door.

Slips a hand up his shirt.
Yuuri gasps, leaning against him. Victor kisses his neck, biting at his collarbone, and Yuuri’s knees turn to liquid, heart thudding in his ears, brisk air nipping at his skin. “You’re a tease,” Victor scolds.

He doesn’t know what to say to that, just lets Victor continue his work on his neck, his mouth hot and wet. “Vitya…”

Victor opens the door behind him and they both stumble inside. Makkachin is asleep on the couch and Victor slams the door shut, taking Yuuri by his hips and leaning him against the short kitchen table until he’s sitting on it, hands fistled in the fabric of Victor’s thin blue shirt. “Do you have a thing for kissing me in kitchens?” Yuuri asks.

He smiles. “I think I just have a thing for kissing you.”

Yuuri takes Victor’s lower lip in between his teeth again and his eyes fall shut with bliss. “You do?”

Victor responds by lifting his own shirt up and over his head. “Absolutely. Now I want to make sure, you did mean…? You do want…?”

“Yes,” he confirms, and he’s surprised by his own confidence. He remembers a while ago, when he’d panicked in Victor’s bedroom… And now Victor is hard on top of him, hanging off of his every word.

It makes him feel powerful.

Victor laughs and kisses him again, open-mouthed, hard, fast. Yuuri can hardly keep up, his thoughts dizzy as he grips at his own shirt, trying to lift it off. Victor pulls away to help him, and then presses their chests together as he kisses him again, pushing him back against the wall behind the table. Victor’s legs straddle his.

“The table is gonna break,” Yuuri mumbles, though he can’t bring himself to be concerned.

Victor doesn’t seem to care, either. His hand grazes Yuuri’s back, moving up and down and then up again, as if it’s not sure where to land. Yuuri shivers at the touch, leaning forward to kiss Victor’s chest, tongue circling his nipple. Victor moans on top of him, a hand slipping into his hair, “Yuuri.”

“Are you already hard?” he asks quietly.

Victor responds by pressing his hips into Yuuri’s thigh, and sure enough…

“No more teasing,” Victor begs.

Yuuri slips a hand down and grazes it across Victor’s jeans. The actor shudders, eyes shut tight, and he presses harder against Yuuri’s thigh, as though he can’t help it. “Bed,” Yuuri suggests.

Victor nods desperately.

He stubs his toe on the doorway to the bedroom.

“Vitya, are you okay? I—”

Victor pushes Yuuri backwards onto the bed, a hand slipping down to his jeans and fingers moving straight to the button. Yuuri shifts upwards, giving him better access, and then Victor is eagerly trying to pull them down, his weight supported by his knees.

Yuuri lifts his hips to help and then Victor’s lips are back on his before he can catch a breath, tongue inside his mouth, exploring, and Yuuri letting himself get lost in the sensation, making his mouth
pliable, accessible. Victor rocks his hips against Yuuri’s boxer briefs and Yuuri is hard, too—painfully hard.

He reaches down and touches the waistband of Victor’s jeans, copying the same movements the man had done just moments ago. And then Victor Nikiforov is sitting on top of him wearing just boxers.

**Victor Nikiforov.**

(Their talk after the banquet had certainly dulled line between the famous Victor and the real Victor that Yuuri had come to know. The talk had helped Yuuri gain more confidence regarding their relationship, had helped Yuuri realize that, really, they’re equals. It had solved a lot of problems.)

(But for a moment—just a moment—Yuuri allows the situation to sink in.)

**Victor Nikiforov.**

On top of him.

**(Victor Nikiforov.)**

Turned on by him.

(Very, very turned on by him, evidently.)

It’s like some wild fantasy he’d had when he was eighteen.

Except even better, because he loves Victor, isn’t just admiring his body.

(Though he is still admiring his boy. Surely both is okay.)

**Victor hooks his thumbs in the waistband of Yuuri’s boxer briefs. “Off. Please.”**

Yuuri nods, heart racing in his chest. He lifts his hips again, and Victor kisses him, content, as he slips the last layer off. Yuuri feels bare beneath him, and he sets to work on Victor’s boxers as well, tugging them down to his ankles. He breaks the kiss and stares.

Victor chuckles, kissing his shoulder. “Okay so far?”

“Okay, just need a minute,” Yuuri confirms.

“If you don’t want anything, tell me. Don’t feel bad about it.”

Yuuri nods, takes a second to catch his breath.

Victor glances down at him, then gets back to work on his shoulder, nipping hard. “You’re gorgeous. Gorgeous. And all mine.”

“All yours,” Yuuri agrees, letting out a breathy sigh. “And you’re all mine.”

Victor hums in agreement.

“How do you have condoms?”

He nods, then scrambles off of him and opens the dresser nearby. Yuuri hears him muttering something in Russian as he searches desperately.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Yuuri reminds him, though he’s desperate, too—his cock hard and
twitching, his entire body begging for Victor to come back.

“Here!” Victor exclaims happily. “And… Hang on…” He displays a bottle to Yuuri and then grins, kissing him again, straddling his legs. “You’re so beautiful. My Голубушка.”

Yuuri arches his hips, needing friction. “Please, Vitya, I want…”

“What do you want?” he mumbles, kissing his way down his chest, a hand slipping down to his cock. Yuuri groans.

“I want you to… I want you…”

Victor meets his eyes, his gaze gentle.

Yuuri doesn’t know how to say it without saying it. He looks at Victor, silently pleading for him to understand.

And he does. “Do you want…” He’s interrupted by a sharp breath when Yuuri shifts his hips again. “Me to…” His hand moves to Yuuri’s ass, squeezing it, and Yuuri whimpers, nodding.

“Please, please,” he starts, moving desperately, now, his cock aching. “Please, Vitya, oh my god.”

Victor nods and grips his hips. “Turn over.”

Yuuri does, moaning when he feels Victor’s cock rub against his ass. He desperately arches into the bed sheets, but it’s not enough. “Please,” he repeats uselessly. “Please.”

He hears the bottle open.

Yuuri’s hair is sweaty, sticking to his forehead, and he desperately tries for friction, raising his waist into the air to move against Victor’s cock, the man on top of him letting out a rewarding gasp. His eyes are shut tight, and the feeling that had started as minor trepidation has turned into pure bliss, anticipation.

And then there’s a finger at his entrance.

He moans before it has even entered him.

“Oh my god,” he mumbles, pressing his face into the pillow. He had never thought he’d be so vocal during something like this, but…

Victor’s lips drift down his back and Yuuri isn’t sure how to do anything but feel. Colors explode behind his eyes. “It feels good?”

He’s afraid of what might come out if he opens his mouth, so he just nods.

He moves slowly, in and out, then adds a second finger. Yuuri whimpers, “More. Please, more.”

Victor adds a third.

(Yuuri crumples.)

“Victor, Victor,” he repeats endlessly, his name a prayer. “Fuck.”

“Say that again,” Victor asks, the voice coming from somewhere behind him, and Yuuri can’t see, and somehow that only makes it better. Then, Victor’s fingers slip out of him.
He groans at the loss, shifting his hips backwards. “Fuck me, p-please.”

Then he hears a few sounds and Victor’s cock is at his entrance, pressing lightly against it. Yuuri’s eyes roll back in his head. “Victor. Please.”

It feels like eternity before Victor finally enters him. Yuuri moans, thrusting backwards. It’s unlike anything he has ever felt before. Incomparable. “You feel so good,” Victor praises, his voice low. “So tight and ready, Yuuri.”

He starts a slow rhythm, one hand on his shoulder and another on his side. Yuuri fists the bedsheets, knuckles white, breaths coming quick and syncing with Victor’s own. “Harder,” he begs. “Harder, harder.”

And then, gradually, he speeds up. Harder and faster, sloppier, Victor’s grip on him tightening. Yuuri groans with every thrust, the pleasure unbelievable, unstoppable. But it’s rising, building, and… “Victor, I’m gonna…”

His words trail off as he sees stars, hips thrusting backwards to meet Victor with each movement, Victor’s cock hitting a spot that makes him cry out with bliss, his own twitching. And then he comes, grip on the bed tightening desperately, the process slow, languid, Victor riding out every last moment of his high as he reaches his own, lips pressing down against Yuuri’s shoulder as his pace slows. Yuuri rolls onto his back.

“Yuuri, you were incredible.”

Oh no.
(Oh no.)
(He can’t let Victor see him.)

He grabs for a pillow and presses it against his face, still shaking from the pleasure and adrenaline. Grips it tight.

“Yuuri?” Victor asks suddenly, turning and trying to pull the pillow away. “Yuuri, what’s wrong?”

He lets Victor tear away the pillow and swipes at his eyes. It’s a useless effort. He sobs gently, and Victor holds him against his chest, grip tight.

“Did it hurt?” he pleads. “Please tell me it didn’t hurt—oh no, I hurt you, didn’t I? And I didn’t even realize—”

“It didn’t hurt,” Yuuri promises.

Victor strokes his hair. “You didn’t want it? I pushed you, didn’t I? Pushed you into it, because I…”

“No, Victor, stop. I’m just happy.”

He exhales sharply. “You are?”

“I’m so happy,” Yuuri mumbles, tears still flowing. “I’m so happy, because this was the best thing I could’ve asked for, because I love you and it felt good. It felt right. And you’re perfect.”

Victor kisses the crown of his head. “I’m not even close to perfect, but you are.”

Yuuri shushes him. “Just take the compliment.”
“Okay, then, I’m perfect,” Victor teases.

He laughs and cuddles against him, tears landing on his chest. “Sorry for crying.”

“Don’t be. You just scared me.”

“Sorry for that, then.”

Victor smiles at him. “Apology accepted. Now let’s go clean up.”

~

A few minutes later, they're cuddling on the fresh sheets, Yuuri's head pillowed on his chest and his fingers lazily drifting through Victor's hair, sorting out the tangles. Victor yawns, his eyes shut as he snuggles closer to him.

Yuuri looks up at him. “How are we supposed to do the interview tomorrow now?”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m gonna be thinking about this the whole time.”

Victor’s expression turns concerned. “You’re right. We might have to put it off.”

“That’d go over great with Yakov.”

Victor yawns again, eyes falling shut. “He’d kill us.”

“Maybe,” he muses, tracing a shape on Victor’s chest. He notices the way that Victor’s breathing is already slowing. The sound causes him to yawn, too. “Read me something.”

Victor hums. “Read you something?”

“Something nice,” he suggests.

“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”

Yuuri laughs. “Shakespeare?”

“You said something pretty,” he protests, then puts on a dramatic—though impressively accurate—accent. “Thou art more lovely and more temperate, Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May. Thou art a fantastic figure skater and, according to most of the world, my fiancé.”

“Hmm. I have a feeling part of that was made up.”

Victor kisses his hair. “But it rhymed. Aren’t you impressed?”

“Sort of.”

“Sort of? That was impromptu poetry,” he protests, offended. “One day I’ll impress you, Yuuri.”

“Is that your mission?”

“Oh, always.”
Yuuri is nervous for the interview.

It doesn’t take a genius to figure that out.

He drums his fingers on his thighs. Glances out the window. Opens his phone, stares at the home screen for a few seconds, then locks it again. Victor feels somewhat useless, trying to provide comforting words but only seeming to remind him of his nervousness.

“I’ve met Guang Hong before,” he promises. “He’ll go easy on us. And we’ll discuss all of the questions before hand. No surprises.”

Yuuri nods, swallowing. He takes out his phone again and Victor sees him texting Phichit. He can’t help but feel a slight stab of jealousy due to the fact that Yuuri is going to Phichit for comfort instead of him, but whatever helps, he supposes.

Yakov had already drilled them on what to say and what not to say, but he’s busy on the set today, so Sara is with them, sitting in the passenger seat of the taxi. She gives Yuuri a sympathetic smile, and he returns it before looking back down at his phone. Victor takes one of his hands and squeezes his fingers.

When they finally get there, Guang Hong is understanding, friendly. Victor practically watches the stress drain out of Yuuri.

They discuss the questions with Sara, and then, by noon, the interview is ready to start. It’s in a large room, and they pretend to walk in, greeting Guang Hong and grinning brightly at him before sitting down on a dark, soft couch. There are cups of water in front of them, and Victor watches as Yuuri grabs one right away, taking a long sip. It’d look normal to anyone watching, but he can sense the underlying anxiousness.

They start with simple questions. Guang Hong pokes fun at them for the first scandal, with the photos released of them holding hands, and Victor does most of the talking, Yuuri just laughing and nodding when necessary.

And then Guang Hong brings up the fact that they have an exclusive to share here on the show. That’s when Yuuri’s nervousness rises to the surface as he shifts uncomfortably in his seat, glancing at Victor.

Victor looks back at him and places a hand on his knee. “We do.”

And then the video plays.

(Plays.)

(They hold their breaths.)

(So does the audience.)

It starts on a white screen, and then the ice fades in slowly. The blade of a skate is visible. Then, the shot pans upwards, and it’s Yuuri, skating alone. Gentle movements, matching the song.

And then Victor joins.
Even though it was atypical for an interview, Sara had insisted on Guang Hong not seeing the video until the live show. Yuuri hears him gasp, quietly—a sharp intake of breath. He wants to look at the host, wants to look at the audience, but he hasn’t seen the final video yet, either, and it’s captivating. Otabek’s camera work, the costumes, the lighting. It’s all nothing short of magical.

Yuuri feels a hand on his shoulder.

He doesn’t move.

But the touch helps.

He hears Victor swallow.

And then there’s a lift, the sound of the ice and the music filling the room, echoing, playing. The movements are familiar, Yuuri practically feels himself moving as he watches it, can practically see the rink around them. He imagines Victor is feeling the same way.

And then the song slows. The screen fades back to white.

*History Maker.*

And a date. And a tagline.

*We call everything on the ice love.*

It’s silent, for a while.

Victor tugs on the collar of his shirt.

And then Guang Hong clears his throat and is saying words that get jumbled in Yuuri’s head as he finally faces the crowd, their expressions puzzled. He licks his lips and ducks his head, not wanting to see them anymore, not wanting to think about how the world is going to react to the fact that he’s going to be in a movie. *He.* Not even an actor. With *Victor Nikiforov.*

It hits him.

(He’s going to be in a movie with Victor.)

(And Victor had said he wouldn’t have to act, not much anyway, but this is still really, truly happening.)

And then it’s commercial break.

And he releases the breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding.

“Yuuri, you did great,” Victor promises, leaning closer to him on the couch and taking both of his hands. He casts Guang Hong a look and the host seems to understand, nodding and walking away. The actor hands him the cup of water and Yuuri drinks, his head pounding. “You did great,” he repeats.

Yuuri just nods, managing to grab hold of a modicum of self-control. He takes in a deep breath and nods again. Victor squeezes his fingers. “Do you think people will be mad?” Yuuri asks.

“Why would they be mad?”

“Because I’m not an actor,” he reminds him. “I’m not an actor, and what if I do a terrible job and the
movie is terrible? Then Yakov wouldn’t make any money and… And… Who would pay the crew, and how would—"

Victor kisses him, cupping his cheek. “You’ll be perfect. Don’t worry about it.”

“You saying ‘don’t worry about it’ doesn’t make me worry any less.”

“What if I say that everyone will love the movie, because everyone will love you?”

He turns back on the couch, taking another long sip of water.

“The interview is almost over, and when we get back to Santa Barbara we’ll talk about it, okay?” Victor promises, concerned.

Yuuri shuts his eyes and nods. He’ll be fine until the end of the interview. He’ll be fine in general. It’s just that everything had happened so quickly, all at once, and now here he is on a talk show, and he has hardly even had time to breathe.

He offers Victor a smile. It seems to help both of them.

~

Yuuri is quiet in the car.

It’s driving Victor insane.

It’s like a guilt, gnawing away at him. Had he pushed Yuuri into this? He had obviously been uncomfortable during the interview, but then he remembers how calm he’d been during the actual pair skate, how graceful, how confident…

He remembers what had happened after the pair skate.

The sight of Yuuri beneath him, his hands in the bedsheets, Victor’s fingers splayed across his skin, the noises he’d made that had unraveled him beyond—

No, no.

Not the time.

Right now, he needs to be supportive. Needs to figure out what to do to help.

“Yuuri?” he asks.

Yuuri looks at him, then his eyes dart away again. “Yeah?”

“Are you mad at me?”

“Of course not. I’m not mad at you.”

Victor swallows. “Do you regret saying that you’d be in the movie?”

“I don’t know.”
It hurts, but he appreciates the honesty.

“It’s not too late to change your mind.” He won’t make Yuuri do this if he doesn’t want to. “I’m sorry if I pushed you into it. I got overexcited.”

“Don’t apologize,” Yuuri says. “It was my decision, you left it up to me, and I said I’d do it. So I’ll do it. I’m just…"

“Just what?”

He sighs and rubs at his forehead. “Remember the gala?”

(How could he forget?)

Victor nods.

“One of those women told me that people say I’m stealing you from the world.”

“Oh, Yuuri, that’s… That doesn’t make any sense. You know that, right?”

Yuuri shrugs. “When people look at us, they’re going to think that… They’re going to think, how did Yuuri ever get Victor to… To…” His breath catches, but he keeps his calm. Victor takes his hand and squeezes it.

“You know what we’ll do if people think that, which they won’t?”

“What?”

“Absolutely nothing. Because who cares what anybody else thinks. Want to know what I think? I think that I want to go back to our trailer and kiss you for a very, very long time. What do you think?”

Yuuri laughs. “I think… I think that that sounds good.”

“Yeah?”

He nods. “Yeah.”

“I also think that I’m proud of you,” Victor says, playing with his fingers. “Because I know that tonight wasn’t easy on you, but the audience loved you. Unsurprisingly.”

Yuuri leans over and kisses him. Victor thanks every possible deity that, for once, he seems to have said the right thing. “Thank you.”

~

“The rough drafts of the new script are done,” Yakov tells Victor, setting them down on the table in front of them. “You have tonight to learn the lines. We film new scenes tomorrow.”

Victor stares. “Tonight?”

“You’re a quick learner,” the director points out.
“Quick but… This quick? How many new scenes?”

Yakov shrugs. “Not too many. You’ll be fine. And you, Yuuri—you need to learn, too.”

Yuuri’s eyes grow wide. “I’ve never even acted before.”

“Victor will coach you. And you’re in as few scenes as possible.”

“The love story is focused on the skating?” Victor asks, flipping through the new script.

Yakov nods.

“Good. That’s the way it should be,” he says, getting up and hugging him. “You won’t regret this, Yakov. This is much better. A chocolate cake.”

Yakov gives him an odd look at that.

~

“Okay, you know your lines?” Victor asks, drifting his fingers through Yuuri’s hair before they start filming.

Yuuri nods, offering him a smile.

He messes up the first take.

Then the second, then the third.

Victor doesn’t get impatient, but Yuuri does, and it’s breaking Victor’s heart.

Eventually, though, they get a good one.

Victor lifts him up off of his feet and Yuuri laughs, shaking his head, because it’s just one scene out of many, because he hadn’t even delivered the lines that well, because he’s still nervous. Yakov doesn’t even look upset by the interruption, just satisfied, clapping Otabek on the back as he watches them.

And it’s in that moment that the cast and crew seems to realize.

This will work.

(This will work.)

The more that Victor thinks about the new plot, the more he loves it, the more he thanks those champagne bottles in Moscow for leading them to this point. He can’t remember the last time he had been so excited for the world to watch one of his movies for the first time.

Yuuri gets his old costumes sent from Detroit to Santa Barbara with express shipping. It’s Yakov’s idea to have him do some of his actual routines, both a tribute to the world of figure skating and also a suggestion of convenience since it means Yuuri won’t have to choreograph anything new.
“We’re going to need to film a routine for the scene where Victor first sees you,” Sara says, clicking her pen. “A routine that’s… Dramatic. Intense.”

Victor freezes, eyes widening.

The look scares Yuuri. “What are you thinking about?”

“Eros.”

Yuuri struggles to find words. “Victor…”

(It only takes a few minutes to convince him.)

(Especially when Victor starts pouting, because, well, apparently Yuuri’s resolve is made of paper mâché when it comes to Victor Nikiforov’s lower lip.)

And then, suddenly, he’s trying on his Eros costume again for the first time in years.

He wonders how he’d gotten from watching Victor’s movies on repeat in his apartment in Detroit to having Victor Nikiforov drool over him in one of his old skating outfits. He’s just glad Georgi had gone somewhere and isn’t in the room with them.

The actor looks as though he’s about to collapse when he sees him. His hands fall limp at his sides, phone tumbling to the ground. He doesn’t bother to look and see if the screen is cracked. Yuuri examines himself in the mirror nervously. It still fits. It fits well, actually.

“Do you think I sh—”

Victor’s hands are on his sides, his mouth on top of Yuuri’s. Yuuri’s back hits the wall, hands instinctively flying up to Victor’s biceps to steady himself, mouth opening with ease underneath the other man’s. “Never take this off,” Victor pleads.

“You like it?” Yuuri guesses, laughing as Victor kisses his way down his neck, hands drifting up his torso.

Then, one of his hands moves lower, squeezes Yuuri’s ass. Yuuri jumps at the unexpected touch, feeling his cheeks warming. Victor presses their chests flush together, not an inch of possible space between them. “I love it.”

“Vitya, I have to be in front of the camera in a minute, you can’t be—oh.” He arches his head back as Victor nips at his pulse point.

“You were saying?” he teases.

“Shut up,” Yuuri laughs, letting Victor continue.

~

Eros is going to be the death of him.

“He needs to do it again, don’t you think?” Victor suggests to Otabek. “Another take.”
“I think we have all the footage we need,” Otabek says.

Victor needs Yuuri in that outfit more than he needs air. “One more take wouldn’t hurt, though, surely.”

He’s just about to offer Otabek a bribe when Yuuri skates off of the ice. Lilia had slicked his hair back. He looks unbelievable. Victor feels like he’s floating. Wonders if he should kneel. He should definitely kneel, right? It’s the sensical thing to do in a situation like this? Or maybe just start calculating how it’s possible for a human to be made purely out of stardust and sex?

“Am I done?” he asks, licking his lips.

(Just like he does at the start of the routine.)

Victor leans against the wall. Doesn’t trust his own legs anymore. Doesn’t trust any part of his body when it comes to Yuuri Katsuki in that outfit. Can’t even trust his own mind. Doesn’t know who he is anymore.

“I think so,” Otabek comments.

“You should… You should skate it one more time,” Victor suggests.

Yuuri chuckles. “No, I think I’m okay.”

He takes Victor’s hand and leads him towards the costume room. Victor is pouting, but understanding. Yuuri is probably tired, and anyway he—

“We could go back to the trailer instead,” Yuuri suggests.

Oh.

Oh.

“You mean…” Victor starts uselessly.

When they’re out of the sight of the crew members, Victor’s wrists are pinned against the nearest wall, Yuuri’s forehead pressed against his as he stares into his eyes, pupils dilated, gaze heavy, weighing Victor down as though the gravity around him has been multiplied tenfold. “I don’t have to change,” Yuuri mumbles, breath ghosting on the shell of Victor’s ear.

Victor’s breaths are embarrassingly quick, a tremble moving down his entire body. “Yuuri…”

This is certainly a new side of him.

(A very, very welcome new side.)

“If you want?” he asks, a bit shyer, now, as though wondering if this is okay.

(Which it is. It’s more than okay. In fact, on a scale of zero to okay, Victor is certain that Yuuri would break the scale. And the laws of the universe.)

“I want,” Victor confirms quickly.

~
"I feel like I don’t even know you anymore," Phichit sighs dramatically. “Yuuri Katsuki, world-famous movie actor, figure skater, boyfriend of Victor Nikiforov, star of upcoming blockbuster film History Maker.”

Yuuri rolls his eyes. “You still know me.”

“I know. I’m just kidding. You’re the same dork who used to buy midnight premiere tickets to all of Victor’s movies the night that they came out, as though the seats would fill up that fast.”

Victor glances up from his phone. “The night that the tickets came out? That’s true dedication.”

Phichit grins. “After Stay Close to Me he made me stay and watch all of the credits in case there was an extra scene. And when there wasn’t one…”

“Phichit, stop,” Yuuri begs.

Victor leans in front of the camera and rests his head on Yuuri’s shoulder. “No, keep going.”

“There was another time, I set Yuuri up for a blind date…”

“Phichit. No.”

…and he took the girl to see one of your movies, er, which one was it, Yuuri?”

Yuuri buries his face in his hands. “I am going to hang up on you if you keep talking.”

“Whatever, I don’t remember what movie it was,” Phichit dismisses. “Anyway, after the movie was over, the girl told Yuuri she didn’t really like the movie. And Yuuri asked why, and she told him that she wasn’t a fan of the main actor, and, well… You can imagine what happened after that.”

“Oh, Yuuri, defending me,” Victor teases, wrapping both arms around him. “That’s so sweet of you.”

Yuuri groans. “Phichit, why would you tell him that?”

Phichit shrugs. “I have more stories, too, but I do want to stay Yuuri’s friend, so they can wait.”

“Could you text them to me?” Victor asks.

“I hate both of you,” Yuuri complains, though he doesn’t. Isn’t sure he could if he tried.

“No you don’t,” they both protest at the same time.

(Yuuri wonders if he just helped a dangerous friendship form.)

He sighs and glances around the room. “Victor, could you go get my glasses? I think I left them in my trailer.”

“Sure,” he offers, kissing him on the temple before leaving. “Come on, Makka, we’re going on a trip.” The dog bounds after him happily.

“I left them there on purpose,” Yuuri says to Phichit the moment the door is shut.

Phichit raises an eyebrow, impressed. “Why?”
“His birthday is coming up, it’s on Christmas day. What am I supposed to get him?”

He hums. “That’s tough. He got you that ring, right?”

“And a car. And a really nice blanket. And fifty other things that I insisted he take back, including loose diamonds, a Rolex, an iPad, some clothes, one shirt that had his own face on it…” Then he winces. “And let’s not even mention the body pillow.”

“Wait. He bought you a car? And you told him to take it back? And diamonds?”

Yuuri nods. “The car is in Detroit, actually.”

Phichit gapes. “Give it to me if you don’t want it.”

“Okay, I don’t think he’d mind.”

“Sweet! Okay, okay, anyway—your gift. Um, right, well… I see your problem.”

Yuuri sighs. “I have a lot of money from the studio now, but not enough to buy him diamonds. How am I supposed to beat that?”

Phichit thinks. “To be honest, I think he’d like whatever you got him. You could just give him a hug and he’d probably think it’s worth more than diamonds because he’s so nuts about you. But what does he like?”

“He likes… I don’t know. Poodles. Acting. Old movies.”

“I’m sure you’ll think of something good. I wouldn’t stress about it too much.”

The door swings open. Victor sits down on the bed beside and puts his glasses on him, grinning. “Better?”

Yuuri smiles. “Better, thanks.”

“What’d I miss?” he asks, glancing between him and Phichit.

“The time that some guy started chatting up Yuuri at a party and he didn’t want to talk to him, so he made up that he was already dating a guy. Then, when the creepy dude asked for the guy’s name, Yuuri responded with ‘Victor.’”

“Phichit.”

~

A trailer for the movie is put together over the next two weeks.

The cast and crew gather around to watch it for the first time, Victor pulling Yuuri against him, an arm around his side. He sees Mila and Sara holding hands off to the left—when had that happened? Otabek and Yurio are talking to each other, and Yurio is smiling, genuinely smiling.
It warms Victor’s heart to see him happy. Even if he’d never say that because he values his own life.

They’re in an office room in the studio in Los Angeles, but the chairs had been rearranged to make it more like a viewing room. He leans his head on Yuuri’s shoulder and sighs, waiting for the video to turn on. “Are you nervous?” Yuuri asks him.

“Not at all. Are you?”

“Not… Not as much as I thought I’d be.”

The trailer is gorgeous.

It’s a cinematic masterpiece, Victor thinks.

He hugs Yuuri close during the clips of the pair skate, closer during the parts where his and Mila’s characters get into a fight, closest during the ending, a clip of Victor beginning his free skate, one that Yuuri had choreographed just for him. And then it cuts to a white screen.

*History Maker.*

Sara starts clapping first.

And then the room *erupts.*

Arms fling around Yuuri. Several pairs. Victor watches as the skater hugs everyone back, smiling at each of them, mumbling quiet thanks. Mila kisses him on the cheek. Victor hugs him last, burying his face in the other man’s neck. “This is going to be the best movie I’ve ever made.”

“That’s not true,” Yuuri responds.

“It is.”

Victor pulls away, arms remaining around his neck.

(He laughs first.)

(Yuuri laughs second.)

(And he’s the most beautiful thing Victor has ever seen.)

(Except it’s frustrating. Because Yuuri *can’t see it.*)

(But Victor can.)

(Victor can.)
Evidently, Yuuri hasn’t been to a real Hollywood party before.

(Because this is nothing like the gala.)

(This is chaos.)

There are people sprinting across the main floor, kissing in dark corners, dancing to music that can’t be heard over the roar of the crowd. And Yuuri just stares uselessly, not intimidated so much as paralyzed, gaze drifting across the herds of people, not landing on anyone in particular because there’s too much to see.

They’re like cattle, he thinks. Moving towards the music, the champagne, the best dancer of the moment.

“This is great!” Victor screams. Yuuri can hardly hear him.

Yuuri hadn’t set up this party, Victor had—sort of. He does it every year for his birthday. It’s a week prior to his real birthday, though, since it’s not supposed to be a Christmas party. However, Yuuri is
fairly certain that half of the people here don’t know Victor’s name. Nor do they know that they’re attending a birthday party. Nor do they know their own names, at this point.

There’s a pool in the back, and Victor leads him to it, grinning. “Want to swim?”

“I can barely hear myself think,” Yuuri yells back.

Victor kisses him on the cheek, oblivious to what he’d said. “Okay, let’s swim!”

A moment later, Victor is in the pool. Wearing his suit. Yuuri presses his palm to his forehead. The drenched actor can’t seem to figure out what’s wrong, though, as he reaches for Yuuri’s ankle to try and pull him in, too.

(Yakov had demanded that one of them remain sober. Yuuri had volunteered.)

“I love you, Yuuri!” Victor calls from the water. “How long do you think I can hold my breath for?”

“Victor, don’t—”

He’s gone. Yuuri keeps an eye on his blurry form inside the pool to make sure he lives. Victor waves at him from underneath the water and, horrified, Yuuri waves back.

Christophe marches up to him and claps a hand on his back. “Yuuri!”

“Hi, Christophe.”

“The man of the hour!”

“It’s Victor’s birthday next week, not mine,” Yuuri reminds him gently.

Christophe laughs. Yuuri wonders if he’d even heard him. “Where is he?”

“How long was that, Yuuri?” Victor asks from the pool, then catches sight of Christophe.

“Christophe! Jump in!”

He jumps in, bottle still in hand. Yuuri winces as the alcohol leaks into the pool. “I, um, wasn’t timing you,” Yuuri says apologetically.

Victor looks heartbroken. “Let’s say it was ten minutes. Christophe, I held my breath for ten minutes!”

“Ten minutes?! Let’s have a contest.”

Yuuri winces as they both go under the water again. The other partygoers begin to gather around, chanting their names. It sounds more like a jumble of random shouted syllables, though. Either that or Yuuri is beginning to go deaf. Either way, Victor wins.

Then he’s crawling out of the pool, suit dripping wet, and attaches himself to Yuuri, grinning wildly. “I won, Yuuri. Did you see? Did you see?”

“I saw.”

“Aren’t I talented?” he asks. “And why are you spinning? Are you trying to dance? Oh, you’re such a good dancer.”

Yuuri catches him just in time. “Careful, Vitya—come here, let’s get you sitting down.”
“It’s my birthday, Yuuri.”

“Not until next week.”

“But it’s my birthday party.”

“That’s true,” Yuuri agrees, helping him to sit down on a barstool by the pool. There are drinks lined across it, all on fire. Victor reaches for one but Yuuri grabs his wrist. “I think you’ve had enough.”

“So smart,” he compliments. “Always so smart. Smart and pretty. I’m lucky.”

He blushes, unsure of how to respond.

Victor glances over towards the other side of the pool. There are flashing lights and music that doesn’t quite sound like music. “I think that’s a dance contest.”

It definitely doesn’t look like a dance contest. It just looks like people dancing.

Christophe is over there, though, dripping everywhere. “Yuuri, if I win the dance-off, will you marry me?”

“Victor…”

“Please?”

Yuuri smiles and brushes some of his hair out of his eyes. “Okay, if you win the dance-off and you remember this after tonight, I’ll marry you.”

Victor hugs him happily. “Will you hold my clothes?”

“What?”

He begins unbuttoning his suit and tugs at his tie uselessly. “Help me with my tie. I’m stuck.”

“I am not undressing you in the middle of your own birthday party.”

Victor gapes. “Does that mean you will later?”

“I mean… If you want.”

Victor grins at that. He tugs off his suit jacket and then gets to work on his undershirt, tossing it over the bar. Yuuri grabs at the articles of clothing so that they don’t land on the flaming drinks. Victor hugs him, shirtless, lifting him off of the stool. “Wish me luck.”

“Good luck.”

~

Victor loses the dance-off.

(Yuuri has never seen him more upset.)

He’s sobbing. Tears flow down his cheeks, his hands clutching at Yuuri’s suit tightly, face buried in his chest. “Yuuri, I’m sorry.”

“Victor, Victor, it’s okay.”
“You won’t marry me, now. We can never get married. And it’s all my fault.”

Yuuri isn’t sure what to do with him. He glances around, but nobody else at the party seems to be paying any attention to them. “Er, I’ll still marry you.”

Victor looks up at him. He’s a mess. Smells like chlorine and alcohol. “You will?”

“Sure.”

He sniffs. “You’re so forgiving.”

“A real angel,” Yuuri jokes.

Victor doesn’t take it as a joke. He meets his eyes, looking up at him through silver lashes. “You are an angel.” He kisses his palm.

Yuuri just blinks. “Right. Are you… Are you ready to go home? Maybe we should spend the night at your house, I think it’s closer than the set, anyway.”

“My house,” Victor agrees sleepily. Then something seems to occur to him. “Makkachin is in Banta Sarbara.”

“Santa Barbara,” Yuuri corrects politely.

“He’s there,” he confirms. “Gotta take care of him. He gets lonely.”

Yuuri kisses him on his temple. Victor’s cheeks instantly flush pink and he hugs him again, tighter this time. “I’ll tell Yakov to get someone to take care of Makkachin. Don’t worry about it, okay?”

“Mmm. You’re good. A good person, Yuuri. Which is good. Good is a weird word. Good. Good. Good.”

He lets Victor lean on him for support as they head out to find a taxi. Yuuri had been planning on giving him his gift tonight, but apparently that’s not happening.

Victor falls asleep on him in the taxi, holding his hand. He mumbles nonsensical syllables in his sleep, and Yuuri wraps an arm around his side, shutting his own eyes as well.

It’s difficult to carry him into his own house, but Yuuri manages.

He tucks Victor into bed, and is planning on staying up on his laptop, but the other man’s hand is still in his grasp, and the idea of letting go hurts his heart. So he stays, swipes at Victor’s tear-stained cheeks, touches his hair comfortingly. Victor appears to feel better, still muttering absent-minded sounds, sighing contentedly whenever Yuuri shifts beside him.

~

“Do you want your present now?”

They’re just about to drive back to Santa Barbara, but filming doesn’t start until three in the afternoon, so there’s a bit of time. And Yuuri can hardly stand waiting anymore. Yes, there’s still a week until Victor’s birthday, but they’ll be in Barcelona on Christmas, and he figures there won’t be much time then for gift-giving.

He’d kept the gift in his backpack. Victor, in his drunken stupor, had attempted to look inside it last night, and Yuuri had had to pry him away.
Now, though, Victor glances up at him from where he’s sitting cross-legged on the bed. But he looks…

(Surprised?)
(No, not surprised.)
(Confused.)

“You got me something?”

Yuuri doesn’t understand. “What do you…? Of course I got you something.”

Victor licks his lips, eyebrows drawing together. “But you… You didn’t have to.”

*We’re engaged,* Yuuri wants to point out.

(Though they’re not really engaged. Though they sort of are.)
(He’s still not quite sure where they stand on that, but he knows that they’re in love, and that’s all he really cares about.)

So instead of responding he just produces the small gift from his bag. It’s wrapped in silver paper. To match the gold paper that Victor had given him his gifts in. He hadn’t really suspected that Victor would notice, but Victor lights up and hugs him, a silent exchange of words, of understanding.

“Thank you,” he mumbles.

Yuuri isn’t sure how to respond. He just hugs him back. “You haven’t even opened it yet. It could be something that you hate.”

Victor laughs at that. “Not possible.”

He holds the present like it’s a delicate piece of art, turning it over to the part where the paper is folded over itself. “You’re good at wrapping,” he compliments.

Yuuri shrugs. “I’ve been wrapping all of my own presents since I was young.”

Victor undoes the fold and removes the paper, careful to keep it intact. And then he’s holding the present, and Yuuri’s heart leaps up into his throat. It’s choking him and he can’t breathe.

(Because it’s not expensive.)
(And it’s not fancy.)
(And it’s not multiple presents at once and it’s not magical or special or—)

He stares.
(But are those…? Is he…?)

Victor runs his thumb over the edge of the photo frame. His mouth opens, as though he’s about to say something, and then closes. He glances up at Yuuri, and…

“Are you crying?” Yuuri asks quietly.

A second later, Yuuri is tackled against the bed, knocking the breath out of him. He laughs as Victor
squeezes him tight, face buried in his shoulder. “I love it. This is the best gift I’ve ever gotten.”

“You’re hurting me,” Yuuri complains lovingly. “And you’re serious? You don’t have to lie. Really, I won’t be offended.”

Victor pulls away and picks up the photo frame again. The selfie from the night of Yuuri’s birthday party. Victor’s hand on his cheek and the not-an-engagement ring glinting brightly. Yuuri had thought it was a nice photo. Victor had thought so, too. “I’m absolutely serious.”

“I… I actually got you one more thing.”

He tilts his head to the side. “You did?”

“It’s… Okay, so, I wasn’t sure… We both liked that photo, that selfie. But I remembered that you really, really liked another photo, and originally I was just going to get you this other one, but you’re not in it and I thought it might be weird just to get you a photo of me, so I got both. Does that make sense?”

Victor looks confused. “Another picture?”

Yuuri leans over and reaches into his bag, pulling out another frame—unwrapped. It matches the first.

The photo from Instagram. Yuuri asleep on his couch. Makkachin, the jacket, the television.

(Yuuri has no time to react before he’s tackled again.)

(This time, he doesn’t complain when Victor almost kills him.)

“I love you.”

Yuuri wraps his arms around him. “I love you too.”

“No, you don’t understand. I love you.”

He laughs breathlessly. “I think I understand.”

Victor pulls away just enough to make eye contact. “No. You… You can’t understand. It’s not possible.”

Yuuri smiles. “I didn’t think you had enough decor in your room. So I thought maybe some pictures would help.”

“That’s a nice thought, but these are coming with me,” Victor protests, kissing him. “Back to Santa Barbara, then back here, then wherever we go next.”

(We.)

Yuuri hugs him again.

~
Victor wears a hat when they attend the Grand Prix Final in Barcelona.

They’re in the back of the stands, trying to draw as little attention to themselves as possible. It goes well until Phichit catches sight of them and yells their names at the top of his lungs. Every pair of eyes in the room drifts to them, and Yuuri winces. This is supposed to be Phichit’s big day, and now there are crazed fans sprinting towards him and Victor. Fantastic.

His short program goes well—he’s in third by the end of it. Yuuri is nervous the entire time, his hand squeezing Victor’s violently whenever he does a jump or a score is announced. Victor doesn’t seem to mind, though he also doesn’t understand the specificities of what’s going on. When, during Phichit’s free skate, he lands a perfect quad flip, Yuuri calls out happily. Victor claps.

“That was a flip?” the actor asks. “That’s your move, right?”

Yuuri nods.

And then Phichit’s long program score is about to be announced…

“This is it,” he whispers to Victor.

The technical score is low, but the interpretation score?

(He’s in first place.)

Yuuri exhales, laughing, and kisses Victor on the cheek. “He’s in first. Once everybody else has skated, we’ll know if he won or not.”

JJ goes. It would appear the pressure had gotten to his head because his performance is rocky, and the moment he gets off of the ice he’s in the arms of his fiancée. And then just two more skaters. The first can’t surpass Phichit, and the second does well, so Yuuri winces.

But Phichit wins by two points.

It’s a blur as Yuuri runs down from the stands to find him, which is difficult amidst all of the chaos, but eventually he does, and he hugs Phichit tight, praising him. Phichit laughs and hugs him back, and a while later he’s standing on a podium in the middle of the ice, the audience roaring his name. The way it should be.

(In Yuuri’s opinion, at least.)

“Next year, you’ll be up there somewhere,” Victor whispers.

He swallows. It feels like it has been so long since he has competed, feels like he won’t even remember what it’s like to be in front of a crowd. Except now that he has starred in a Hollywood movie, perhaps it’ll be easier. Perhaps he’ll have more confidence. “I hope so.”

Victor leans his head on top of Yuuri’s. “You will. Just wait. And I’ll be in the stands.”

“With a baseball cap?”

“Hmm. We’ll see about that.”

~
Barcelona is beautiful. Yakov gives them a day off without Victor or Yuuri requesting it first. And though he claims it was just due to the way the schedule worked out, Victor hugs him and tells him something in Russian that makes the director smile in a way Yuuri has never seen before. Then he’s taking Yuuri’s hand and they’re exploring, sight-seeing, shopping. It’s easily one of the best days of his life.

Shortly after Barcelona, filming ends.

There’s a party with the cast and crew, but there are no tears—only hugs. Yuuri says goodbye to everyone, including Victor, who doesn’t put up with that for a single second, telling him that he’ll follow him to Detroit and then to Antarctica and wherever he chooses to go next. Yuuri isn’t sure what to say to that, so he just kisses him.

He flies back to Detroit to practice. Needless to say, Phichit is shocked when Victor enters their apartment as well, glancing around as though contemplating which corner he should sleep in. It’s funny, seeing Victor walking around such a small space, as though his personality is too big for it. And Yuuri had been concerned that he wouldn’t be happy without swimming pools and velvet couches, but when he’s sleeping next to Makkachin on a small sleeping pad they’d laid out in their living room…

(He looks happy.)

(And Yuuri isn’t sure if it’s his own imagination coloring it, or if it’s real, but he prays that it’s real. Because he looks happy.)

(But maybe it’s just due to the fact that he had brought his custom black Mercedes-Benz to Detroit.)

(Phichit, certainly, is happy with the red Lamborghini that had been meant for Yuuri. Yuuri wouldn’t be able to count the number of selfies Phichit had taken while inside of it on the world’s most advanced calculator. However, Yuuri makes sure that he drives safe.)

(Needless to say, Celestino is more than surprised when Phichit pulls up to practice in it for the first time.)

~

Eventually, the premiere is coming up in Los Angeles. Yuuri, Victor, Phichit, and Celestino fly there for it. It’s a five hour flight, and the moment they land, Yuuri is sprinting out of LAX with Phichit, grinning at him. “This is your turf now,” Phichit comments.

Victor and Celestino hurry to catch up with them, and Victor places a hand on Yuuri’s shoulder. “I forgot how sunny it is already.”

They stay at a resort, at Victor’s request, and Yuuri can see Phichit relaxing in the pool from their balcony. He turns around. “Thanks for setting this reservation up.”

“Of course,” Victor responds. “I have to say, though, it might not have been a good idea for us to share a room.”
Yuuri frowns. “What do you mean?”

“We might not leave the room.”

He laughs as Victor wraps his arms around Yuuri’s waist, kissing him on the back of his neck as he looks out over the city. “You’ll never change.”

“Mm? What do you mean?”

“Easily distracted,” Yuuri scolds, turning around in his arms and kissing him on the lips instead. “But it’s kind of cute.”

Victor grins. “You think I’m cute?”

“And egotistical.”

He clutches at his heart and falls backwards on the bed. “You wound me.”

Yuuri rolls his eyes. “Vitya, get up.”

“I am wounded, Yuuri.”

“Come on, let’s go to the pool.”

“I can’t feel anything, Yuuri. Only pain.”

Yuuri sighs and gets on the bed, straddling Victor’s legs with his own and kissing him firmly. “Better?”

“You might need to do that again,” Victor considers, eyes twinkling.

He does.

(It takes them two hours to make it to the pool.)


~

“Are you nervous?” Victor asks in the limo on the way to the movie premiere. He’s wearing a maroon suit, black tie, and Yuuri isn’t sure he has ever looked better.

Yuuri smiles at everyone around him. Phichit, Celestino, Victor, Mila, Sara, Otabek, Yurio, Georgi, Lilia, Yakov, Christophe… Everyone. “No.”

(In fact, he has never been less nervous.)

(It’s kind of miraculous.)

“I can’t wait to see it,” Phichit comments. “It’s gonna be great.”

They arrive at the building, and everyone cheers as they exit. Yuuri smiles and waves at the cameras as they flash, and Victor complains that his suit blends in with the dark red carpet. Yuuri just tells him not to worry about it, holding his hand as they walk along towards the theater.
They sit in the middle. When the lights dim, Yuuri sees everyone glancing around excitedly. He rests his head on Victor’s shoulder, and it’s as though his body is chastising his mind for being confident, his stomach turning and goosebumps breaking out across his arms.

Because this is it.

(This is it.)

The movie opens with Victor’s failure at the Grand Prix Final, a shot of him crying in a bathroom stall. It feels so real that Yuuri grips his arm, remembering that time he’d been in the same scenario at the gala. Victor seems to understand, kissing his hair before turning back to look at the screen.

Yurio’s character is introduced a moment later, and Victor and Yuuri both turn to grin at the actor. Yurio scowls but, even in the darkness, Yuuri thinks he can see him blushing. Otabek smiles at him, too, proud. Then, a while later, Mila is introduced, and they see Sara squeeze her hand, whispering something to her.

And then Yuuri.

Victor’s eyes are glued to the screen as Yuuri skates to *On Love: Eros*, his first routine in the movie. Yuuri doesn’t look at him, just keeps watching, admires the cinematography and how they’d managed to make his skating seem so graceful, so perfect. The song echoes throughout the theater, and when he glances around, the audience around them seems captivated.

The story progresses. Victor’s character begins working harder and harder because he’s inspired by Mila, and he slowly falls in love with Yuuri, whom he keeps seeing at competitions. In the first competition, Yuuri beats him, but in the second and final one of the movie, Victor wins silver. Yuuri wins bronze, Yurio wins gold.

And then the pair skate.

Yuuri holds his breath.

This scene is familiar—he’d seen the teaser trailer for the movie a thousand times since their interview months ago. It starts with a shot of a toe pick, then drifts up, Yuuri skating alone. Everyone knows what’s coming, yet it feels as though the entire room is waiting in palpable anticipation. When Victor comes onto the screen, there’s some clapping scattered throughout the room, and Yuuri feels his cheeks heating as he shifts closer to Victor.

(It’s surreal, seeing himself on a screen like this.)

(Then Victor touches his hand.)

(Slips his ring off.)

“What are you doing?” Yuuri whispers.

Victor looks at him, and it’s hard to see him in the darkness, but there’s love in his eyes. His voice is less confident than usual. His words shaky. Unadulterated emotion. “I want you to marry me. Really marry me.”

It takes Yuuri a moment to process the words. He glances down at the ring that had been on his finger just seconds ago, then glances at Victor’s and takes it off for him, too. He bites his lip. “You’re not even going to say the right words?”
Victor starts laughing, as though he can’t help it, and Yuuri is laughing, too, but it’s a messy laugh—tears and sniffs and hurting ribs. And in the darkness, their movie playing on the large screen in front of them, their friends surrounding them, it’s beautiful.

“Will you marry me?” Victor whispers.

Yuuri nods and Victor hugs him across the armrest, holding him close against his chest. “Of course I’ll marry you.”

Victor sighs. “That’s a relief. I didn’t have a plan for if you said ‘no’, to be honest.”

Somebody a few rows back shushes them.

Yuuri giggles and buries his face in Victor’s neck. “I love you so much.”

“I love you more.”

“Does this always have to be a competition?”

“Yes.”

After the pair skate and a few more finishing scenes, the movie ends. The credits begin rolling, and one by one the actors and actresses skate onto the ice, all performing a final group skate, the movements synchronized. Yuuri remembers how long this had taken to choreograph and smiles at the memory.

The audience loves it, cheering whenever another actor or actress joins the others on the ice. Then Yuuri feels someone clap him on the back and turns around to see Yakov. “I’m glad we hired you, Yuuri.”

Yuuri blushes, nodding. “Thank you. I appreciate that.”

“I’m also glad we hired you,” Victor adds, kissing him.

“So am I,” Yuuri gushes, then leans forward so that he can see Phichit off to his left. “Thanks for making me audition, Phichit.”

Phichit grins. “I’m just a natural matchmaker, what can I say? I think I deserve at least fifty percent of the revenue from this movie.”

Yakov just sighs and leans back in his chair, rubbing at his forehead.

~

“I really don’t want a bachelor party.”

“Yuuri, you need one,” Phichit complains. “It has always been my dream to throw a bachelor party. Come on—please?”

“I’m having one,” Victor points out. “Christophe’s idea. We could have a shared one.”

Yuuri laces their fingers. “That’s a good idea.” He turns to Phichit. “Can we do that?”
Phichit turns around on his hotel room bed and buries his face in a pillow. “No, no, that’s not the point of a bachelor party. There are supposed to be strippers, champagne, good times, good stories…”

Yuuri and Victor stare at him.

He thinks for a moment. “Remember that time you stripped at my birthday party last year, Yuuri? When there was that pole in the middle of the room? Something like that.”

Victor’s head snaps around in an instant. “You what?”

“I… I had a lot to drink,” Yuuri mutters, shaking his head. “We do not need to discuss that.”

“I still have videos,” Phichit points out.

“Videos?”

Yuuri freezes, then in an instant he’s on top of Phichit’s bed, wrestling his friend for his phone. “No, no, no, no,” he repeats endlessly, Phichit struggling underneath him, the phone slipping off of the bed and onto the floor in the process.

Victor leaps for it, grabs it before either of them can. He stands up and holds it high over his head, Yuuri getting up and trying to grab it from him but failing miserably. “Oh, Yuuri, you’re so short,” he teases.

“I’m only three inches shorter than you, you just have long arms,” the skater protests. Then he folds his arms across his chest. “Vitya, if you don’t give me the phone I’m never kissing you again.”

Phichit looks betrayed as Victor hands him the phone without another word.

Yuuri puts the phone in his pocket, and Victor grabs his shoulders. “Please let me watch the videos?” he begs, rocking him back and forth.

“Come on, Yuuri,” Phichit pleads. “They were hilarious.”

He glances between them, defeated. “You two are dangerous together. Fine, but I’m not going to be in the room when you watch them. And only because you’ll probably see them eventually anyway.”

Victor grins as Yuuri tosses him the phone, then starts walking away. Phichit sits next to Victor as he pulls up the videos, tapping on the first one and hitting play.

Yuuri goes into the bathroom to shower, and comes back out a while later.

(Victor stares at him as though he doesn’t recognize him anymore.)

“We’ll have a joint bachelor party,” Victor announces, voice high. “At a building with a lot of structural integrity. For safety purposes.”

“Structural integrity?” Yuuri questions.

“A lot of poles. For safety purposes.”

“Victor.”
Phichit concedes, eventually.

They have their joint bachelor party at a bar, invite all of Yuuri’s skating friends in Detroit. There’s drinking and dancing, though not too much drinking, and Victor is only slightly tipsy when Yuuri tells him he has something to show him. He’s surprised when Yuuri leads him down the street to a small hotel and checks them into a room.

“Yuuri, what are you…”

“I had an idea. Kind of a present.”

“What was the idea?” Victor asks, a little concerned.

Yuuri starts unbuttoning his shirt, straddling his lap.

It turns out that he likes Yuuri’s idea.

(A lot.)

~

“I haven’t known the groom very long—er, well, one of the grooms,” Phichit says, looking at Victor. “But I know Yuuri well.”

Yuuri squeezes Victor’s hand and smiles up at his friend—his best man—lovingly.

“And in some ways, through Yuuri, I feel like I’ve known Victor for a long time. I’ve known him since Yuuri and I went and saw his first movie released in American theaters together.”

“Where is he going with this?” Yuuri whispers.

Victor shrugs. “I don’t know.”

“I remember Yuuri crying after the movie, and I asked him why he was crying—because the movie wasn’t really that sad, it was a happy one. He insisted for several hours that the main actor was the most attractive person he’d ever seen in his life. I tried to console him, but it was useless, and Yuuri stalked his IMDb page that entire night.”

Yuuri puts his head face-down on the table. Victor rubs his back, enthralled by the story.

“So from that day onwards, we watched all of Victor’s movies together. And rewatched. And rewatched again. And Yuuri got posters of him. I would buy him some for his birthday every year, ’cause they always made him really happy. And I think that he was in love with the idea of Victor, which is understandable, because it’s easy to fall in love with the idea of people, to idealize them.”

Phichit takes in a breath, smiling at them. “But the truth is, Victor isn’t who Yuuri had thought he was, and that’s okay, because they fell in love anyway. And I think that’s the most beautiful part of their relationship. Not the part where Yuuri stayed up late every night reading Victor Nikiforov
fanfiction—"

“Phichit.”

“—but the part where he slowly but surely fell in love with his true self. And Victor fell in love with
him, too. And it’s as simple as that. So thank you everyone, and please raise a glass in celebration of
Victor and Yuuri!”

There’s a cheer across the room, then glasses are raised and sipped.

Victor leans close to him. “Do you think there’s fanfiction written about you by figure skating fans?
Or, wait, movie fans? Do you think there’s fanfiction written about us?”

“I will not allow you to search for fanfiction written about us.”

“Why? Will I find some that you’ve written?”

Yuuri doesn’t answer, just kisses him on the cheek. “You’re cuter when you’re not talking.”

“Yuuri! That’s rude.”

“I’m just kidding,” he promises.

Victor pouts. “Not forgiven.”

He smiles and kisses his lips instead. “How about now?”

“Okay, you’re forgiven.”

~

One morning, Yuuri is crushed.

(Literally crushed.)

(By Victor.)

(Who jumps on top of him.)

“Yuuri!”

“What, what is it?” he asks, coughing.

Victor seems to realize what had just happened. “Oh, sorry, are you okay? Did I hurt you?”

They’d bought an apartment together in Detroit not too long ago, Phichit moving in with another
friend from the rink. They live in the same building, though, and visit often. Phichit is a firm believer
in pasta Thursdays, a tradition that is held dear to all of their hearts. Yuuri lightly pushes Victor off of
him, then yawns. “What time is it?”

“Early, but I just got a call with good news,” he promises, kissing him.

Yuuri kisses him back, turning to get a better vantage point. Victor sighs as his lips open, Yuuri
turning so that he’s on top, chest flush against Victor’s own and the kiss lazy, fingers drifting through hair and slipping up shirts. “Aren’t you going to give me your news?”

“Oh, right. Three pieces of good news.”

“Three?”

“Three,” Victor confirms, wrapping a leg around Yuuri’s hips. “Want to hear them?”

He manages to slip Victor’s shirt over his head and kisses his shoulder. “Sure.”

“Okay, good news number one: Yakov is directing another movie and wants me to be in it.”

Yuuri’s eyelashes brush against his chest. “That’s good news, but not very surprising.”

“Good news number two,” he says, a smile breaking out across his features. “It’s a spy movie, Yuuri. We’re going to be spies. Mila is the lead this time, and Yurio is in it, and Christophe, and it’s about a mission to stop the assassination of a diplomat or something. Very good script.”

He remembers their conversation about Victor disliking the fact that he’s often typecast as a romance actor. It feels like it had happened so long ago. “That’s great.”

"Oh, and do you remember those horrible women from the gala?"

Yuuri bites his lip. "I remember."

“They auditioned for the movie. Yakov was about to hire one. Not anymore. That role will go to a much, much more deserving human being.” Victor tugs him upwards until their eyes meet. “And, best of all, good news number three. It’s going to be shot in Detroit.”

“In Detroit? So you can stay?”

“I can stay,” he mumbles, kissing him on the forehead. “Not that I would’ve left you. We would’ve found a way.”

Yuuri laughs as Victor turns them over, knees framing Yuuri’s hips. He lifts Yuuri’s shirt up with ease. “But this is the best case scenario,” he points out.

“I may have suggested to Yakov that filming in Detroit would be a good idea.”

“Suggested?”

“Begged, pleaded, suggested—all one and the same.”

Yuuri smiles softly, looking up at him. Victor’s hair is falling down into his eyes, which are as blue as ever, which look down at him with an adoration that makes Yuuri’s heart do a flip. He wonders how he’d gotten this lucky. Wonders how it’s possible to be so in love with someone and to have it never fade.

(Wonders how this is his husband.)

“How are we going to do this?” Yuuri asks. “You filming and me skating and competing, we’ll both be flying to different parts of the country every other week.”

“We’ll figure it out,” he promises. “Besides, we can FaceTime. And I’ll go to as many of your competitions as possible. Makkachin would miss you, too.”
Makkachin, hearing his name, jumps up on the bed and steps on Yuuri’s leg. Yuuri sits up to pet him and Victor moves behind Yuuri, wrapping both arms around his stomach. “And I’d miss Makkachin. And you.”

Victor hums and kisses his neck. “If we weren’t married, I’d marry you.”

“That doesn’t really make sense.”

“Sure it does.”

Yuuri sighs leans back against him so that they’re laying on the bed. Victor holds him close. “You never really make sense.”

“Mmm. Your hair is longer, you know,” Victor mumbles, drifting his fingers through it.

“Should I cut it?”

He yawns. “No. I like it.”

Yuuri turns to look at him, a hand on his chest. “You do?”

“It makes you look… I don’t know. I like it.”

There’s a pause.

“Victor?”

“Yes?”

“Do you ever feel like maybe the world is trying to keep us apart?”

He frowns. “What do you mean?”

“Well… We met by chance, really, and then there was that whole stint with the paparazzi, and then the gala, and we had such different lives. Sometimes I just think that, if I hadn’t breathed at a certain moment, we might not have ended up together. And that scares me for some reason.” Yuuri licks his lips. “Did that make any sense?”

Victor cups his cheek with a hand. “But we did end up together.”

“I know, but what if I had messed it up?”

“Then I wouldn’t be this happy,” he muses. “Because I wouldn’t be sleeping in a bed with my incredibly attractive husband. Which would be tragic, but luckily that isn’t the case.”

“Luckily,” Yuuri repeats. “Do you think it was luck?”

Victor licks his lips. “I think… That no matter what universe we’re in, we’d find each other. Because I can’t imagine a scenario without you in it. It… Actually, it kind of hurts to think about. Life without you.”

“I feel the same way,” he answers. “Like… Like it’s meant to be.”

“Like it’s meant to be.”

Yuuri yawns again, exhausted. He cuddles closer to Victor, Makkachin by his feet. As though all is
right with the world. “I’m tired.”

“I’m sorry for waking you. Go back to sleep.”

“You’re going back to bed? Even though you’ve been up for ages?”

Victor kisses his hair. “I don’t know how to break this to you, but I really don’t have a choice when you’re on top of me.”

“Good.”

“Selfish, are we?”

“Mmm.”

“Goodnight, Yuuri.”

“It’s morning. But goodnight, Vitya.”

~

One Year Later

~

Victor isn’t sure what to wear to Yuuri’s competition.

He ends up wearing a suit.

And he’s excited.

(Very excited.)

Yuuri, on the other hand, is a mess.

“You’ll do great,” Victor promises, though his words seem to have little to no effect.

“What if I’m never as good as I used to be? What if I only go downhill from here?”


“Not even for you?”

He shrugs. “Okay, skate for me.”

An hour or so later, everyone is cheering like wild. Victor cheers, too, but he’s not sure what’s happening until it’s announced over the intercom. It turns out that Yuuri had just broken a world record for his free skate.

The events after that are a blur.

At some point, Yuuri dives into his arms, and at some point, cameras are flashing as they hug. People
throw questions at them. Yuuri runs a hand through his slicked-back hair, shy, answering a few.

“Will you ever be in another movie?”

He blushes. “That’s… No, I don’t think so.”

“Will you be attending more competitions in the future, Victor?”

Victor nods. “I hope so, if my schedule allows.”

“Maybe we’ll even see you on the ice again,” one reporter jokes.

They all laugh, and Victor shakes his head. “I think I’ll leave that to my husband.”

It’s reporter after reporter until the final results are released, and Yuuri wins gold, clutching his medal tightly and waving happily at the cameras. JJ wins silver and Phichit wins bronze, taking endless selfies with everyone around him.

Several hours later, when they enter their hotel room, Victor lifts him by his hips and pins him against the inside of their door. “Му Голубушка, my record-breaker, my gold medal winner,” he mumbles as he peppers kisses across his jawline.

“You have a million gold medals,” Yuuri protests humbly.

Victor kisses his medal as Yuuri wraps his arms around Victor’s neck to keep his balance. “Not as pretty as yours.” He sets Yuuri down on his feet and kisses his two gold rings, one with a small diamond embedded in the top. “Gold suits you.”

“Should we celebrate?” he jokes.

There’s a spark in Victor’s eyes, then, his pupils dilating. He grips Yuuri’s hips again, mouth opening on top of his own. Yuuri moans, hands grabbing at his shoulders. “I think a celebration sounds good,” Victor responds.

“I know you like pinning me against things—and I like it, too, don’t get me wrong—but I need to shower first. And we should celebrate in bed, anyway.”

Victor pouts. “Just one celebration? How about we celebrate in the shower and in bed? This is a big deal, after all.”

Yuuri laughs, thumb brushing across his temple, fingers drifting through his hair. Victor shuts his eyes contentedly, leaning closer to him. “I think that sounds like a great idea.”

“And I think you’re gorgeous,” he mumbles. “Gorgeous, talented, and did I mention gorgeous?”

“Careful, I could get used to this type of praise,” Yuuri jokes, poking him in the chest.

Victor grins. “Good. Because I could do it all night.”

Yuuri kisses him. “I’m going to hold you to that, you know.”

“I know you will. Because you’re also obstinate, and rude sometimes, and a tease, and—”

“Victor,” he complains, laughing.

“Kidding, kidding. I love you.”
“I know,” Yuuri confirms.

“Good.”

“And I love you.”

“I know. I really do wish I could marry you again. Let’s get divorced.”

Yuuri pretends to think about it. “Okay. I could get behind that idea. Another wedding. Phichit isn’t allowed to have a speech this time, though.”

“Oh, I could listen to dozens more of Phichit’s speeches,” Victor complains. “Dozens upon dozens upon dozens.”

He rolls off of the bed and grabs Victor’s arm, lazily tugging him towards the bathroom. “Let’s shower.”

“I’m going to add ‘demanding’ to the list.”

“Be quiet and kiss me.”

(Victor doesn’t protest.)

~

**Five Years Later**

~

“I think… I think that maybe I did love you, once.”

And Victor’s words are thick, heavy, hanging in the air. Like they don’t fit right. He had rehearsed them in his mind for weeks, trying to get them perfect, trying to figure out the best way to display his emotions. But they don’t feel right. The tears flow, yes, but it’s not natural, it’s not as though they’re meant to be there.

(He’d thought of doing this dozens of times before. Imagined this exact moment.)

The response comes quietly. A mumble. Exactly what he’d expected to hear. “What do you mean?”

Victor pinches the bridge of his nose. Takes in a deep breath, exhales slowly. This isn’t easy to do. “I… You meant everything to me, for a while. But there’s a difference between true love and infatuation. And what we had? What we had was just infatuation. I’m sorry, but it’s true, and I think you know—”

“Stop trying to make it scientific,” the man across from him snaps.

He glances up quickly, eyes darting back and forth between his. Trying to get a grasp on the emotions. Because his point just isn’t getting across. “I’m not.”

“Yes you are;” the response comes, quiet, distraught. “You’re trying to label everything, every emotion that ever goes through your stupid mind, but you can’t, because some of it is indefinable,
some of it is… Is… It’s… Um…” The other man’s eyes drift off to the side.

Victor follows his gaze. A grin spreads across his features.

“YUURI!”

Yakov rolls his eyes. “CUT! Victor, you can’t just stop in the middle of a take like that—”

Victor sprints across the set and into Yuuri’s arms, holding him tight. “How was Japan? How’s your family?”

Yuuri hugs him back, burying his face in his neck. And the motion is familiar and lovely and home and everything good in the world and he could care less about the movie right now because Yuuri is here with him and Yuuri came back and… And…

“Where’s Yuuri?” he asks.

Yuuri smiles. “He’s in the car—Phichit is watching him. He wanted to come in to see you but I told him you’re busy working and I knew he’d distract you.” Then he glances at Yakov and winces. “I didn’t know that I’d distract you, too. I guess I should’ve assumed that.”

“We’ll get Yurio to babysit tonight,” Victor muses, playing with the bottom of his shirt. “I want to welcome you home properly.”

Yuuri blushes. “He won’t mind?”

“No, Mila will help, or Otabek, or someone,” he says, waving his hand. “I’m going to go say hi, though. Did he like Japan?”

“Loved it,” Yuuri tells him.

Victor exits the set. Yuuri turns to Yakov, rubbing the back of his neck. “Um, he’ll be right back.”

Yakov sighs. “Alright, everyone, take ten.”

Yuuri gives him an uncertain look.

“Fine, take twenty,” Yakov announces.

Little Yuuri smiles at Victor through the car window, and Phichit opens the door for him, helping the boy out. Phichit smiles at Victor and Yuuri, then says goodbye and heads off towards the rink.

Victor pretends to cover his eyes with his hands and look around. “I don’t see anyone.”

“I’m right here,” little Yuuri complains. “You’re covering your eyes.”

“What do you mean?” Victor asks, confused, as he kneels down so that they’re at the same height.

Older Yuuri watches them with amusement.

Little Yuuri tugs at his hands, pulling them away, and Victor gapes, lifting him up and onto his back. “You’re a genius!” he praises. “I can see you now. Oh, you look older. How long has it been? Five years?”

“Five days, Dad.”

“Oh, okay,” he says. “And did you like Japan?”
“I liked it,” the boy confirms. “I got to see Babushka and Dedushka and Aunt Mari.”

Older Yuuri speaks up, smiling. “I took him ice skating.”

“Show him the video!” the boy urges. “I did a sale-chow.”

“Salchow,” Yuuri corrects politely, pulling out his phone. “Here, look.”

Victor watches the video. It’s not a salchow, but he does do a little jump and land on his feet. The actor just frowns at the screen. “That’s not you, that’s a professional figure skater.”

Little Yuuri tugs on his hair. “That’s me.”

“No, no, look! See how the person on the video did that fancy jump? That has to be a professional figure skater. He doesn’t look like you, anyway.”

“Papa, that’s me.”

Victor holds his son up in front of him and stares at him, eyebrows drawing together with concentration. “Hrm. Maybe he does look like you.”

“Because it is me,” he urges. Big brown eyes just like Yuuri’s. “You’re silly.”

“I’m silly?” Victor asks, offended. “Oh, you’re hurting my feelings. Now we need to go get ice cream. To make me feel better.”

Little Yuuri laughs as he’s lifted up into the air and then back onto Victor’s shoulders. “Can we get chocolate peanut butter flavor?”

“Of course. In fact, we’ll buy so much ice cream that you’ll turn into ice cream.”

“That’s not how it works,” the boy protests.

“It is! I’m a scientist.”

“You’re not a scientist, you’re an actor.”

Victor pouts. “Who told you?”

Older Yuuri glances back towards the set. “Shouldn’t you tell Yakov first?”

“He’ll figure it out.” Yuuri gives him a look and he wraps an arm around his side. “I’ll text him. Now, tell Yuuri that he’s being ridiculous and it is completely possible to turn into ice cream.”

His husband smiles, ruffling his son’s hair. “Your father isn’t very smart.”

Little Yuuri laughs in delight. “See?”

“You two are smarter than me,” Victor complains. “You’re only two months old and you’re already smarter than me.”

“I’m six years old.”

“You are? Really?”

“Dad.”
“I want a bedtime story,” little Yuuri complains.

Victor sees the bags under his husband’s eyes and kisses him on the forehead. “Go to bed. I’ll handle this.” The skater just nods and walks down the hall, stretching out his arms as he goes.

He sits down on little Yuuri’s bedside, and the boy looks up at him expectantly. “I want a good story.”

Victor glances through his bookshelf, then pulls one out that catches his eye. “Is this Shakespeare? You’re too young for Shakespeare.”

“We’re learning about him in school!” little Yuuri insists. “He’s a poet.”

“I was in one of his plays,” Victor informs him.

“You were?”

He hums in agreement. “Hamlet. I’ll show you when you’re older.”

“Wow. You were Hamlet?” It’s obvious that he has no idea who that character is, but he’s smiling anyway.

Victor lays down beside him, flipping through the book. “Shakespeare’s Most Famous Quotes. Want me to read some?”

“I thought you just said I’m too young for it.”

“Hmm, not all of it.”

Little Yuuri yawns and then cuddles on top of him, pillowing his head on Victor’s chest. Just like older Yuuri. It warms him more than any hearth could. “Okay, Dad,” he mumbles. “Read Shakespeare.”

Victor thinks of Yuuri falling asleep in the other room.

He thinks of Yurio’s new television show that will be starting production in Los Angeles soon, that Otabek is the head producer of.

He thinks of Mila and Sara’s wedding in a few months.

He thinks of Phichit in his red Lamborghini.

He thinks of the five Grand Prix Final trophies sitting on his and Yuuri’s bedside table, lined up in a neat little row.

(He thinks of love.)

Little Yuuri blinks up at him.

That’s love.
Has to be.

(Has to be.)

(Because love isn’t just happiness—it’s risk. The feeling of having a piece of one’s self separate, out in the world. It’s a swirl of complex emotions that cannot be defined nor detached. It’s joy and pain and heartbreak and excitement and holding his son in his arms. It’s meeting Yuuri in a small interview room. Victor had been sadder back then, but one day, in a flash, iridescent color had flooded his world, put a light in his eyes and set his heart on fire.)

(It’s a cheesy line, but he thinks Yuuri would like it.)

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players…”

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