Only You

by quesadiaz

Summary

In the year 2021, Victor Nikiforov, retired professional figure skater and Number One Husband, steps into a taxi to make his way home from the grocery store, arm full of vegetables and fruits to bring home to his beautiful husband and loyal old dog. A sharp sound and a blur of color is the only warning before Victor wakes up in the year 2016, sitting in a first class seat on a descending airplane headed for Fukuoka, Japan.

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A "Victor died and time traveled to the past to relive falling in love with Yuuri" fic from Yuuri's perspective. Rated T (currently) for hopefully-not-too-excessive use of swears. Follows the anime with slight divergence until the cup of china, where at the conclusion of which the rating will change and so will the rest of story. Companion fic to be released at the conclusion of this one.
TEMP EDIT 5/3 - the entire month of may is going to be absolute hell for me so updates will slow from their usual 6-9 day span into more like 2 weeks apart. v sorry :(

Notes

hey this is literally my first fic since The Bad Times when i was 12 and my brain only functions in shitposts so b nice 2 me thx <3

EDIT 2-23: changed the summary, i want yall to know that the fic follows the show for a bit, but yuuri will indeed find out about the time travel. i don't mean for this to spoil anything, i just don't want yall 2 get bored of this just because i'm a slow updater! i lov u all so much and u deserve good time travel fic!!

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I don't know anything abt anything and i'm super sleepy hmu if something's fucky

See the end of the work for more notes.
Yuuri's absolute failure at the Grand Prix Final was probably the lowest point in his entire life. His hangover the next morning only added fuel to the fire of his misery. On his way to the airport with Celestino, his shoe sole came off. On the plane, he spilled orange juice on his lap. In the bathroom on the plane, he whacked his head on a dislodged plastic panel. Back in his seat, he pinched his finger in the belt. Shit was bad. Shit was so bad.

Celestino was a good coach, a great guy, but bad with emotional outbursts. Not in the "doesn't know how to deal" way, but in the "deals way too enthusiastically" way. With placating reassurances and empty words, the large Italian man patted Yuuri gently on the back-- careful of jostling him during a high-altitude hangover-- and promptly fell in for a nap. Yuuri really wanted to do the same, but it was a twenty-hour flight back to Detroit and he just wanted to cry it out. At least he could do that silently.

Weeks of Phichit trying to get him to come out with their fellow rink mates followed. Weeks of Yuuri locking himself in their shared room is what occurred. If not for the blessings of online assignment submitting Yuuri may have failed his classes, it was a genuine miracle he graduated at all, honestly.

On Valentine's Day, Phichit tried his best. "Yuuri," he cooed gently. "I've got a surprise for you~" "Phichit, I don't want anything." The sad boy groaned under his blanket. Phichit did not heed the warnings, and wrestled the blanket out from Yuuri's hands, nestling himself inside the cocoon of shame. Two pairs of dark eyes met in humid silence. As the moments ticked by, Phichit showed no signs of discomfort as Yuuri struggled to breathe in the wet darkness.

Finally, he gave in, sitting up on his bed. "Ugh, fine. What is it?" He winced internally at the rude tone he took with his best friend, but thankfully the younger boy took it in stride. He also took something out from behind his body.

"Tadaa!" He shouted, displaying the candy bar proudly. "Phichit... this is..."

"Bueno White! Who's your best frie—ack!" Phichit coughed the end out as Yuuri held him in a bear hug, shaking softly. "So you ready to talk now?"
Before Yuuri could nod his head yes, both of their phones chimed with an Instagram notification. What greeted them upon unlocking was an image of two pairs of feet, in what looked to be a very expensive spa.

v-nikiforov

[ image ]
1,731 likes

v-nikiforov #HBD to my good friend @christophe-gc !!! #spaday

cristophe-gc Nothing like a day out on the town with your greatest competitor, eh? ;-)

"Competitor..."

Yuuri's face seemed to darken as Phichit gave his phone a double tap. "Yuuri...?"

"He..." Tears flowed from his face directly onto his phone screen. "He thought I was a fan, Phichit. He didn't even..."

Their eyes met, and Phichit looked as if his heart had sunk into his feet.

"He didn't even recognize me as a competitor."

"Oh, Yuuri," A deep hug enveloped Yuuri, his body wracked with sobs as Phichit held him into the night.

In March he returned home to Hasetsu. In March he decided he would make up his mind about whether or not he'd retire. Just... one more time, though. Just to get it out of his system.

As he skated Stammi Vicino for Yuuko, his tensions didn't melt away. He didn't lose himself in the music. He mused about his career as a figure skater—if you could even call it a career at this point—and all the ways he loved and hated the ice. With every jump, he imagined he were flying, flying far and away from his career, from his responsibilities, from everyone, so it could be just him. No one to recognize him—or fail to recognize him—no one to tell him whether he should or shouldn't quit, no one to tell him he was fat or stupid or melodramatic. He skated with much on his mind, but nothing in his thoughts. He felt wistful.

Yuuko flapped around making a big deal out of it, but Yuuri could see the worry in her eyes.

Early April brought snow, for some reason. As unseasonable as it was, he'd have to take care of the front entry eventually. Just... not yet. He scrolled through the YouTube comments on the video of himself skating Victor Nikiforov's Routine. The self-exposure to toxic and rude comments soothed him in a way. It was nice to know he wasn't the only person who hated him. The occasional supportive comment was like a cool breeze on a hot afternoon. They made him feel better day by
day, and they only continued to pour in even weeks later. Yuuri felt with sudden warmth that, quite frankly, he had time. He had time for this decision and he had time to figure out what he really wanted. Perhaps things would be fine. Everything was fine.

A cat-like stretch had Yuuri coughing around a yawn, finally ready to leave his room for the day even though it was early afternoon. A glance out his window told Yuuri that it was snowing a lot harder than he’d initially thought. Neat. He plodded out to the hallway, pulling on a sweater to protect from the chill. He sleepily brushed his teeth and washed his face, thinking about how he’d probably have to shovel snow.

Entering the main room, Yuuri noticed his sister peeking out of one of the small front windows. "Mari," he whispered. "Is something wrong?" He tiptoed over to her as she wordlessly waved her hand to beckon him over. "Is it the snow? Is it that bad?" Mari shoved her hand out towards Yuuri’s face in a 'Stop' motion, her forehead still pressed to the window. After a silent moment, she finally turned around, a knowing grin on her face.

"I think you should open the door, little bro." She said quietly, walking away.

Opening the door, Yuuri was immediately bowled over onto the wooden floor by something large and cold.

“Yuuri!” the something shouted.

Now on the floor, Yuuri dusted the snow off his glasses to find a man firmly planted over him. Hugging him, no, more like holding him. Shaking?

A lock of silver hair fell onto his frames as the man over him nuzzled his incredibly cold nose into Yuuri’s neck. Wait. Hold on. Silver hair? What kind of old man could topple him over like this?

“Yuuri… tadaima…”

What kind of old man could topple him over and then pretend he lives here? A drunk? It’s the middle of the afternoon! He’s heavy! It hurts!

Yuuri managed to choke out an exclamation of pain as he struggled underneath the firm, solid man.

“Ah! I’m so sorry dorogoy, let me help you up,” said the man in a worried voice. Without looking, Yuuri reached for the surprisingly soft and not at all old and wrinkly hand and accepted the help up to his feet. When his hand wasn’t immediately released, he ventured a glance towards the person who tackled him and–

Oh.

Oh my god.

“Eh? Yuuri, you're looking really pale– Yuuri!”

The last thing Yuuri saw–before his eyes rolled back into his head and he hit the floor–was consecutive five-time World Champion, legendary, world record holding, world's greatest ice skater Victor Nikiforov reaching out to touch his face.

Then, darkness.

Chapter End Notes
"lol he passed out clifthangerr~" is such a cop-out but listen.
listen.
i did that.

**rough translations:**
"tadaima" - i'm home
"itakatta" - that hurts (thx Uhei for the correction you're an angel) i took this out bc it felt kind of weeby of me.
i dunno. sry lol
"dorogoy" - darling (but your darling is a dude)
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hmu on tumblr
Yuuri woke up with a start, choking on his own drool. Reaching for his glasses, he absently noticed they were on the wrong corner of his nightstand. No matter, what’s important was the incredible smell wafting into his bedroom all the way from the dining room. Mama was making katsudon, god bless her. Yuuri scratched his belly and yawned, thinking about what a strange dream he had. Victor Nikiforov at his own home? Preposterous, truly. Hugging him? That’s how he knew it was a dream. No use dwelling on it though, not like he’d never dreamed of Victor before after all.

Making sure to wash his hands in the bathroom first, he plodded into the kitchen where his mother was frying up the pork cutlets for his favorite dish. “Mama,” he yawned “do you need any help?”

“Oh, Yuuri!” she gasped, turning off the gas and scuttling over to her son. “Are you feeling better? That was quite a spill you took!” Yuuri stared at her, confused for a moment before she ran her fingers tenderly through her son’s jet black hair. “Thank goodness it’s just a bump and nothing worse,” she smiled. Hiroko tapped a sore spot on Yuuri’s hairline, and he winced hard. “We’re out of band aids so I sent your father to the drug store to replenish the first aid kit. He should be back before dinner is ready.” She returned to preparing his favorite food. Before he could ask for clarification, she pointed to a stack of four bowls and four small plates. “Be a dear and set the table for dinner, alright?” Yuuri, confused, could only ask why there were four place settings to be laid out, was Mari not going out tonight after all?

“Oh, Vicchan is still in the bath, but he’ll be joining us for dinner. He’s the one who requested Katsudon!”

Eh? “Vicchan?” Memories of his beloved late toy poodle swam through his vision before Hiroko ushered him out of the kitchen with a request to fetch ‘Vicchan’ from the baths for dinner.

Stepping gingerly into the fog of the outdoor baths, Yuuri squinted at the ground, looking for his dog for some reason. Why would Vicchan be in the baths? How would he have gotten this far? Wait, how would his dead dog request katsudon? Hold on a second. Wait, what was he doing?

“Yuuri~” came a soft voice in his ear. Yuuri spun around like a startled animal, as Victor Nikiforov—shirtless, dripping wet, literally right here in front of him in real life Victor Nikiforov—snaked his long, toned arms around Yuuri’s waist in a gesture so warm and tender that Yuuri wondered if he’d slipped and died on the wet floor stones and this was, in fact, the afterlife. Nose-to-fucking-nose, his beautiful mouth continued, “Are you feeling alright now, zvezdochka?”

Yuuri’s mind went blank. He trembled. yuuri.exe has crashed. yuuri_flight.exe launching.

With a cherry red face, a shout to wake the dead, and absolutely no elegance at all, Yuuri propelled
himself backward out of Victor Nikiforov’s arms and directly into the onsen. With all of his clothes on.

Sputtering water and wiping his nose of the burning sensation, Yuuri felt someone yanking him up and out of the water. A chuckle lilted out of Victor Nikiforov’s mouth. “Again with this? What’s the matter with you dorogoy? Or are you just fond of falling for me?” A wink was obviously imagined.

All of this must be imagined. Yuuri is dead and this is the afterlife, obviously.

“V-V-V-Victor Ni–”

Victor Nikiforov was standing naked in his home. In his family’s onsen. Victor. Nikiforov. In Japan. Naked. Yuuri could not have been redder if he was composed entirely out of artificial dye.

“Yuuri? You look afraid, is something the matter?” A concerned look with way too much warmth took place in Victor Nikiforov’s eyes. His blue, blue eyes. Those eyes searched deep within Yuuri’s for something, something. “Yuuri..?”

“Wha-what are you d-d-doing here!?” He finally spat out.

“What do you mean, Yuuri? Of course I would come for you. You’re acting so strangely–”

“Strange? I’m the one acting strange?” Oh no, he can't stop. "It’s not strange to you when the top skater on the planet waltzes into the home of a two-bit nobody and falls all over him like they know each other!?” Shit, shit, stop yelling. ”What the hell are you doing here!?"

“What? 'Know each other'? Yuuri what are you…?” Victor Nikiforov’s glassy eyes suddenly snapped wide open with what seems to resemble… fear? Why would he be afraid? His hands were apparently right next to Yuuri’s face, and now they were trembling. Maybe he’s cold? Shit, maybe yelling at him was worse than he thought. Perhaps Victor Nikiforov would be rightfully skeeved out by yelling. Oh jeez, was he angry? Opening his eyes from their squinting position, Yuuri could see… tears.

Big, wet tears, cascading down Victor Nikiforov’s face.

“Yuuri,” said the taller man in a shaky voice “Milyy muzh, what… are you not…?” His slender fingers were shaking. Oh my god Yuuri screwed up so bad. He’s going to tell everyone that Yutopia has the worst customer service and that some nobody skater shouted at him and his parents would rip into him for yelling at a guest and the internet would tear him to shreds and the skating world would blacklist him for life, not that it matters if he was going to retire anyways but his life is over, everything is over, everything–

Strong hands on Yuuri’s shoulders brought him back to reality. The reality where he’s kneeling waist deep in the onsen, fully clothed, hyperventilating, with Naked Legendary Figure Skater Victor Nikiforov reaching behind his head to rub firm circles at the base of his skull. Which… felt really great actually. Those unbelievably blue eyes were rimmed in red, brows furrowed in worry but voice calm and firm.

“Breathe Yuuri, in and out. You’re in the onsen. You’re at Yutopia.” In. Out. “The month is April. This morning it snowed.” In. Out. What was he doing? Victor Nikiforov was holding Yuuri’s head to his naked shoulder, rubbing the base of his skull, and saying things. Just… things. Why? In. Out. “Your name is Yuuri Katsuki. Your favorite color is purple. You are 29 years old–”

Wait, what?
“I-I’m only 23,” Yuuri said, finally able to breathe at a normal pace.

Victor Nikiforov looked like he was about to start crying again. “Right.” He breathed out, with an unreadable look on his face. “Twenty three. Let’s get you dry and head to dinner.”

Chapter End Notes

**rough translations:**
"zvezdochka" - star, but said in a cutesy way.
"dorogoy" - darling, but for a dude.
"milyy muzh" - i’m pretty sure this is supposed to mean “my husband” but let me know if i’m wrong. milyy muzh is more like "darling husband"

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hmu on [tumblr](http://tumblr.com) and give me undeserved praise so i can work up the motivation 2 continue pls i lov u
“It’s not fair, Makkachin…” came a quiet voice. Then some unintelligible words, then Russian, seemingly spoken through the world’s stuffiest nose.

A new shirt, a new sweater, a new pair of annoyingly tight sweatpants. Same old Yuuri. Same old blushing, anxious, confused, hungry, horrified Yuuri. He shouted at Victor Nikiforov. He had an attack in front of Victor Nikiforov. Because he was shouting at Victor Nikiforov. In what universe was he ever going to come out of this situation unscathed? In what universe would this ever play out even remotely positively, let alone in his favor? He wanted to scream into his pillow, he wanted to beat on the walls. His chest felt like a shaken-up can of soda, all fizzy and tingly and making annoying popping sounds that he could barely hear but were definitely there.

“I can’t believe I did that I can’t believe I did that I can’t believe I did that,” Yuuri was mumbling. Just staring at the floor of his room, head in his hands, chanting his self-deprecating spell, and hoping beyond hope that it would fix itself instead of having the chance to fuck anything else up.

Yuuri took a few deep breaths, remembering the things Victor said as he cradled Yuuri’s head to his chest. “I’m in my bedroom,” he began, “I’m at my parent’s onsen in Hasetsu. I’m sitting on my bed. I’m putting a new pair of socks on. I’m rubbing my arms for warmth.” This was kind of nice, he supposed. He continued making simple objective observations of his room for another few moments before his stomach growled loudly.

Yuuri washed his hands yet again, beginning to feel his tender skin dry out. His path to the main room took him past Victor’s room, apparently. He could hear a dog whining from inside and the face of his affectionate toy poodle flashed at the forefront of his mind. Again. With a twinge of sadness, Yuuri pushed the thought from his mind, remembering that Victor Nikiforov also had a poodle and that was probably the dog locked up in Victor’s room. He thought for a moment that he would like to see this dog. He missed dogs. Maybe hanging out with a dog would make him feel better about being a colossal asshole to his idol.
Hiroko and Toshiya are good parents, great proprietors, and fantastic cooks. Their partnership in the kitchen is communicative, slightly flirty, and a little strange to look at. If you were peeking into the kitchen at the same time Yuuri was, you would see two people so deep in love that it seems intrusive just to glance at them. His father placed a tender kiss on his mother’s blushing cheeks and Yuuri quickly scuttled back around the corner, stomping a bit to announce his re-entry to spare any possible embarrassment.

Helping his parents in the kitchen was fun, in a weird way.

“Yuuri, my boy! Start the tea, would you?” So Yuuri does.

“Yuuri, dear, toss this eggshell in the trash for me?” So Yuuri does.

“Yuuri, could you put this back into the freezer for me?” So Yuuri does.

It is through this soothing pattern of mindlessly assisting his parents that Yuuri finds himself in front of Victor Nikiforov’s room, because “Vicchan is late, isn’t he? Did he want to eat in his room instead? Go fetch him, Yuuri.” So Yuuri did. Which landed him sweating in front of Victor’s room with his trembling fist in a knocking position, but not knocking. Anyone who passed by would probably think him a creep. Skulking around outside a famous athlete’s room? What the hell, Katsuki. Just standing there, probably eavesdropping, listening intently to the quiet sniffles coming from wait.

Sniffles?

Forgetting that it was the exact thing he was worried about being seen doing, he gently pressed his ear to the door. Eavesdropping on Victor Nikiforov’s sniffles.

“It’s not fair, Makkachin…” came a quiet voice. Then some unintelligible words, then Russian, seemingly spoken through the world’s stuffiest nose. “Kak ya mogu snova proyti cherez eto? On ne vernulsya so mnoy! M-moy Yuuri n-ne zdes!’ Yuuri heard his name. A hiccup. A heart wrenching, strangled sob, muted, presumably, by a pillow. The short whine of a dog put the image of a man crying pathetically into the fur of his dog into Yuuri’s head. Which, obviously, was the most depressing this anyone could think about right now. Jesus Christ, he had fucked up so hard. Victor fucking Nikiforov was crying like he’d watched someone die because Yuuri was so incredibly rude to him. He hurt his idol, the person he looked up to for more than a decade. He remembered a time he cried this hard, when he was opening up to Phichit about his GPF failure and Victor’s heartbreaking dismissal of him.

Is that why he was here? His own feelings were decimated but he didn’t want anyone else to feel the way he had, especially not Victor. These quiet sobs coming from his idol were killing him. He really had to apologize. After dinner they would have a talk, hopefully Yuuri wouldn't bail, and everything would magically be fine!

“Papa zdes’ odin, Makkachin,” Victor wept. “Sovsem odin.”

Yuuri was surprised to find that he was also crying. He was not surprised to find that he felt like human garbage. It wasn’t a new feeling, but the cause was worse than usual.

Mimicking his earlier tactic with his parents, Yuuri tiptoed out of the hallway and then stomped back down it, making his presence known. Then knocked loudly on the door.

“V-Victor,” he tried to say without his voice cracking, which happened anyway, “Your dinner is
going to get cold, did you want me to bring it to your room instead?"

A scramble could be heard from far behind the door. Footsteps. The jangle of a dog collar. Throat
clearing. "No, Yuuri. I'll be out in a moment, apologies for the delay."

"Alright..."

Victor Nikiforov showed up to dinner five minutes later with red and puffy eyes. Below those eyes
was the fakest smile Yuuri had ever seen. Which says a lot coming from him considering he made a
living off of gazing into a reflective surface for the past handful of years. There no way his mom
missed it either, considering she was the mother of an anxious wreck for all of those years. Motherly
instincts kicking in, Hiroko practiced English with Victor while they ate, asking him about things he
liked to do, things about Makkachin, happy things.

"Vicchan, what do you love?"

Yuuri obviously imagined the furtive glance that World Champion Professional Athlete Victor
Nikiforov obviously didn't shoot in his direction. Obviously. There was no dusting of pink on Five-
Time Consecutive Gold Medalist Victor Nikiforov's cheeks. No tender smirk his wet, parted lips,
framed by grains of rice.

"Katsudon! You make the best katsudon in the world, Hiroko." Victor said with a wink.

"Oh Vicchan, you are flattering me!" Said the small, blushing woman, flapping her hand
dismissively. "Did you come to Hasetsu just for flirting?"

"I came for——"

Victor's face fell. He didn't finish his sentence. Yuuri was certain he didn't imagine the direct stare
from across the table. Blue eyes—still framed in red—met deep brown for what felt like minutes, but
had only been seconds. Yuuri didn't imagine the flash of emotion in those eyes. He didn't imagine
the firm setting of those lips. He didn't imagine that determined stare. What was it for? What did
Yuuri have to do with this? Victor took a deep breath, seeming to settle nerves? What nerves? What
for?

"Katsuki Yuuri," Victor began, moving back from the low table.

"Ah,"

Living Legend Victor Nikiforov, The Pride Of Russia, The Greatest Figure Skater In History,
pressed his palms to the floor in front of his knees, fingers facing each other, and bent forward.
Downward. Forehead placed upon those fingers, which, by the way, were on the ground. Yuuri
blanched.

"I would very much like to coach you. And I hope you will accept me."

yuuri.exe crashed.

Chapter End Notes

rough translations:
- Kak ya mogu snova proyty cherez eto? On ne vernulsya so mnoy! M-moy Yuuri n-ne zdes'! : How can I go through this again? He didn't return with me! My Yuuri is not here!
- Papa zdes' Odin, Makkachin. Sovsem Odin. : Papa is alone here, Makkachin. So alone.

(special thx 2 Rizenna who is an absolute gem i lov u)
Their noses nearly brushed together as they breathed, puffing loud and hot in the quiet room.

"Are you going to make it up to me...?"

An attempt was made.

Yuuri fully intended to tell Victor Nikiforov to get up, stop bowing, are you crazy? Why the hell would you want that? Is this a dare? A Prank? A cruel joke? He intended to calmly chuckle and go along with what was obviously a joke. A ruse. He was going to pat Victor Nikiforov’s back and say “Yeah sure, buddy, then tomorrow we can storm the National Diet Building and take over the country.”

What Yuuri did, instead, was drop his chopsticks, stand up, and run.

He ran immediately out of the main room and up the stairs and through the long hallway and into his room. He slammed the door and dove into bed and cocooned himself in his blanket and cried. He shook and he sobbed and kept it silent as the eyes of twenty different Victors stared him down, their piercing blue gazes setting Yuuri on fire with their judgment.

Victor must have known that he hurt Yuuri’s feelings at Sochi, he must have come for a vacation and to apologize, and Yuuri snapped at him. He snapped at him causing the greatest athlete of all time to feel so guilty that he up and decided to throw away his entire career to soothe a panicky idiot. Yuuri’s stupid anxiety bothered Victor Nikiforov so much that he was going to fuck over his entire life just to placate a nobody because Victor Nikiforov was just that kind and wonderful and Katsuki Yuuri was a complete asshole with no regard for other people’s feelings and the entire world was going to blame him for ruining Victor’s life and—

“Yuuri,” That voice was way too close to be coming from outside the door.

A horrifically embarrassing squeak flew out of Yuuri’s throat as he struggled to free himself from his
blanket cocoon. His efforts were rewarded when almost ten full seconds later he could finally taste cool fresh air. He felt a dip in his bed and Victor Nikiforov, was, for the third(? fourth?) time, invading Yuuri’s personal space. He seemed to not give the slightest shit about comfort zones or boundary bubbles. His younger self might have called him an idiot for caring about that. Then again, his younger self might have passed out and stayed out in the first place. How could he not when the man plastered all over his bedroom wall was in that very bedroom and OH MY GOD THE POSTERS

“Y-you need to get out! Please don’t be in here!” Yuuri stuttered, blushing hard and trying to push Victor off the bed while grasping at the more easy-to-reach posters, but firm hands grabbed Yuuri’s wrists and set them back into his own lap.

“Please don’t tear them down, Yuuri. I rather like them.” Victor’s face began to flush as Yuuri’s eyebrows crinkled in amusement.

“You… like seeing posters of yourself…?”

“No!” the Russian man shouted a little too forcefully. “I-I just mean I like that you like me… I mean I like that you like my skating! I like that you’re a fan! I am also a fan!” He sputtered it out at a strange volume, with his eyes squeezed shut, with his chin tucked to his chest, all of the tell-tale signs of embarrassment. Which was something Yuuri simply could not acknowledge as a possibility.

“You’re not a fan, you didn’t even recognize me as a competitor in Sochi.”

Shit.

Fuck.

That was supposed to stay in his head.

Victor’s eyes shot open with a horribly guilty look and Yuuri immediately spat out a string of Im Sorrys and Forget Its and It Doesn’t Matters. Victor hung his head in shame and out came the actual weirdest thing.

“I’m sorry, Yuuri. It was so rude of me to dismiss you like that, I should have paid more attention to the people I shared the ice with. It was very selfish of me to disregard the feelings of my fellow competitors and treat everyone around me like just another fan. I was caught up in myself and I never want to make you feel like that again.” Victor raised his head to meet Yuuri’s eyes with resolute determination. "I promise, Yuuri, I will never hurt you like that again."

They were both blushing hard. The words had poured out of Victor’s mouth with practiced ease, as if he’d said it a thousand times but it had never been enough. Was it that obvious that Yuuri was devastated by the encounter? He wondered what about him gave off the “you hurt me in the past” vibe. Maybe everything.

“I want to coach you,” he continued. “I truly mean it.”

Yuuri, tired of all of receiving one shock after another, barely muffled a chuckle. “Yeah, right,” he scoffed. “Just toss your career down the toilet for some random skater with no appeal or talent.”

“No appeal?” The older man crinkled his brow in disbelief. “You’ve got to be kidding me. The way your body moves with the music is beyond appealing. No, not with the music, the music moves with you.”

Yuuri felt another wave of heat rush to his face. No doubt he was red from the bump of his
collarbone to the tips of his ears, but Victor continued his praises.

"Your step sequences are phenomenal, your interpretation is always fresh and exciting, your jumps —"

"Why are you really here?" he interrupted, not bothering to disguise the doubt in his voice. "Are you just out to have fun? Try your luck coaching? Fooling around in Japan under the pretense of professional work?"

"I’m here for you, Yuuri. Only you." Victor grabbed the younger man’s hand and tenderly ran his thumb over a knuckle. His eyes were resolute, determined. “I came to coach you. When I saw you skating my routine, I saw a man who was skating his love. I saw your longing, your admiration, your bittersweet feelings for the ice. Yuuri, you are an incredible skater. You have so much talent, so much appeal, and so much potential. I want to maximize that potential. I can and will help you get to the podium at the Grand Prix Final. I want the entire world to see that Yuuri Katsuki is the greatest figure skater of all time.”

A silent moment passed between the two as they stared into each other’s eyes, their faces only a foot apart now.

Yuuri coughed, cleared his throat, let out a small sound, and immediately fell back to his pillow and lost it. He was laughing so hard he could barely breathe. His eyes pricked with tears, his throat stuttered around the spit collecting in the back of his mouth, and his ribs grew sore. Yuuri took a solid 20 seconds to compose himself. Sitting back up, he noticed the amusement in Victor's eyes, as well as a twinge of sadness. Did Victor ever hear himself? Like when he talked?

"I'm s-sorry," Yuuri huffed, attempting to catch his breath. "I appreciate what you're saying, it makes me really h-happy, actually." Was that a blush returning to Victor's face? Yuuri took a couple deep breaths and stared at his lap before continuing. "It's just that... I've already failed, I already know that I can't do it. I don't want you to get into something you don't know if you really want and then become a laughing stock when the world realizes you wasted your time and energy on a completely average skater."

"That hurts, Yuuri."

"Huh...?"

Victor's hand was splayed against his chest, his lips in a mock pout. "Are you saying that you know what's best for me? That a World Champion can't spot greatness when he sees it?" Victor was leaning uncomfortably close with each indignant word that spilled out of his glossy lips. "Are you saying, Yuuri, that I, Legendary Ice Skater, Russia's Pride, Olympic Medalist Victor Nikiforov would drop two hundred thousand rubles to sit on a plane for thirty hours to enter a region he's never been to in a country whose language he doesn't understand to get to a town in the middle of nowhere to drop even more money on a long-term stay at a short-term inn just to walk into the extremely well-decorated bedroom of Japan's top figure skater and lie to him?"

"N-no, I... that's not—"

"Because if so, that is incredibly rude."

Yuuri tentatively looked back to Victor through still-wet eyelashes to find an absolutely predatory gaze directed at him. Heat rushed to his face once again as his head snapped back down and his eyes shot to the left, blown wide. Victor's eyes were dark, his face was dark, and Yuuri had only just then realized that the entire room was dark. The sun had set during his cocoon
time and the soft light shining in from the full moon had illuminated Victor's hair like a silvery halo.

"You should apologize too, you know."

Victor's hand trailed up from it's resting place still on Yuuri's lap, his long, pale fingers ghosting across the fine hairs on the younger man's arm. Yuuri was enthralled with the sight in front of him. Eyes lidded, lips pouting, cheeks flushed, brows furrowed in an almost pleading shape. Yuuri couldn't think, couldn't move, couldn't focus on anything except the fact that Victor Nikiforov was way too close and touching him way too softly and what was going on?

"I-I'm sorry—" His voice cracked embarrassingly as Victor's knuckles brushed a lock of black hair out of Yuuri's face, softly brushing down his cheek and resting under his chin. A gentle pressure was all that he needed to lift his face upwards, eyes meeting Victor's with intensity. Their noses nearly brushed together as they breathed, puffing loud and hot in the quiet room.

"Are you going to make it up to me, krasotka...?" The Russian man all but whispered.

"I... yes..."

Victor suddenly shot back away from where he was very nearly pressing against Yuuri's body and clapped his hands together, seemingly ending the spell he had cast on the confused man. "Wonderful!" He shouted suddenly. "Then I'll be back in the morning to get started with training." He hopped off the bed and opened the bedroom door, about to step out, but suddenly turned back around to wink at Yuuri's disheveled form. "You might want to get to sleep early, we will be leaving the house at five!"

The door slid closed and Yuuri released a breath he hadn't known he was holding. He struggled to catch his breath yet again and clutched at his chest, sweating. He decided that leaving his room now would be a terrible idea. He was terribly embarrassed, and so so tired.

He yanked the blanket back over himself, covered his face with his hands, and groaned into his pillow. So many emotions had occurred today. He wasn't used to having that much happen in such a small period of time. Victor Nikiforov wanted to coach him? Victor Nikiforov honestly came to a podunk town in Kyushu on purpose to specifically coach him? In what fucking universe, exactly?

Against his palms, Yuuri felt himself... smiling. He was happy, ecstatic even. The Victor Nikiforov—well just Victor now if they were going to be as close as professional colleagues—had come to Japan just for Katsuki Yuuri.

He didn't know how he was going to manage falling to sleep tonight, but as quickly as he'd thought it, he already had.

Chapter End Notes

this was supposed to be tender and sweet but it got steamy and manipulative

rough translations:

-Diet: not a translation, but i originally put "parliament" there and google told me japan's
parliament was called the Diet? that's a weird name imo

-krasotka: hopefully what i intended, a tender word meaning something along the lines of "babe" or "beautiful" or similar.
Get The Pointe, Yuuri

Chapter Summary

Yuuri had definitely not noticed the small grain of rice stuck just under Victor’s bottom lip. Yuuri was not staring at that grain of rice. Was not staring at that absurdly shiny lip. Yuuri was not preoccupied with thoughts of his idol looming over him, silver hair lined with silver light, musky scent wafting over him like a rolling fog, those very lips so tantalizingly close.

Chapter Notes

i really wanted to post this tonight so pls forgiv the garbage russian for now i'll be fixing it when i wake up i beg yr forgivness ;w;

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“As much as I like your off-season shape, Yuuri, I’m afraid I’ll be taking that bread.”

A cold finger lightly trailed across the strip of exposed lower back skin between Yuuri’s old gray shirt and tight sweatpants. he nearly jumped out of his skin from the shock, the fresh croissant flying into the air and landing expertly into Victor’s hand. The implications of Victor's phrasing were lost on Yuuri, because Yuuri was focused on having lost that gorgeous golden croissant. But Victor could have carbs of course, since Victor’s metabolism was perfect, precisely sculpting those intense angles and firm muscles and soft edges and alright time for rice and mackerel no time to dawdle holy shit

Victor walked with Yuuri to Minako’s studio, chattering on about the trees and the building architecture and how cute the stray cat over there was, but Yuuri wasn’t listening. Yuuri was still thinking about that night, red still plastered onto his face like he was born that way. It had been nearly a month now since that... experience in Yuuri’s bedroom and he still wasn’t over it. Victor, however, behaved as though it had never happened. Like he didn’t basically almost kiss Yuuri. Like he didn’t practically seduce the shorter man into agreeing to the strictest workout schedule of all time. Like he didn’t say “You won’t be on the ice until you’re back to peak season shape!” directly to Yuuri’s face with a smile.

Soon enough, Victor left the younger man to practice while he shopped in a nearby department store. Had Yuuri not known any better, he would think Victor looked like he actually knew what he was shopping for. But Yuuri did, in fact, know better, he had to by now, it had been a month already since the man he admired had blown into his life, crying a few times for unknown reasons and apparently soothing his emotions by purchasing a frankly ridiculous amount of décor for his new room.

“It’s not as though he’s just looking for an excuse to take a break, after all,” Minako muttered. Yuuri
hadn’t caught the first part but he figured he could catch up with context. “I know that your brain isn’t the most cooperative but you have to at least understand that much right?” Yuuri gripped the barre and stretched his back further, deep in thought. His life-long teacher maneuvered his body into a normal standing position and spun him to face her. “You need to understand this Yuuri. He chose you. He’s in this for the entire season at the very least. You need to trust him.”

“I do,” he whispered, staring at leftwards at his own shoulder.

“Youuri, look at me,” She said in a low voice. She gathered his puffy cheeks into her tiny, delicate hands and pressed her forehead against his in a familiar way. The last time she’d done this, he’d been 14 and far too eager for pointe work. Yuuri had stolen a pair of shoes, too new to be used properly, and she caught him before the roll-through, before he had the chance to break his ankle and destroy his career before it even began. She looked into his eyes now with the same graveness she had back then. “Look me right in the eyes and tell me you understand what I’m trying to tell you.”

Was it that obvious? Was he such a bad liar that his doubt was so plain on his face? Memories of that night poured into his thoughts like honey. He’d been played, he knew as much, but he couldn’t stop his mind from fantasizing, couldn’t stop his heart from fluttering. If Yuuri kept resisting Victor, would Victor keep pursuing Yuuri? Maybe Minako was trying to tell him that he would. Maybe Minako saw earnestness in Victor’s words and behavior.

But what if she was wrong?

“What if I’m not enough?” He mumbled, fistng the hem of his wrinkled training shirt. “What if I get as good as I can possibly get and it isn’t enough? Of course he’d want to bail after that. Why would he want to stick around if I can’t even do that much?” Minako gathered him into a brief hug, whispering something into Yuuri’s hair that he couldn’t hear over the rustling of his teacher’s leotard. When she let go, they continued their practice.

It is as Victor munches on a rice ball while Yuuri is stretching across the park bench that the absurdly casual question comes. Yuuri fell backward, off the bench, out of his split, and onto his butt. He blushed furiously, mouth opening and closing like a fish.

“….What?”

“I said, Do You Have A Lover?”

“I-I…no…”

“Great!” Victor beamed. He sipped from his water bottle for a moment, then paused. “What about past lovers?”

Heat rushed to Yuuri’s face as Detroit floods his memories. Had they been lovers? They were certainly intimate, though non-sexually. Did that count? It kind of did, in a way, but that probably wasn’t what Victor was asking about. Wait, why was Victor asking?

“N-no comment.” He conceded.

A silence stretched between them. Victor looked perfectly content, but Yuuri felt quite awkward. He wondered if perhaps that was purposeful, if this was Victor making fun of him. Maybe this was light payback for having been so rude to him. Is that what the other night was about? Was that why Victor pretended like nothing happened? Was he… teasing Yuuri?
Stealing a glance in the direction of the Russian man, Yuuri couldn’t help but feel a pang of satisfaction. Had Yuuri been a less pure man, he’d bask in the attention his celebrity crush was spoiling him with. But Yuuri, obviously, was a pure man. Yuuri had definitely not noticed the small grain of rice stuck just under Victor’s bottom lip. Yuuri was not staring at that grain of rice. Was not staring at that absurdly shiny lip. Yuuri was not preoccupied with thoughts of his idol looming over him, silver hair lined with silver light, musky scent wafting over him like a rolling fog, those very lips so tantalizingly close–

“Yuuri, what’s that over there?”

Snapped out of his daze, Yuuri quickly explained that the large building behind them was Hasetsu Castle, that it’s actually a tourism replica of the castle that used to be there, which was torn down after the feudal system was abolished.

“So… no ninja?” Victor questioned.

“Well I mean, there’s a replica ninja house inside, there’s a whole museum about the history of the castle–”

“Let’s take a picture, Yuuri!”

Before he could protest, the younger man was pulled to his feet and brought to the perfect photo spot. Victor crouched to his knees to be level with Makkachin and get a great angle. Yuuri pulled out his phone and opened his camera as he stepped in front of the pair, but Victor stopped him.

“No, no, Yuuri, with me! I want you in the picture too!” Victor grabbed his hand and pulled him down to the other side of Makkachin, sandwiching the happy dog between their shoulders. Yuuri felt an arm wrap around his neck, and suddenly he was extremely close to Victor. They had to be if the castle hoped to be in the shot at all. Victor threw a peace sign with his left hand, taking the picture with his right.

Yuuri didn’t notice until that night that, in the picture, his face was sporting a shy smile under his quite frankly ridiculous blush.

Hasetsu, Saga

[link]

[v-nikiforov] Hasetsu Castle! #ninja #selfie @katsukiyp

4,197 likes

Yuuri turned off his phone, and for the first time in a couple of weeks, he slept peacefully.

Yuuri woke up not very peacefully. A stampede must have escaped from a traveling circus, elephants and horses about to barrel down on his family’s establishment in mere seconds. They were the only Inn in town. They were the only hotel for miles and miles. Three news teams paid double to rent the last available rooms. The rest had to find seedier places outside of town. Yuuri couldn’t find
He and Victor quickly snuck over the back garden wall and somehow made it all the way to Ice Castle’s gym without being spotted by paparazzi that morning. The afternoon was a different story. The two had been distracted all through their training that day by the colossal disturbances coming from the lobby area. Takeshi was spotting Yuuri in the gym while Yuuko and the triplets were outside the main doors fending off the media.

“So what do you make of him?” Takeshi whispered when Victor left to use the restroom. “I heard from Yuuko that he… ya know…”

Yuuri made a mental note to send Yuuko something smelly in the mail.

“I don’t know what to think, honestly. At this point I’m pretty sure he’s serious about coaching me.” The stretch in Yuuri’s thighs was a comfortable warmth as Takeshi pressed down on his back, making his stomach hug the floor. “I’m pretty close to my goal weight now, Victor had been looking pretty excited lately so I guess he can tell. But he’s been bringing up his Russian rink mates at dinner so maybe he’s just ready for me to fuck up so he can get back to his life.”

“You’re not going to fuck up.” Takeshi’s confidence may or may not have been infectious.

Dinner that night was had in a private dinner room rather than in the main room with their media guests. Toshiya stayed in the kitchen, cooking for their eager clientele, Mari stayed in the shadows, cleaning, and Hiroko was left to expertly field questions by desperate reporters. It helped that she was such a cheerful person by default. The only thing anyone got out of her all night was “I’m so proud of my Yuuri!” and “Vicchan is such a polite boy!”

Victor and Yuuri ate alone, quietly, in a small room reserved for private parties. Yuuri poked at his broccoli while Victor casually dropped chunks of yellow pepper onto Yuuri’s plate as if it were 1) okay 2) expected and 3) normal. Like he’d always done it. Yuuri didn’t particularly enjoy peppers, but he didn’t hate them, but what right does that give Victor, just pawning them off on him like that. Entering suddenly, Mari flopped down next to her brother and immediately began complaining about A-TV’s camera man having hit on her. The tense silence melted into comfortable conversation and it was at that point he’d gotten a facetime call from Phichit.

“WHAT THE ENTIRE FUCK!” Came an indignant screech the very instant he’d accepted the call.

Yuuri laughed while cradling his ear with one hand. “Hold on Phichit, I’m at dinner.” Mari waved him off in a silent insistence that she’d take care of his dishes. “Let me head to my room first, I’ll skype you?”

“FINE HURRY UP” Was the answer he got before Phichit ended the call.

“Better run little brother.”

The call was picked up incredibly quickly, Yuuri hadn’t even yet sat in his chair.

“Why the HELL didn’t you tell me!” Phichit’s pixelated face was already shouting again and his camera hadn’t even focused yet. “Were you even going to tell me?! The betrayal, Yuuri!”

“Calm down Phichit, I’ll tell you right now,”
For the next hour, Yuuri had told his best friend all about the things Victor did and said. He didn’t tell him about catching Victor crying though, that seemed a little too personal. For the next hour after that, Yuuri had apologized profusely to Phichit and they’d caught up for a bit.

“Ah, sorry! Ciao Ciao is calling me, gotta go!”

Yuuri flopped onto his bed, relieved that his friend wasn’t too angry with him.

He slept peacefully again, a little too early, despite the ruckus carrying over all the way from the main room.

“You did it, solnyshko! You reached your goal! Let’s take it easy today, we’re going to walk together.”

“Is that a good idea? The press is still skulking around…” They were like vultures, desperate for any passing roadkill they could twist into entertainment.

Victor pressed Yuuri into a tight hug murmuring “I’m so proud of you, you worked so hard,” and other honeyed words. Yuuri was starting to believe them, though. “You can go by yourself, though, if you really want to.” The hesitance in the taller man’s voice wasn’t obvious, but it was detectable. He obviously wanted to walk, but had he wanted to walk WITH Yuuri?

“I’d like to walk with you,” Yuuri said quietly.

Their stroll took them past the park, past the bridge, past the nearby shrine, and finally to the crowded steps of Ice Castle Hasetsu. Yuuri felt pretty calm and more than a little chill. He was enjoying himself, even.

Axel broke away from her sisters who were holding back the media frenzy and caught their eye with a horrified look. “Yuuri, he–”

“YOU!”

Was it a tiger? A tiger had flown past his face. A wild animal with nothing to fear. All claws and fangs, a monster had tacked Victor backward and crumpled the champion’s coat in its tiny hands.

“Yuri! Good morning!” Victor said cheerfully.

“Kakoe, k huyam, dobroe utro, suka?!” The animal screamed. No, this was a child. An extremely angry child, gesturing wildly at Yuuri and rumpling Victor’s coat in his tiny fists. "Ty poetomu svalil? Iz-za etogo... etogo... hryaka? OKHU EL!?"

Victor’s cheerful mask fell off as he fixed an impossibly cold stare down his nose at the boy. “Eto on to hryak?” Victor said flatly, swiping the boy’s hand off his collar like a bug. "Mozhet mne tebya kak svininku podzharit'? Chto skazhesh'?"

The blonde teenager froze, then slowly turned to Yuuri with pure, unbridled, hatred in his tiny green eyes.

Yuuri’s hard earned calm and chill immediately evacuated his soul.
rough translations:

(another COLOSSAL thanks 2 Rizenna who is far too good for this world. too pure. an angel.)

solnyshko - small sun, it's a cutesy pet name. i've morphed it into 'sunshine' because that's less..... strange
*stuff yuri is saying* - Don't say good morning you $@&$ &^$#(bad words)! This is why you left? For that...that...PIG? Are you fucking crazy?!
*stuff victor is saying* - *He*’s a pig? How about I cook you up like pork? (something to that effect)
"Showdown!" Shouted Axel.

"Konpe!" Yelled Loop.

"Death Match!" Screamed Lutz.

Chapter Notes

in this chap, yuri is passed a heaping bag of beans.

pls enjoi.

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The blonde child bore his teeth at Yuuri, a promise of violence coming off as more of an attempt at posturing. He glared upward to the taller man's face, all of his hatred concentrated into the lingering eye contact. The corners of his mouth pulled up into a smug grin.

"Hah! As if a guy that would sob like a baby in a bathroom stall would ever change just by having Victor as a coach! Yeah right!"

Yuri Plisetsky was kind of a brat.

Victor stepped between them after having explained to Yuuko in the backroom what all the new commotion was about. The taller Russian placed his hand on the smaller one's head and ruffled his hair, creating obvious knots. "I know Yakov didn't allow you to come here, how you manage to get past Aeroflot's unaccompanied minors supervision?"

Yuri Plisetsky smacked Victor's hand from atop his head and seemed to snap his teeth at him. "idi nahuy you fucking—"

"Yurio! There are children present!" Victor gasped in false offense.

"The hell did you just call me?!!"

It was at this moment Yuuko made herself known from the backroom behind the service counter. Her eyes were swirling with motherly rage as she grabbed Yuri Plisetsky's hoodie and yanked him backward towards the counter.

"Boy," she whispered in calm, heavily accented English. "You'll be speaking respectfully as long as you are under this roof. Understand?" Yuri Plisetsky looked as though he'd seen a monster, and his
mouth gaped with what looked like surprise, but may have been fear. "Do you. Understand. Me."

He merely made a choked sound in response.

Yuuko focused her eyes back into reality and let go of the boy's hoodie with a gasp. "Y-Yuri Plisetsky! Oh my goodness!" With a few flaps of her hands, she bounded over the counter with all the grace of a newborn giraffe and hopped up and down for something like ten full seconds.

Yuuri recalled the last time she'd done this, a whole month ago when Victor had first arrived in Hasetsu and followed Yuuri to Ice Castle, introducing himself quickly to the Nishigori family instead of gently and slowly like Yuuri had advised. Yuuko had hopped for quite a while then. Yuuri knew she was sensitive to surprises, she always had been since they were children together. She required ear plugs on the ice because "it's too sharp, Yuuri!", she required her favorite jacket in order to skate because "the rink is too wet, Yuuri!", she bounced up and down when excited because "I'm so happy I could fly, Yuuri!"

Yuuri had long since disregarded the whys, Takeshi seemed to get it well enough. Though he did indeed know that it was not a good idea to surprise Yuuko without some prep, lest she exhaust herself. He was going to talk to Yuuko and Takeshi first, then set up a meet-and-greet in the backroom, then gently introduce Victor to Yuuko. And Victor had blown right through that plan, the way he blew through life.

Yuuri Plisetsky opened his mouth, as if saying anything would ebb his confusion, but Yuuri placed his hand on the smaller boy's shoulder, shaking his head in silent defense of his friend.

By the time Yuuko had gotten the energy out of her system, Takeshi had entered the lobby from the rink, wiping his gloves with a gray rag. "Yuuko, the tune-ups are done—" He stopped in his tracks and switched to English as he noticed his wife's elation and a new face.

"Ah! That's Yuri Plisetsky, yeah? Welcome!"

"Th-thank you," the boy coughed, back thoroughly smacked by the meaty hand of the Nishigori patriarch. The boy seemed to pop out of his trance once he'd caught his breath. "I... I'm not here for long! I've come to take Victor back to Russia!"

Yuuri's heart dropped to his feet with was must have been a noticeable thump.

He looked to Victor for... confirmation? Reassurance? Something.

Victor seemed to consider it, actually consider leaving back to Russia. After all the trouble he'd supposedly gone through? After the promises he'd made to Yuuri? After Yuuri had finally dropped enough of the annoying fucking pudge to finally, finally skate with Victor? A few tense moments passed, then Victor plastered that winning smile on his face and tilted his head to the right and placed a finger to his cheek and opened his mouth, only to say

"Fight for it."

Yuri and Yuuri stood at the opening to the rink, skates laced, training clothes on, confusion obvious. Victor flew across the ice, making absolutely no moves to quell that feeling, but plenty of moves that heightened... other feelings.
Yuri was draped over the rink wall, hanging like clothes on a line. Yuuri was lain against it a few feet to the left, his elbows on the rail for balance, his chin in his hands for comfort, his body pointed backwards in a comfortable stretch.

"Ah, he changed it," muttered the smaller Yuri.

"Changed what?"

"He was already working on his programs for next season," the boy elaborated. "He changed up some of the elements for whatever reason."

Yuuri’s eyes hadn’t left Victor’s gliding form at any point, but he looked slightly different now nonetheless. From the corner of Yuuri’s vision, he saw Yuri Plisetsky gripping the rink railing until his knuckles turned white. His jaw was set into what was surely intended to be a manly, angular, look but instead came off like the pout of a puffy-cheeked child.

"If he's taking the season off he should just let me have it. I could do it better. I could surprise people more than he would." Strange, how sure this kid was that he would surpass Victor. This would be his senior debut, even. Meanwhile Victor was in his prime, currently on a consecutive winning streak, more than 30 individual medals under his belt, never a step out of place—

Ah, too soon.

Victor skidded rear-first across the ice, and a sound like air being ripped from his lungs echoed through the rink. Before Yuuri or Yuri could react, he had righted himself and begun to skate towards them both, eyes settled behind them.

"You're too old for this old man," Yuri Plisetsky chided with a snarl. "Give me the routine and come back to Russia. Coach me like you promised."

"Coach you...?" Victor's blank expression somehow said everything.

Yuuri could feel enraged heat radiating to his right side. Knowing that the teenager was seconds from exploding, he edged back towards the benches, not wanting to be in the middle of it.

"Oh, yes! The choreography!" Victor laughed. "I'd completely forgotten again!"

"What do you mean again, you son of a—"

"Plisetsky!" Three small, synchronous voices boomed from hip height.

Yuuri’s eyes shot to the source of the shout, seeing three little girls with mischievous little smiles and no self-preservation instinct evidently, judging by the way they were tugging on Yuri Plisetsky’s sleeves and shouting all at once in Japanese, a language the teenager definitely did not understand. Yuuri hurried over to calm the triplets and attempt to translate, but the girls obviously wanted to flex their elementary English.

"Showdown!" Shouted Axel.

"Konpe!" Yelled Loop.

"Death Match!" Screamed Lutz.

Yuuko and Takeshi made their way towards the group, intending to scoop up the children and apologize for the interruption, when Victor stopped them and swung an arm around Takeshi,
seemingly directing him away from Yuuri. "Incredible!" he giggled. "This is better than I could have imagined! Takeshi, can we hold a competition in this rink?"

What.

"What?! You expect me to skate on the same ice as this pig?!"

Victor leaned into Yuri's space with an entirely fake smile and a measured tone.

"I believe I told you to watch your tone, Yura."

---

Yuri Plisetsky was not happy with the living arrangements at Yutopia. There were no available rooms, and as a result had to occupy the large storage closet attached to the party area currently known as Victor's Room. Had it not been for that, Yuri would have had to sleep in Yuuri's room. And surely Yuri would not appreciate any of that, given how deeply he seemed to despise the Japanese man.

Yuri first demanded everyone leave him alone.

Then he demanded food.

Then he demanded a bath.

At dinner, Hiroko was more than happy to spoil the boy, and Yuuri thought to a week back when his mother had made an offhand comment about 'missing her teenaged children' that Yuuri didn't quite understand until the exact moment Yuri Plisetsky took his first bite of katsudon.

The blonde's eyes shimmered as though he'd seen the face of God. His lips, parted slightly in reverence, seemed to be almost quivering. If Yuuri hadn't known better, he'd say there were tears pricked at the corner of Yuri's eyes as he sung praises upon the dish, shoveling rice into his face like a starving explorer.

Hiroko beamed like the cat the got the cream, plodding away happily with a slight bounce.

Yuuri understood.

It was at that moment Mari arrived in the usual dinner area, separate from the main room. She called out to her brother, receiving a huff from below in return.

"Yuri Plisetski! How are you doing?"

Yuri lost his annoyed mask and his face turned slightly vulnerable as he gazed up at the woman behind him. "I'm... thank you."

Which was... pretty cute. Yuuri could barely feel the soft smile that grew on his face. The scene before him was like a soft painting, a young boy finding kindness in unexpected places, the light in his eyes renewed, the sharp contrast between his earlier personality and the current serene aura laid bare for all to see. Yuuri definitely understood now.

Victor, though, just... just absolutely destroyed it.

"You didn't give a real answer, Yurio." He teased.
The teenager's mask went right back up, hackles raised in indignation. "The hell is with you?! I'm Yuri not 'Yurio', what the hell kind of stupid name is that?!"

Mari spoke up then, adding that it made at least a small bit of sense, considering there were two Yuris and it could get confusing. Victor and Yuri began yet another argument in rapid Russian and Mari beckoned Yuuri into the hallway to assist her with cleaning out Yuri's new room.

The dust in the storage closet was nothing compared to the intrusive feeling of walking through Victor's room. Bringing boxes and cleaning supplies through the immaculate space was hard enough without dropping dirt onto Victor's beautiful décor, let alone avoiding bumping into the tightly packed furniture.

There was only one more small box to be removed, but it was surprisingly heavy. Surprising enough that Yuuri careened into the nightstand hip-to-corner, knocking Victor's phone off, gravity disconnecting it from the charging cord and sending it clattering to the floor.

"Shit!"

He placed the heavy box on the floor and reached for Victor's phone to make sure it wasn't cracked.

The first thing Yuuri noticed when he pressed the wake button was that the screen was perfectly fine.

The second thing Yuuri noticed was his own face, and then Mari snatching the phone from his hands.

"Head back down little bro, I can handle the rest from here since you obviously can't stop yourself from snooping around." Yuuri, to his own surprise, did not even protest the accusation.

That wasn't possible. Yuuri's face? No. That can't be right. It must be a misunderstanding, the dust must have messed with his vision, or the leaky cleaning supplies in an unvented room perhaps clouded his mind.

But Victor had said he was a fan.

But Victor hadn't recognized him in Sochi.

But Victor greeted him by name when he arrived.

But Victor hadn't made any attempt to get to know him beyond practice and that... time.

But that one time...

But Victor...

Victor...

Would Victor answer, if Yuuri asked? Would he laugh at Yuuri for having dared to assume he was more important than he was? Would he scoff? Would he run away? Would he be creeped out and go back to Russia with Yuri Plisetsky? What about the competition they'd just organized? He'd leave after saying all that? Abandon a tourist explosion at a whim? This is what Yuuri got for expecting too much. This is what he got for snooping, for expecting answers. His town goes bankrupt, his parents have to move to Fukuoka, the competition is too much there, they go out of business, Yuuri's entire family becomes homeless—
"What do you mean he doesn't remember?!"

In his panic, Yuuri hadn't realized he'd been standing in the hallway outside their dinner room, practically eavesdropping on Victor and Yuri's conversation.

"Shh!" Victor shushed. "Don't be so loud, Yurio!"

"I told you I'm not fucking accepting that stupid name! How does someone not remember that?!" Yuri said quieter.

"I only know he doesn't remember, and you're not going to make a single peep about it, do you understand me? You'll keep your mouth shut, you'll answer to Yurio, and you'll be kind to the people who are rearranging their home for your selfish adventure while you practice for the short week that you'll be here. You'll go back to Russia without me and—"

"The hell I will! I'll beat the pig and—" a clatter of dishes interrupted Yuri and Victor's voice came threatening, low,

"One more time, Yurio. If I have to tell you one more fucking time I promise you I will end your glorious, distinguished career before it ever starts."

Yuri's voice sounded muffled, as though his mouth was full of cotton. "I'll win, Victor. I'll take you back with me so you can make good on what you promised."

"I expect the best from you."

"You'll get it."

Yuuri found himself running towards Ice Castle not even breaking a sweat, his feet propelling him forward as though he were trying to escape something. He clearly intruded upon something important, and felt like an absolute jerk for having done so. What if he'd been caught? How would he explain that? Hey Victor, sorry I listened to your secret whispery conversation! I was wondering if you really had a picture of me as your lock screen background? You see I was snooping through your shit because I'm a human dumpster fire and I wanted direct answers from you as though I'm owed anything!

Yuuri spent the next three hours skating lazy compulsory figures and spins until his thoughts fell out of his ears.

The sleep that came to him when he returned home was mindless, well-earned.

He dreamt of figure-eights carved into his heart.

Chapter End Notes

yuuko flaps and bounces and i lov her

rough translations:

idi nahuy - slang, literally meaning "go to dick" more commonly used as "fuck off"
(thank u rizenna, you absolute angel)

**konpe** - phonetic japanese loanword from english, meaning competition

the final conversation between Victor and Yuri is held in english for reasons
Yuuri held firm in his belief that Victor knew what he was doing.

“The assignments are as follows: Yuuri gets Eros and Yurio gets Agape!” The Russian smiled like he’d just solved world hunger, self-satisfied and ever sure that this was the right way to go about things.

Victor clearly didn't know what the hell he was doing.

Yuuri and Yurio woke up at the same time. Their shared alarm—Mari screaming—had propelled them both out of bed and had the two bounding through the hallway they shared between their respective rooms before skidding to a halt in front of the kitchen.

On the floor was Mari and an enormous white dog.

The enormous white dog shakes, and in a puff of smoke, Makkachin appears.

"Ah, hey guys, sorry about the mess!"

"Mari, what on earth happened here?" Yuuri questioned.

"I was making sirno... s-soynr... uh..."

"Syrniki," Yurio spoke softly from behind Yuuri's back, staring at the counter above Mari’s head. "You made... syrniki..."

"Yeah! I figured you would appreciate Russian food, what with being so far from home and all. I'm
afraid we don’t have any sour cream though, so I used strawberries. I hope you like them!” The woman on the floor placed a dusty hand on the back of her neck and grinned, proud of herself.

Yuuri was still scanning his wide, brown eyes across the room at the mess he was certain he would have to help clean up. Mari stood and ruffled the white dust out of Makkachin’s fur and the dog preened at the affection.

"While I was putting the flour away Makkachin jumped on me and I dropped it all over him, I’ll take care of it though, you kids just enjoy breakfast and head on out."

Yuuri and Yurio sat next to each other at a low table in the corner of the main room, silently staring at the biscuit? pancake? looking things on the serving plate in front of them. Next to the serving plate was a small bowl of cut strawberries in a sugary syrup. This probably wouldn’t be a great start to a day dedicated to athletic training but damn if Yuuri didn't love sugared strawberries.

Yurio tentatively reached out to grab one of the syrniki and took a bite, immediately turning his head away from Yuuri and shooting up from his seated position.

"I... forgot to wash my hands first." The boy mumbled before sprinting to the bathroom.

Breakfast was done in less than ten minutes and the two were out the door. Yuuri attempted polite conversation with Yurio on their jog to Ice Castle but the younger boy refused to entertain the pleasantries, preferring instead to stare blankly at the rotation of Victor’s bicycle tires.

The fisherman on the bridge bid them a good morning and Victor cheerfully responded. Yuuri greeted the man in return. Yurio said nothing.

There were school children walking past the park who were all excited to see the celebrities jogging by, shouting praises in Japanese. Victor shouted “Ohaiyo~!” Yuuri gave a shy wave. Yurio turned his head away from them.

Yuuri noticed that teenager was being a little more prickly than yesterday, maybe he wasn’t happy about breakfast? Though he seemed to enjoy it enough, having devoured most of the plate, leaving not very much for Yuuri at all.

Maybe that conversation with Victor affected him more than he'd let on.

As they entered Ice Castle's lobby, Yuuko was standing, carefully brushing Lutz's hair into her signature pigtails as the sleepy girl sat on the counter in front of her mother.

"Hey guys! How is your morning going?"

"Fine, thanks."

Yuuri stopped in his tracks, eyes glued to the unfriendly child who'd just greeted someone for the first time today. The boy caught his eye and made a low grumbling sound.

"What are you staring at, pi—“

He stopped short and swiveled his head around. Takeshi was using some tools on one of the broken lockers in the sitting area to the left. Axel and Loop were on the floor, quietly watching a video on
their mother’s phone. Yuuko and Victor were chatting as Lutz leaned against Victor's chest, knocked out. The teenager seemed to let go of a breath he had been holding, and turned back to glare at Yuuri, then stormed off silently to lace up his skates.

Yuuri figured he should do the same, and quickly became preoccupied with how important this competition was going to be. He had been considering retirement, but Victor showing up had blown that out of the water. Had it though? Yuuri already found it pretty clear that his spectacular failure at the last Grand Prix Final and subsequent Japanese Nationals would knock him out of consideration to be assigned to the upcoming Grand Prix Series, he couldn’t imagine the ISF giving him anymore leeway than he’d already been given.

Yuuri had to make the most of this training, whether he won or not. Victor was finally going to begin teaching him today. Win or lose, this was Victor Nikiforov, choreographing a program for him. If he fails again, it would be the last time he ever skates with him. No, it would be the last time he ever skates at all.

He can't lose.

He'll make it this time.

The two remove their blade guards and skate to the center of the rink, where they find Victor waiting with a small remote.

Wordlessly, he presses a button and a sound like an angel's aria bleeds through the air of the rink. Organ tones slide through the Latin words in scales that kind of sound like they came from a vampire movie, if Yuuri was being honest. Maybe organ notes just remind him of old and abandoned cathedrals, which in turn remind him of vampires. American movies had that associative effect.

"This song comes in two arrangements with two different themes," Victor said softly. "In Regards To Love: Eros and Agape. Tell me, have you two ever thought about love?"

Predictably, Yurio shakes his head. Yuuri shakes his head as well, and notices Victor quirk a brow.

Of course that’d be weird. Of course he'd be surprised. Yuuri is a 23 year old virgin whose entire romantic repertoire consists of pining over Victor Nikiforov for 15 years and sharing tender kisses and cuddles with his best friend purely for comfort.

"What do you feel when you hear this?" Victor asked. He smirked and held his arms crossed over his chest as though he already knew the answer.

"It's innocent," Yuuri began. "It sounds like the singer doesn't know what love actually is."

Yurio stuck out his tongue. "This innocence stuff is boring. It doesn't fit my image at all."

Victor smirked, and clicked a button. Violin, guitar, and castanets seemingly dancing around one another in a flamenco-style piece. No words this time, unlike the first song. The melodies of both arrangements were the basically same, but the surrounding tunes were successful in producing wildly opposing feelings.

"It's like a completely different song," Yuuri whispered.

Yurio jutted his hips out, and demanded with a wild swing of his arms that the song be his.

"The first song is called Agape," Victor said. "The theme is unconditional love."
Yuuri felt that he could portray that kind of love without much fuss. Unconditional love was a little abstract but perhaps with a bit of time he could find his Agape. Yuuri was ready and willing.

“The second song is called Eros. The theme is sexual love.”

Haha what? Yurio was 15, wouldn't be kind of awkward to have a fifteen year old portray sexuality? Yurio seemed content to accept it, eager, even. Yuuri absently wondered if Yurio would even have the capacity for sexual love on a scale like Eros. Yuuri had been fifteen once, but the effortlessly seductive tones of Eros absolutely did not line up with the way fifteen year olds operate. Yuuri wondered how Victor and Yurio would get around the awkwardness of a child portraying sexuality, but held firm in his belief that Victor knew what he was doing.

“The assignments are as follows: Yuuri gets Eros and Yurio gets Agape!” The Russian smiled like he'd just solved world hunger, self-satisfied and ever sure that this was the right way to go about things.

Victor clearly didn't know what the hell he was doing.

“You have to surprise the audience, you know? Do the opposite of what they are expecting! The way you are right now, you're both about a hundred years too early to be thinking you can choose your own image. The audience sees you as a piglet and a kitten, you need to work harder to defy their expectations!”

“So you can call him a pig but I can't?” Yurio shouted. “The hell kind of creepy foreplay is that? You're the only one allowed to insult your—“

“Yurio.” Victor said, voice low in his throat.

“No! I'm tired of this! Why are you giving me Agape when you know it isn't me?! You're only giving him Eros because of his disgusting behavior at the banquet—“

wait

“Plisetsky I swear to—“

what

“What are you talking about?” Yuuri stepped forward as the two Russians froze in place.

“Uh,” Yurio stepped back.

The fear was evident in Victor and Yurio’s eyes, causing the tension to mount in Yuuri's shoulders.

“What behavior, what banquet? Sochi’s banquet? I don't even remember it I was ignoring everyone and stayed at the drink table. I don't remember anyth—” Yuuri froze and the memories seeped in.

His father. Videos of his 21st birthday. Recounts of his first college party.

Oh no.

“Tell me what happened.” Yuuri mumbled, face blank and oddly calm. Victor skated over to him and stared at his face. He searched Yuuri’s eyes for something and apparently found what he wanted because he seemed to release a breath he was holding. He pulled out his phone.

“You got drunk at the banquet,” Victor started, swiping and tapping at his device. “But I swear you were the life of the party, Yuuri! Everyone loved you!”
Yurio scoffed. “You forced me into a dance-off with you and I only lost because I was tired from actually being useful the day before.”

Victor held his phone out to Yuuri. “Here's some pictures I took of you two dancing, if you want to see?”

Yuuri carefully took the phone and began swiping through the images. They seemed fine for the most part, he was definitely drunk, his tie was loose and his shirt was partially unbuttoned. Swipe. His face was flushed and sweaty, the dance-off was definitely strenuous. Swipe. Swipe. The images were embarrassing as hell, and Yuuri was red-faced and teary looking through them, but it's not like he was naked or anything. He sighed in minor relief and Victor moved to retrieve his phone, signaling the end of the images.

Swipe.

Ah.

Spoke too soon.

A video file that seemed to be accidentally taken instead of a picture. 0:02 seconds. Autoplay. Music, wolf whistles and cheering. Yuuri's hand on his forehead, eyes glazed, half-lidded. Face pink and biting his lower lip. Shirt ruffled but present, pants gone. Tight black briefs. Holding onto the pole, mid step-through, bending towards the camera. Eyes focused somewhere behind the phone as he dragged his tongue over his top lip and reached behind—

The video ended.

Victor snatched the phone as he swiped again.

Victor didn't stop the next video in time, and Yuuri heard his own drunken, slurring, horrific voice filter through the air of the rink at top volume.

"Be my Coach! Victor~!"

Yuuri's face blanched and the sounds around him seemed to fade inwards, a high-pitched ringing replacing everything.

The flow of mortification crashed hard into his legs like a strong beach wave on a windy day. Toppling into the water as he fell down, down and his throat was burning, his throat was fucking burning and he couldn't breathe, every time he tried to suck some air into his screaming lungs there was only more water. More burning. More of the slippery feeling in his mouth as he tried to cough it out but each heaving expulsion only sucked back in more burning and he was drowning in it. He was drowning, drowning and he was going to die he was going to fucking die here.

Another sputtering cough dislodged a knot of spit from his throat and onto the ice. His new position on his hands and knees surprised him, and when his hearing came back Yurio was shouting at Victor.

"—hell is going on?!"

"This wasn't supposed to happen it wasn't like this before—Yuuri!" Victor was landing soft blows to Yuuri's back as the younger man continued to cough and wheeze like he hadn't been breathing for hours.

"What do you mean 'like this before', you said he didn't remember the banquet!"
"Shit, h-he was supposed to be fine this didn't happen! Oh god what's going on Yuuri! Yuuri, Answer me!"

Victor knew he didn't remember? Victor was keeping this from him? For what? Victor knew that he fucking pole-danced half naked in front of all of those people, those strangers and competitors and their coaches—coaches he fucking begged Victor to be his coach in front of everyone, ISF officials and judges, his fucking sponsors oh my god. Oh my god.

Victor.

Victor had filmed him.

On the pole.

Licking his lips.

Reaching out to him.

"You..."

"Yuuri! What is it are you oka—"

"You knew! You knew this whole time what an idiot I'd made of myself! Is that why you came here? To mock me?!" Yuuri shouted at the ice.

"No Yuuri I came here to c-coach you! Remember, I—"

"And you didn't think to tell me about this first? You just showed up naked at my house in my country because a drunk stranger asked you to? And you knew I didn't remember! You knew and you kept it from me! You tackled me, I passed out, you were naked in my home!"

Victor waved his arms in front of his face. "No Yuuri I swear I didn't realize you didn't... I had no idea that you didn't remember the banquet until—"

"Until you what, grabbed my ass and started crying? Until you realized you can't just hop on a plane for a long distance booty call and be immediately accepted?"

"What? That's not what—"

"Isn't it though, Victor? Isn't that why you're here? To make fun of a fan? To mock me for admiring you for so long and yet fucking up so hard? You're here to fucking—to just—ugh!" Yuuri slammed his fists against the ice. His knees were wet from having been kneeling for so long, and were starting to get sore. His head was pounding, his thoughts were incoherent ribbons swaying in the wind, it all just came flying out. "You think that I would let you fly over here just to crawl into my pants?!" Yuuri was hyperventilating once more, his train of thought spilling out of his chest like a waterfall, tears still falling, spit still hanging from his chin.

"What a fucking sight this must be for you then, me on my knees since you think you can just get between them so quickly. I can't believe that's the kind of—the kind of person you are!" Yuuri was coughing, he couldn't get air. The words wouldn't stop coming and he couldn't, he couldn't, he couldn't.

"Yuuri stop!" Victor had gripped Yuuri’s shoulders. "Stop talking Yuuri you need to breathe—!"
Another heaving breath, desperate to actually absorb oxygen, his heart was hammering behind his ribs at what felt like a mile a minute and the tears wouldn't stop falling stop stop make them stop. Clawing at his throat nails biting into his soft flesh begging for some kind of air to find its way through and blood? Blood on the ice on the faded reflection in the ice swirling swirling who is that? Who is that person inside the ice? He's bleeding.

"Yurio, go get the Nishigoris, now! Shh, it's okay Yuuri, it's going to be okay, you're okay, breathe in and out come on—"

"Fucking incredible!" Yuuri coughed, head tilting up to finally meet Victor’s worried gaze. His vision was fading from lack of oxygen, but he simply couldn't stop shouting at the man hovering over him. “I can't deal with this, this is too fucking much I'm done I'm done I-I'm done with this. Go back to Russia, go, go, take Yurio and go back and coach the objectively superior child prodigy and go home. I'm done skating, I'm done with skating, I'm done.”

Yuuri’s exhalations became more ragged and strained, louder. In fact both men’s voices were near screaming as they competed to be heard over each other. Victor kneeling in front of Yuuri, trying desperately to see into his eyes. Yuuri on all fours, still hyperventilating and refusing to meet Victor's face.

“Absolutely not Yuuri, I told you I'm here for you! I'm not going back, Yuuri just listen to me, please!”

Yuuri unleashed a throat-tearing scream, sure to ruin his voice for days to come, “Go home, Victor!”

The silence stretched between them for what was realistically about fifteen seconds but felt more like fifteen minutes. Their hot and heavy breaths were the only thing that could be heard in the rink as the two struggled to catch their breath. Victor looked behind Yuuri and nodded.

“Fine.”

Yuuri's head snapped back up and he finally met Victor's icy gaze. It was surprisingly not as cold and detached as Yuuri had expected it to be. Those eyes were full of determination.

"I'm going to pack my things, I'm going to leave, and I'm going home." Victor rose to his full height and stared down at Yuuri through his mussed silver bangs. "I will see you again, Yuuri Katsuki. And when I do, we're having a talk."

Victor skated towards the rink exit and sat on the bench, pulling off his skates in less time than it took to read a medium-length sentence. He slipped into his shoes, grabbed his duffel bag, and walked out.

The door to the rink area clattered loudly.

Yuuri stared at droplets of his own blood on the ice, the reality of what just happened sinking in. He told Victor to leave.

Victor was leaving.

Victor was going back to Russia.

Victor was gone.
sooooo in this fic i’ve worked thru enough of an outline to figure that this Yuuri is going to be a lot more sensitive and prone to skittishness as a result of this chapter. my thoughts r that yuuri isn't as embarrassed in ep10 because he's had ample time to get comfortable with victor (they’re literally engaged when he learns lol) and therefore less likely to panic abt it. if he were to find out around this point (end ep2) i'd like to think he'd be a SHITLOAD less okay with that and would def panic so here's my angry boy in all his glory i lov him.

i figured out a way to lengthen the next part so that this part can b cut off here, sorry! I was getting antsy not being able 2 post i rly love posting it's making me feel better actually haha so pls comment pls scream @ me on tumblr pls tell me if i made any immediately fixable mistakes i love u all so much

(quick edit right after i posted because i realized i didn't hint that the nishigoris were there yet. i wouldn't make victor leave yuuri totally alone after he had just injured himself!)
His skates come unlaced and fall off his feet.
No.
He needs those skates, he needs them to skate with Victor.
Victor.
He's gone.
He's gone for good. Because Yuuri told him to go.
What had he done?

who let me decide it was a good idea to write through anxiety attacks lmfao kill me fam

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes) [there are no translations in this chapter]

No.

He needs those skates, he needs them to skate with Victor.

Victor.

He's gone.

He's gone for good. Because Yuuri told him to go. No. What had he done? What happened? What is going on? Yuuri let small groans escape his throat as he struggled against his warm bubble. The bubble constricts around his shoulders and knees and it's so tight it's so tight he can't take those heaving breaths he needs so badly he needs to expand his chest or else he'll shrink and pop away into nothingness again he can't do this again he can't go back to being nothing after a taste of something why why why—

A cool hand on his forehead, a small pressure on his neck—burning, stinging, the heavy warmth is removed from over him and a sharp, bright light in his eyes it hurts it's too bright make it stop—

Yuuri protests with weak struggles and low sobs as he is removed from his bubble and placed gently on a cloud. A warm cloud that envelops him on all sides. He curls into himself and sinks low into the impossible softness, still groaning at the thought of what he'd done. Gone. He's gone. Victor is gone forever and all because Yuuri is too stupid stupid stupid stupid and useless pointless hopeless to react in any normal way to something so trivial because Yuuri is too small too little too dim too opaque to stand up to the large and bright and crystal clear sparkling radiance of the man he'd worshipped for more than a decade.


"Yuuri, are you awake?" Yuuko. Why is Yuuko on his cloud? "You need to drink water. You're going to get dehydrated. I'll let you sleep but you need to drink first."

Drink. Drinking. That's what got him into this in the first place, his lack of control with drinking. If he never sees alcohol again it would still be too soon.

"Yuuri I'm putting a straw in your mouth okay?" A strange feeling on his tongue as a solid plastic straw is placed between his panting lips. He sucks on the straw and cold, cold, cold water sliding down his raw throat and it stings. Yuuri coughs at the sensation and feels for the first time just how fucked his throat is, battered chords straining to function beyond scratchy groans and wrecked sobs.

It hurts, so he drinks more. He sips and swallows until his throat cries for mercy and then sips again. The hurt is soothing, he can feel it sharply alongside the dull ache of his neck, throbbing from the scratches he'd left there as his adam's apple bobs under the sensitive skin.

Yuuri still hasn't opened his eyes, so he does so. His glasses have been removed, he can only make out vague blobs which he recognizes from experience must be Yuuko and Takeshi, hovering over him. Takeshi picks up Yuuri's top half, destroying the cocoon he'd finally gotten comfy in. Yuuri’s
neck is exposed, the dried blood pulling on his taut skin where it has scabbed together in some places. Yuuko wipes at his neck with a warm towelette, cleaning whatever blood was still there.

A sting, as she applied a gel to his shallow wounds. A pressure, as she applied a gauze bandage over the area. Comfort, as Takeshi laid Yuuri back into his cloud.

Yuuri was surrounded by softness and warmth unlike anything he'd ever experienced before. His breathing slowed as calm finally overtook him, and he drifted off to sleep.

“Fine?! He was bleeding!”

“Shhh! You will wake them up!”

Yuuri stirred under a blanket and slowly stretched his legs, suddenly finding that they wouldn't go very far at all. His eyes snapped open and he finally took in his surroundings. First and foremost, he was in a bathtub. There was a futon under him and a nest of blankets over his body. He'd never been this comfortable before in his life. That he could remember, anyway. Perhaps the womb was similarly comfortable?

He tried to pull his right hand to his crusted-over eyes but found that he was stuck. Yuuri's right hand was being firmly held by Takeshi Nishigori, who was unconscious and drooling on his arm against the rim of the tub. A clinking sound is heard from beyond the door.

"I know you're worried but I promise, he's fine."

"I'm not worried."

Yuuko's whispers could be heard through the door of the bathroom. Yuuri's foggy memory of the Nishigori home provided the knowledge that their living room couch was right next to the bathroom door. An unfortunate design choice if Yuuri did say so himself. Yurio must be the one pacing then, the soft tamp-tamp-tamping across the carpet.

"He's just... He's bleeding... How did he do that to himself? I don't understand."

Why was Yurio here? Why isn't he at the onsen? Wait, Victor was going back to Russia, which means Yurio would be going with him. And if Yurio is here, then that means Victor isn't gone yet, but...

He's still going. He's probably packing at that very moment, thinking about the asshole Other Yuuri who called him a creep and told him to fuck off. The asshole Other Yuuri who screamed at the top of his lungs out of mortified panic. Victor didn't know it was panic, he probably thinks Yuuri actually believes that. He probably sees Yuuri as a creeped out ex-fan who regrets meeting his idol and would be tearing his posters down any moment now. God, why did he have to see the posters? That made it sixty times more embarrassing.

"This isn't something easy to understand, I don't know why or what he's thinking. We only know that it happens and we know how to take care of him."
Oh, Yuuko.

A silence stretches out for a while, long enough that Yuuri is almost drifting off to sleep. Then a small, shaking voice squeaks under the doorframe.

"This is good cake."

Yurio must be really upset. He probably thinks it's his fault for having let the cat out of the bag but he's just a kid, he can't be saddled with this kind of nonsense when he's only fifteen. Yuuri is already used to the heavy emotional labor of his attacks, already aware of the drain he is on everyone around him, already knows how to brush it off and pretend it didn't happen. But Yurio was too young for this. He shouldn't have to deal with the burden of feeling responsible for someone like Yuuri if he could just enjoy his childhood doing the things he loved instead.

"Yuuri's anxiety isn't new for us, but it is new for you. I understand you're upset but I swear, it will be fine."

"But what if it isn't?" Yurio hissed. "What if h-he gets *scars* what if he quits—?"

"He's not going to quit, Yuri."

Ah, Yuuko probably doesn't know that Victor is packing up to leave right now as they speak. Of course Yuuri was quitting. What sense would it make to keep going with a pointless endeavor?

"The last time this happened was a little harder to deal with, we were on crunch time what with his flight going out only a few hours later."

Ah, being seventeen wasn't fun at all. He'd gotten his roommate assignment from Oakland University's dorm advisory board and looked them up on twitter, only to find that his new roomie was quite unhappy with it. Some pretty horrible words were tossed around. Some slurs, some references to wars, some strange stereotypes about genitals, eyes, and (for some reason) teeth.

In true Yuuri fashion, he didn't bother with reporting the student and trying to get a different room. Instead, he'd put it off until the night before his flight to America, getting ready for bed as he normally did, taking his bath, doing his homework, brushing his teeth, staring at his teeth, poking and pulling on his teeth, grinding his teeth… It was about ten minutes later, when Yuuri had suspiciously *not* bid the family goodnight, that Mari checked on him, only to find her teenage brother curled up under his desk and gnawing on his knee until it was bleeding.

Mari and Yuuko had managed to calm him down with a frankly ridiculous number of blankets, wrapping him like a burrito until he could no longer move. Mari held him, his back against her chest, until his struggles ceased and he'd fallen asleep. Thankfully their parents were willing to let him live off-campus, at the outer borders of Detroit only a 30 minute drive to the campus, but the financial strain it put on them was something Yuuri couldn't ever forgive himself for. It was part of the reason he'd kept going with competitive skating even when things were at their worst.

Everyone has always taken care of him. Everyone has always, always, supported him despite his burdensome struggles. How can they continue to do so? How can it possibly be that they don't mind dealing with Yuuri's issues?

His eyes snapped open when a drop of liquid hit his forehead.

"Ah, sorry Yuuri! I thought I'd wrung it out better." Yuuko smiled sheepishly over him. "I was gonna wipe the sweat off your forehead, but since you're awake go ahead and try to sit up."
A stiff feeling in Yuuri's shoulders had him wincing a bit as he lifted himself up on his elbows.

Yuuko gave a soft chuckle as she helped Yuuri sit up fully. "Sleeping for sixteen hours in a bathtub nest will do that to you, I guess."

"Sixtee—" Yuuri's elbow slipped off the edge of the tub and his eyes blew wide.

"Come on, it's time to clean up and eat breakfast."

The triplets blatantly stared at him all through breakfast, barely touching their pancakes. Takeshi had thankfully cut the meal short and herded them all off to school, but not before Loop blurted out that Yuuri needed to change his bandages and was promptly whapped upside the head.

Yuuko is quietly doing dishes when a thought comes to Yuuri. It's morning. He's been out all night. His family probably has no idea where he is. Yuuri reached for his phone only to find that it wasn't in his pocket. He stands up and suddenly Yuuko is behind him, gentle hands on his shoulders.

“I called last night,” She says, handing him his phone. “I told them you were here, don't worry.” Yuuko’s hands radiated warmth through the thin athletic shirt Yuuri was still wearing. She rubbed lightly and set a plate of leftover strawberries in front of him. “Finish these for me?”

Yuuri nibbled on the sweet fruit, remembering the syrniki. Only 24 hours ago he had been sharing a table with Yurio and excited about sharing the ice with Victor. But that was over now. The two had probably boarded their plane by this point. Yuuri absently wondered how his family would afford to ship all his new furniture back to Russia. Would he even send for it? He'd be lucky if Victor didn't get a restraining order on him, let alone making direct contact. Well, if Victor wasn't coaching him then Yuuri didn't really have a reason to continue competitively, right?

He'd only agreed because Victor promised to stay. Which he hadn't. He'd only decided to keep skating because Victor promised he'd coach him. Which he wasn't, anymore. He'd only dared to hope because he'd promised to make it up to Victor. Which he never could. Not after that.

Yuuko moved them both to the living room and sat Yuuri in a garish green chair, pulling out the first aid kit. She quietly changed the bandages on Yuuri’s neck, allowing him the peace of contemplation. However, Yuuri's head was completely empty, contentedly staring at the ceiling as his friend cleaned his scratches, applied gel, and replaced the gauze pads. When she'd finished, she gripped his hands in her own and their eyes met. The sunlight that filtered in through the blue curtains behind Yuuri’s chair left rays of color across Yuuko's face and neck. The light moved like ocean waves across her eyes, and Yuuri felt a pang in his chest.

That blue is going to be hard to forget.

Yuuko, as if sensing his thoughts, gripped his hands tighter in hers, to the point where it kind of hurt, honestly.

"Yuuri, we're always going to be here for you, okay?"

He hadn't reacted quickly enough to hid the embarrassment and self-disgust that plainly shot across
his face. What kind of adult needed to be reassured like a baby? How pathetic was he going to get before he could just get on with it and grow up already? He looked away, but Yuuko's strong fingers were on his chin, forcing him to meet her eyes again.

The blue sunlight scattered against her face and eyes, but she made no move to retreat from it. It must have hurt, having near-direct sunlight hit your eyes like that, she could have at least moved out of it's way to spare herself the pain and annoyance, but she didn't. She sat there, eyes locked with her friend, trying desperately to communicate without words but not quite getting there.

"You are loved, Yuuri."

He knew. He knew he was loved. That's what made everything so much worse. He held the hopes and expectations of everyone around him and he just kept failing them over and over and over and god would it ever end? Would he ever stop disappointing them? Yuuri knows he is loved. It's what lifts him in the best of times and sinks him in the worst. If there was one thing Yuuri knew, it's that people loved him. He couldn't keep burdening them like this.

It must have shown in his face, because Yuuko only gripped tighter, pulled closer, nose to nose, his dear old friend gazing into his eyes with rapt determination. But something more. Something deeper in her hard brown eyes. He could never quite fully grasp Yuuko's expressions, even if he noticed subtle bits here and there. She was too deep. Too unfathomable.

"We all love you."

Yuuri nodded, if only to get her bruising grip off his face. She's a little stronger than entirely necessary, but maybe that's the strength of a mother. Yuuko let out a big sigh, patted Yuuri's cheek, and told him she was going to get ready to bring him home.

Left alone, Yuuri absently stroked against the swirling patterns on the armrests of the ornate chair that sat against the east wall of the room. It was horribly out of place in the blue-themed living room, being a faded green with pearl-white swirls adorning the entire thing. Takeshi usually liked things to match, preferred order, but Yuuko had fallen in love with this chair at a second-hand shop, apparently.

It was kind of a shitty chair, to be honest. The seat of it was a little softer than it should be. Yuuri could move slightly and it would wobble, one of the legs slightly shorter than the others. One spot in the cushioned backrest was slack where everywhere else it was firm, as if there was stuffing missing behind it. Two of the little rivets decorating the front of the armrests were missing.

But it fit there, in the living room. It was warm and well-used. It was cared for, stitched together in a couple of places.

Loved.

"Let's go, Yuuri!"

Yuuko came back down the stairs, looking comfortable and warm in her day clothes. By comparison, Yuuri looked like a drowned rat in his sweaty athletic clothes and unwashed hair. He slipped his shoes on, and they both plodded out the door, walking in silence for about half an hour. With a silent wave at the corner, Yuuko turned right to head towards the market, and Yuuri headed left to enter the front arches of Yutopia.

Opening the main doors, Yuuri ignored the sign on the handle stating an apology that the inn was closed for the day and would reopen in the evening. He ignored the lack of anyone at the counter to
welcome customers (who wouldn't appear because the inn was closed for the day and would reopen in the evening). He couldn't ignore the quiet, though. It was remarkably silent.

But rather than wonder about where his family had gone, rather than worry about the state of Yutopia if no one was tending to it, rather than fall into yet another anxiety spiral, Yuuri was surprised to find himself... vacant. Blank, even. Yuuri walked past the empty kitchen where Makkachin had liked to nap, where he often saw his parent's loving caresses. His feet brought him past the private dinner room, where Mari liked to join in on private conversations rather than do her actual job. Up the stairs, where Yurio had sat before dinner, scrolling through social media and content to be as in-the-way as humanly possible. Into the hallway, where he'd caught Victor sniffling and sobbing for whatever reason.

Victor's room was locked shut.

So he was gone, then.

The tears began to well up in his eyes and he wouldn't—couldn't—let them fall. He was going to deal with this in a mature adult manner. He was going to move on with his life, get a job, help out with his parent's business, and have a normal life. He was going to quit figure skating competitively and resume having actual fun on the ice with a hobby-level interest and stop letting it consume him. He was going to let go of his failures. He was going to stop worrying everyone and deal with his own issues on his own. He was going to live his life the way it had always meant to be lived.

Alone.

But as Yuuri slid open his bedroom door, that plan had crumbled to dust at his feet, the debris settling under his desk, where long pale legs were draped over the arm of his desk chair. An arm was settled behind the headrest, hand holding onto it for balance. The other hand was holding a beer bottle, slack-wristed and gripping tightly.

Victor placed the bottle on the desk next to three others just like it, and met Yuuri's eyes.

"Sit."

Chapter End Notes

sweet jesus this took way longer to write than i thought. i'm rly sorry for that! it's hard to get into yuuri's headspace when i'm stuck in my own, i end up getting wrapped up in it and falling apart in much the same ways 😞

i included the Knee Thing because that's literally something i did as a child. someone made fun of my teeth so i tried to pull them out and then i tried kneeing myself in the teeth to get them to come out but all i managed to do was gnaw for a few minutes and then freak out @ the blood lmao

the next chapter is A Big Talk! i'm gonna be honest with yall it'll probably take just as long *sobs*

pls comment yr thoughts pls hmu on tumblr and scream at me to continue i love u all so much thank u
Chapter Summary

“Yura,” The drunk man whimpered towards the ceiling. “What do I do?”

Chapter Notes

THIS ONE WAS SOOO MUCH EASIER i'm fucking LIVING and here i was thinking it's take just as long but my good mood is like "SYKE I'M HERE 2 PARTY"

god honestly that last chap kicked my ass and i'm halfway thru the next one already (sorry abt my inconsistent upd8 schedule ;w;)

this one is 3k-ish words but feels shorter / lemme know if i fucked anything up i love u all

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

When Yuuri didn't immediately take a seat, Victor seemed to hesitate.

“I told you we would talk when we saw each other again, and here we are, a-and… shit no Yuuri —“

Tears. Those very tears he’d been holding back since he stepped foot in the hallway. Cascading down his cheeks in two solid streams rather than individual droplets. Yuuri felt the world fall away, the walls, the furniture, the floor, himself. His knees hit the tatami with a loud thunk but the pain didn't register. More fat tears rolled down his face and it felt like he was floating, flying away, finally free of surprises.

Victor flailed on the chair, flopping to the floor rear-first, then scrambled on his hands and knees across the small room to grasp Yuuri’s shoulders and let out a string of apologies in four different languages, asking if he was hurt, if he was dizzy, if he was feverish, Victor was too close again and Yuuri just stared, crying.

“God I'm so sorry Yuuri, I'm doing it again, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have surprised you like this, I-I'll just leave you alone for now.” Victor tried to stand up but found himself yanked back down by the sleeve of the green yukata he wore, exposing his rosy shoulder.

Yuuri looked up at him through thick, wet lashes, not wanting to say it but needing to communicate the intent. Stay. The stream of tears didn't stop, and Yuuri slumped a bit, his legs splaying under him in a perfect picture of desperation, exactly the last thing Yuuri ever wanted to convey to Victor. A strangled gasp left the older man's lips as he gripped his chest.
Victor leaned down, trying to kneel, but his tipsy state left him wobbling until he fell to his ass a second time. He scooted closer to Yuuri and gathered his cheeks into his cold, pink hands. His voice came out strained, almost choked. “I’m so sorry, Yuuri.”

To Yuuri’s embarrassment, his tears fell over Victor’s hands, but Victor didn’t seem to mind at all. He was wiping at them with his thumbs and gazing deep into Yuuri’s eyes, babbling in Russian and completely undeterred by the pathetic sight before him. Yuuri’s cheeks burned and his glasses were being squished between huge Russian hands.

“I thought… you were gone.” He squeaked out.

“Never, Yuuri. Not unless you truly want me to.” Had Victor not taken his outburst seriously? “I know it’s arrogant of me to assume but… you were in the middle of a panic attack. I didn’t want to make it worse by upsetting you further.” Victor’s hands dropped from Yuuri’s face into his own lap, grasping at the hem of his robe and then rising to brush his hair back from his face. “I figured you would want a break, compose yourself into a clear mind before banishing me forever.” He chuckled, dry and full of obvious worry.

“Are you… are you going to banish me…?”

Yuuri took a deep breath, unsure.

"I... have a really hard time with things sometimes... with embarrassment, and anxiety..."

“I know—“

“Unless you also have panic attacks I doubt you really know.” Yuuri shocked himself with the snappy tone of his deadpan declaration.

“I mean that I have f-friends with anxiety… so I kind of understand why you… uh...”

Yuuri watched as Victor fiddled with the tie of his yukata, his rosy face and heavier accent giving away his tipsiness. The older man seemed… submissive, in a way. He wouldn’t meet Yuuri’s eyes like he had mere moments before, his chin was tucked into his chest, his cheeks were dusted with a blush that Yuuri wasn’t sure was entirely because of the beer. Victor gripped his elbows and turned his shoulders inwards. He seemed to be melting into himself, for all that meant.

“In the onsen,” Yuuri whispered. “When you were rubbing me,”

Victor’s blush deepened and his eyes shot to the size of dinner plates while continuing to be firmly glued to the floor next to his right knee. Was he embarrassed of his earlier behavior? He had been naked, after all. Victor should be embarrassed by his behavior but should also be proud of how much he’d helped. Yuuri had to make his meaning clear before he misunderstood this as another “you creeped me out” session.

“You knew what to do because you have experience with helping people through anxiety attacks?”

“O-oh… I—yes,” Victor stuttered around simple words, perhaps he was drunker than Yuuri thought. Japanese beer wasn’t that powerful though, it was hard to believe the Russian could be affected by it.

Yuuri’s mind drifted to the soothing circles at the base of his skull, how it relieved the tension in his shoulders and focused his attention in one spot. He remembered the whispered facts, grounding him to reality and the obvious ‘mistake’ pulling him from his more destructive thoughts. The onsen episode was perfect, as far as attacks went. Victor was very thorough in his attentions, it was obvious
he’d done that before.

At the rink though, Victor had been just as flustered as Yuuri. How couldn’t he be, with the accusations that were thrown at him? Yuuri dealt some low blows and that was unforgivable, even through an 11/10 meltdown. But how could he bring that kind of thing up? Hey while we’re in the middle of this awkward apology-fest I’m sorry for screaming at you about only being here to get in my ass?

Victor groaned and slapped his hands down and into his palms. “God, I just… I promised you I wouldn’t make you uncomfortable anymore and that was the first thing I did and I couldn’t have done a worse job as a friend if I’d tried and I just—just—“ Another groan punctuated the ramble as he flopped backwards, klunking against the floor like a discarded pizza box.

“Friend?” Yuuri whispered to himself. Were they friends? They had certainly spent enough time together at this point to qualify, though Yuuri was under the strict impression that it was only as Coach And Student, nothing more. Yuuri hadn’t dared to ask for more, despite the tumultuous feelings in his heart whenever Victor sat a little too close or spoke a little too softly or held eye contact for a little too long. Had Victor considered them friends this whole time?

Victor hadn’t realized what he’d said, obviously. The implications of his wording were lost on him. “Yura,” The drunk man whimpered towards the ceiling. “What do I do?”

How was Yuuri supposed to answer that? Was he even talking to him? Yura is a diminutive, he knew that much. The only other time he’d said that was to Yurio, and he’s clearly not here. Why was Victor asking him what to do? Was he already giving up on his apology? Were his intentions actually that shallow? Yuuri desperately didn’t want to think so.

Being deep in thought, Yuuri hadn’t noticed Victor sitting back up, hair disheveled from the movement, eyes still watering, breath tinted with hops and smelling like wet bread. But when Victor grabbed Yuuri’s cheeks once again, cradling Yuuri’s face in his hands like a priceless treasure, Yuuri was brought back to reality. The reality that Victor Nikiforov was on his knees in front of him, robe half-open, hair mussed, eyes red and pleading, holding his face tenderly.

“I'll go back to Russia if you truly want me to go. I can't bear the thought of hurting you further, Yuuri I just—“

“Don't!”

Victor’s grasp loosened for half a second before Yuuri’s hands were clasped over his icy fingers.

“I don't want you to leave just because of my… my issues...” Yuuri’s voice wavered, but he was intent to continue, suddenly more sure than he’d been in years. “If you go back to Russia… it'll be because I lost, not out of… pity. A-and its disrespectful to Yurio if I forfeit.”

“I can stay?” He said hopefully. Victor's eyes shone with joy and the tears still sparkling at his lashes finally spilled over onto his still-rosy cheeks, which were pulled tightly upwards due to his enormous grin.

“If I win.” Yuuri confirmed.

“Oh lapochka there's no way you could lose!” He shouted, gripping tighter to Yuuri’s cheeks even as the younger man's hands slipped away.

“You don't know that for sure, Victor—oof!”
The breath was squeezed out of him by two strong, Russian arms embracing him tightly around the shoulders. Hot breath in his ear and a wet spot forming on his neck. “You're definitely going to win, Yuuri.”

Yuuri’s brain fizzled at the action as this was indeed the first time Victor had held him in such a way. Their chests were pressed against one another, Victor’s scent right under Yuuri’s nose, silver hair tickling at his chin.

“Vi-Victor you uh—um… you're kind of…”

Victor shot back once more and placed a hand against the dresser to steady himself before he fell over yet again, slightly looming over Yuuri in what undoubtedly looked like a very compromising position. Their eyes were locked and Victor’s face flushed hard. He scrambled back and turned around completely, facing the desk and shoving his hands into the lap of his crossed legs.

Yuuri was… confused, to say the least.

Victor was obviously remorseful for his behavior, yet continued to do it. Not in a “I'm doing it anyway” kind of way but in a “shit I'm doing it again” kind of way. Yuuri couldn't tell what had changed in him between the night Victor begged to coach him and now, but it was certainly… something.

What was this? Another game? No, he hadn't been playing games before, if those words could be trusted. Victor seemed pretty sincere with his apologies and Yuuri didn't think that Victor Nikiforov would cry to get what he wanted. The fact that he was sobbing alone that first night indicated at least that much. What was the end goal here then? The purpose of this meeting? Was Victor truly just apologizing, or was this an elaborate manipulation?

A hiccup from in front of him pulled his thoughts back to the flesh and blood man sitting cross legged on his bedroom floor. Yuuri couldn't see very well from his position, but he could definitely make out a dopey grin and it looked suspiciously like Victor was clutching his chest. He was swiping at his face with the other hand, presumably to wipe away the tears that were still spilling onto Yuuri’s floor.

Yuuri’s voice was barely above a whisper. “I'm sorry too.”

Victor spun around for the millionth time that night, clearly becoming more dizzy than anticipated. “For what?! He demanded.

“I'm really hard to deal with. I'm always—I've been burdening you this whole time and—“

“I would never think of you as a burden, Yuuri. Never in my life.” Yuuri blushed at the low rasp of Victor’s voice. This time he kept his distance, he didn't squish Yuuri’s cheeks or pull him in for a hug, just placed his hand closer and gazed sadly into Yuuri’s eyes.

“But I screamed at you—“

“I'll live.”

“I said those awful things about you—“

“You were afraid.”

“I told you to go home.”
“I did.”

Yuuri lifted a brow. He was fairly certain that the sixteenish hours he'd been out cold weren't nearly enough time to hop on a plane and back. He knew from experience that the flights were at least 16 hours alone and there was no way he'd been unconscious for longer or Yuuko would have told him and oh my god he's talking about here he's talking about here in this house Victor Nikiforov is saying that home is right here oh my god.

“W-why would you… here… I mean…”

Victor’s eyes softened impossibly more and he gazed at Yuuri like he'd hung the stars in the night sky. He inched his slender fingers forward on the floor until they were gently caressing the tips of Yuuri’s own. Victor smiled with such tenderness that Yuuri couldn't bear to maintain eye contact when both of their faces were so flushed. At the spot where their hands connected was an electric current humming through their bodies, burning brighter with every second of contact.

“I made a commitment to you, zvezda moya,” Victor whispered, leaning forward, hand trailing up Yuuri’s arm, mimicking the first night where they were only just closer than they were now. The Russian’s hand came to rest against Yuuri’s jaw, a thumb gently caressing his cheek with such warmth it was close to unbearable. “My home is wherever you are.”

Yuuri was pretty bewildered at this point. Was coaching that serious? He didn't remember Celestino making these kinds of declarations! How much of a commitment could coaching really be, when Yuuri hadn't even signed any papers or agreed on a payment plan? In what world would a commitment to coach an athlete be so… soft? So tender? Yuuri’s heart sped up.

Victor’s hand suddenly stopped its caresses and slowly pulled away. He leaned against the desk behind him and the bottles up top rattled together, drawing Yuuri’s attention.

The bottles.

Victor was drunk.

That’s why he was extra touchy, obviously. That explains the tears and the odd behavior. The relief on his face and the naked affection in his eyes. Victor was obviously just a cuddly drunk.

“Ah, I'm doing it again. I'm sorry I just can't help it—or rather, I should have more control than this. It’s hard to keep my hands to myself, but I know I’ve made you uncomfortable.”

Victor sat back on his heels and gently folded his hands in his lap with a warm smile and sincere eyes.

“I’ll be a pure-hearted man from now on.”

What.

"What."

"What?" Victor placed a hand to his heart in mock offense. "Do you think me incapable? I will show you how virtuous I can be!"

He stood up, patted Yuuri’s hair, and walked towards the door.

“Our training with Minako is in two hours, you'd better get washed up!”
Victor accidentally slammed the door closed.

Yuuri accidentally slammed his mouth closed.

Chapter End Notes

**rough translations:**

*lapochka* - sweetheart (or similar)
*zvezda moya* - my star

hmu i fucken love u guys
Again

Chapter Summary

Victor skated smooth backward loops around Yuuri, demanding his attention when he spun to a stop only a couple feet away.

“My job is to make you feel confident.” Victor's voice was deep and sultry, his eyes half-lidded and pupils blown wide. “I'm the only person in the world who knows your true Eros, Yuuri.”

Chapter Notes

y'all it's 2 am and i'm exhausted. i did all of this shit on my phone please please forgive me holy fuck i NEEDED to post it now so i'm very sorry if something is fucky i will do a fixing tomorrow bc rn i am dead. (bc it's 2 am and i'm exhausted)

anyways enjoi

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

In the shower, Yuuri closes his eyes and sees Victor’s rosy cheeks. In his room getting dressed, he sits in his chair and catches Victor’s scent on the head rest. On the windy path to Minako’s studio, he can feel Victor's hand on his hair. Sweating through dance training, he can feel the wetness on his neck. Every other thought is Victor.

Victor's eyes, Victor's hands, Victor’s hair, Victor's voice.

Victor's sincerity, Victor's honesty, Victor's joy, Victor's unwavering confidence in Yuuri’s capabilities despite all evidence to the contrary.

“You're not straight.” Minako says. Tell him something he doesn't know. “You've got shitty posture right now. Take a few breaths and try again.”

Yuuri fixes his stance and his spine, taking deep belly breaths into his stomach and back. The slow pace of the inhales and exhales have always helped him relax and get back to focus, but today is different. Today is distracting.

This morning Yuuri returned from his panic attack Walk Of Shame and was greeted by Victor Nikiforov drunk in his bedroom pledging commitment to coaching him and expressing that his home is wherever Yuuri is. Truly eventful, truly unbelievable, truly tiring. Yuuri had been asleep for sixteen hours and he's already tired.

“You seem a little looser today. Crying did you some good then?” At Yuuri's surprised stare, she
continued. “Victor told me, he barged in yesterday wailing—“

She had stopped mid sentence, as though she was worried about having said too much. She eyed Yuuri with speculation, quietly deciding whether or not this was useful information to give.

“He was out of his mind with worry yesterday,” she sighed. “He burst in while I was in the middle of lunch, bawling about how he messed up and how you were having an attack and he didn't know what to do, so I told him to give you a bit of space and he looked like a kicked puppy. Your right leg is a little sloppy.”

At lunch, Yuuri had time to think about what Minako's words meant. Victor had come to Minako for advice? And he was upset to leave him alone? Judging by Victor's recent behavior, that seems... completely on-brand. Victor has been clingy pretty much this entire time, now that Yuuri thinks about it. Perhaps Victor is just that kind of person, if experience is any indicator. Yuuri is going to have to work harder to get used to it, especially if he wants to do well with the Eros program.

Mari announces that she's bringing out fish and brown rice, and Yurio sighs less out of pickiness and more out of distraction. Victor doesn't seem to realize though, even though he's been eyeing the boy since they walked in the door.

"Golodnoye bryukho ushey ne imeyet, Yuri."

"That's not it you—!"

Yurio promptly slams his hands on the table and stomps off towards his room with a growl.

“What did you say to him?” Yuuri questioned harshly.

“What? I just told him not to be picky!”

Yuuri shot him a hard look and Victor immediately lowered his head in shame. “He’s obviously feeling responsible for... for what happened,” Yuuri whispered. “You're in the wrong for telling him in the first place, you shouldn't have put that kind of pressure on him.”

“How was I supposed to know he would spill the cats?”

What.

“What.”

“The cats, Yuuri, in the bag, he spilled them out.”

“That—that's not—forget it, I'm going to talk to him.”

Yurio was on Victor’s bed petting Makkachin, who had followed him in. When he saw Yuuri enter, Yurio quickly scrambled to tap and swipe at his phone, as if he'd been preoccupied with it the whole time.

“I don't want to talk.”

Yuuri was fifteen once, he understood.

“Can you stand to listen then?” Yuuri took Yurio’s silence and phone scrolling as a yes so he continued. “I did something irresponsible out of anxiety and as a result I embarrassed myself deeply in front of fifty some odd people, including the world’s greatest figure skater, who I’ve idolized since I was little.”
Yurio lifted an eyebrow, as if to say Yeah I Know That Already Dumbass.

“I know my limits,” Yuuri said, taking a seat next to Makkachin. “I shouldn't have drank that much if I didn't want to embarrass myself. I was responsible for my own choices and I chose badly, and when I realized what the consequences were, I panicked.”

“But—!”

“But nothing. You didn’t force me into three dance-offs and you didn't force me to pole dance and you didn't force me to beg Victor to coach me. I did that on my own. You being the bearer of bad news doesn't make you responsible for the outcome.”

Yurio huffed and curled up into himself, fingers curling through Makkachin’s fur, and his chin resting on his knees. He seemed to relax a bit, but still had some sadness in his eyes. An uncharacteristically high pitched sound came from the boy.

“Why did he even come here.”

*I'm here to coach you*

*I made a commitment to you.*

*There's no way you could lose.*

*I'm here for you, Yuuri.*

*Only you.*

“I wish I knew, Yuri.”

The younger boy took a deep breath and glanced at Yuuri’s neck bandages.

“Oh, these should be fine in a couple of days, don't worr—“

“I’m not worried, pig!”

Yurio sprung off the king sized mattress and stormed out of the bedroom, shouting for Mari to hurry up with dinner.

---

After eating, cleaning, and a bit of housekeeping, Yuuri and Victor head to the rink for his choreography lesson. Yurio had the morning while Yuuri was with Minako, and now the teenager was on a run with Makkachin along the sprawling beach to be alone and clear his head some.

While Yuuri laced his skates, Yuuko gushed about Agape and how beautiful and complicated the choreography was.

“It was so… so reverent, Yuuri! The divinity of it all—!”

Yuuri chuckled as he removed his skate guards and hit the ice for the first time since his meltdown. He expected to feel tight and buzzing, to feel awkward about what had happened, but he was too excited about Eros to remember that he should be sheepish. Victor had been practically bouncing the
entire way to Ice Castle and his enthusiasm was, apparently, contagious.

Yuuri circled the rink a few times, waiting for the pleasant burn in his thighs that signaled he was warmed up. He skated a few figures and fell into some lazy drills until finally Victor’s voice came from behind the boards on the far end of the ice.

“Finally! Okay Yuuri, I’ve fixed the cd player. Head to the bench so I can finally show you Eros!” Victor flicked his hand into the air with a flourish, drama queen that he was. It was getting to be manageable, though it was strange how quickly that happened.

Yuuri slid over the the gate and stood next to Yuuko, who was bouncing in place next to Takeshi, fairly excited to press the play button on the remote. Victor took a few deep breaths, and then fell into an absolutely sultry position.

His right hip cocked outwards, shoulders back, neck bared in a subversively dominant way. The music began, a trill of guitar as Victor slid his hands over his head and then down his ribs with a subtle pop of the rear. He circled his arms around his head like a shield, brought them to cross-cross over his heart, then splayed his arms wide floating backwards, as if to take flight, stopping short to place his toe pick to the ice, canting his hips to create a delicious silhouette.

Victor’s head turned to make eye contact with Yuuri, his hair billowing around his angular face, and he lifted his chin with a smirk.

It was a challenge.

Yuuri vaguely registered a commotion near Yuuko and Takeshi, but could not bring himself to look away from Victor. The violins started in and intense footwork followed along with the melody. A clap over the head into a series of quarter turns into a spread eagle into a suggestive hand placement into a twist of the wrists into a back camel into the fiery depths of hell, basically.

Was this even physically possible? There was no way Victor is expecting him to be able to do this! It's way too complicated for Yuuri’s skill level, not to mention the… seductive nature of the program. Yuuri swallowed down his anxiety, refusing to give more thought to the ways he… inspired this choreography.

The intensity of the music ramped up and Victor was continuing the rapid footwork, sweat was already glistening on his forehead and neckline. With a final push to the side, as if discarding something—someone—Victor came to a halt with his arms wrapped around his shoulders, and the image of Victor wrapped around the neck of a lover was plain as day.

Victor skated towards the gate, sipping some water and toweling the sweat from his exposed skin.

“So, Yuuri,” He said in a low voice. “What did you think of my Eros?”

Yuuri coughed and sputtered around words as Yuuko clapped and shouted praises in the background. “I-it was… uh, kind of—like um—“ Victor's smirk was ever-present and only growing with each stuttered word, clearly satisfied with the result of his work. “It was… good…”

“I'm glad!” Victor motioned for Yuuri to join him in the center of the ice, skating lazy loops with a particular perk in his posture. “Now then, Yuuri,” he said, stopping five feet in front of the flustered man. “Which quads can you land right now?”

“I’ve got the toe loop down, and I can manage the salchow in practice but never in competition.” Yuuri was absolutely not going to mention all the times he’d practiced the flip. Best to take that to his grave. Footwork was where he was strongest, which is how he made up for missed Technical Points
when quads failed him.

“Your footwork is where you're strongest, so let's start with getting your body to memorize the step sequence first.”

Yuuri’s mouth gaped. “You're putting me… on—“

“Basics!” Victor beamed. “Now let's get to work. Start with figure drills until you're warm again and then move into the intro, I want twenty repetitions and then we’ll break for five minutes.”

“Victor, you—“

"Listen," Victor began quietly. "If we focus on your strongest point today, it'll be a guaranteed success. But if we focus on the jump composition, you're more likely to overthink it. You need to start with perfecting the presentation and interpretation, because even if you flub jumps, you can make up for it. If you only work on jumps, then there's nothing to fall back on in the worst case scenario."

He knew Victor was right, it made complete sense. It was common sense, even. But Yuuri couldn't help feeling defeated, in a way. Victor just grinned and clapped his hands together.

"Hayaku, zolotse!"

Yuuri pushed off his right foot and huffed, deciding not to tell him he’d used the wrong word. He could embarrass himself on his own later. With furrowed brows, Yuuri began his twenty minutes of drills, losing himself in his thoughts as he often did during compulsories, not noticing the way Victor stared him down for all twenty of those silent minutes.

Moving into the intro, Victor had skated next to him so that Yuuri could visualize the moves he needed to make. He felt stiff and wrong. He felt fake. How was he going to fall back on presentation when it wasn't even possible for him? The third time through the intro, Yuuri needed to watch Victor less. The seventh time through, Yuuri had it, but couldn't get the feeling right. The tenth time through, Yuuri was beginning to give up.

He wasn't a suave playboy like the song suggested, he could barely dress himself, considering how this long sleeve was way too thin and seriously not retaining heat at all, it was distracting. Yuuri shivered from the cold of the rink. The shiver locked a knee, and the locked knee flubbed a turn, and the flubbed turn had Yuuri sprawled out on the ice like a newborn fawn, all limbs and no grace.

"Yuuri!" Victor called out. "You're thinking too much again!"

Yuuri was embarrassed, he'd embarrassed himself in front of Victor again. How many times would this happen? How many times must Yuuri fail before Victor realizes the mistake he'd made? Before Victor realizes what a waste of time this was? Who cared what Yuuri was like when drunk? You can't be drunk on the ice, he was never going to get any of this. He was going to lose against Yuri Plisetsky and Victor would leave Japan and Yuuri would quit figure skating and life would go on and Yuuri would die a lonely innkeeper with weak ankles.

"Yuuri, you're better than this. You have the skills, why can't you put them to good use?"

Victor stood a few feet away from Yuuri, looking him up and down, and Yuuri could sense the appraisal. He could physically feel the trail of Victor's sight and he couldn't stand it. He didn't want Victor to see him like this, caught up in his own head and unable to crawl out for ten minutes to do simple tasks. Victor would see his incompetence, his lack of confidence, his personal failures. Victor would see too much.
Yuuri felt... angry. He was fed up of this feeling. He was tired of Victor seeing him at his worst and there being nothing he could do about it. It was so frustrating, having the skills yet not being able to utilize them. Yuuri isn't the same smooth extroverted dancer from the banquet. Yuuri couldn't be the fun and carefree person who improved the party, who twirled across the dance floor with Victor Nikiforov and stated his desires upfront. He knows he has the ability, but he hasn't the slightest idea how to harness it.

"You still doubt your natural appeal, don't you?" Victor asked. The Russian man was suddenly much closer than before. "I created Eros for you, Yuuri, it's true. But you don't have to feel obligated to recreate it. You don't have to call upon a you that doesn't remember, just focus on what Eros means to you."

Yuuri averted his gaze in favor of staring at the water bottle on the edge of the rink. What Eros meant to him? He'd never been sexual in a practical way in his entire life! He had no real experience to draw from. Even through puberty he was all blushing and denial, never thinking too hard about his... stress-relief.

"Yuuri," Victor said low in his chest. "You're capable of this on your own, I happen to know that for an absolute fact. I won't let you hold yourself back from your true potential." Victor skated smooth backward loops around Yuuri, demanding his attention when he spun to a stop only a couple feet away.

"My job is to make you feel confident." Victor's voice was deep and sultry, his eyes half-lidded and pupils blown wide. "I'm the only person in the world who knows your true Eros, Yuuri." Victor placed a finger on his lips the way he did when he was scheming. Yuuri let out a sigh that almost turned into a whimper.

Victor dragged the finger over his soft and shiny lower lip, pulling it down a bit and giving Yuuri a peek at his lower teeth. It was a hot gesture that left Yuuri red as a tomato.

"Won't you please show me again?"

Yuuri's head was so fogged he barely noticed the distance between them closing steadily. True to his word, Victor wasn't going to touch him. But the proximity and the... lip thing were driving him mad. He was frustrated at Victor's insistence on perfecting before improving, but this kind of frustration was... new. He leaned forward, subconsciously yearning for the contact he'd just this morning rejected.

Yuuri's glazed eyes snapped back to reality when the rink door slammed open.

"OI, OLD MAN! YOU GAVE ME THE WRONG NOTEBOOK AND THESE FOOTNOTES ARE DISGUSTING!"

Yurio paled at the sight before him before tossing the notebook onto the rink, shouting something about throwing up, and slamming the door again.

Yuuri bent down to pick up the smallish book of choreography notes and illustrations, and flipped it open to a middle page.

Amateurish sketches littered every other page. Figure with his hands on his chest, Figure with his hands twisting around his head, Figure with his hand delicately placed on his cocked hip, Figure with his hand running through messy hair and biting his lip. There were scribbles in Russian across the page and pointing to various parts of the figure drawings, but also a few words in English.
Yuuri didn’t know what he was looking at, but he had a feeling it was personal and important. Victor snatched it from his hands as quickly as Yuuri had picked it up.

“Ah! I gave him the Eros notes by mistake. I'll give him the correct notes after dinner.” Victor knocked himself on the forehead, chuckling at his mistake. He skated towards the gate, putting his skate guards and coach voice on. “Yuuri, go through a few more repetitions and then cool down and clean up for dinner. And give some thought about what Eros means to you before your evening workout.”

He was halfway out the door, leaving Yuuri gaping on the ice and utterly confused, when he turned around with a final order.

“No jumps! See you at home!”

“You know, Victor probably hasn't thought about it this hard, you should have just made something up instead of getting pissy.” Takeshi was pressing on Yuuri's back, assisting him through a cool-down stretch.

“Victor can get away with not thinking about it, he's got his genius ability to work with.” Yuuri let loose a small grunt, feeling a little tighter than usual. Maybe it was all the tension from practice catching up to him. Takeshi’s hands let up on the pressure for a moment, and Yuuri’s stretch was cut short.

“I saw a kind of story in the choreography, and I saw Victor’s notes and pieced some things together.” Yuuri hopped up onto the bench, ready to act out the story he found. “A playboy comes to town, and all the women fall for him. He can get any one of them, but chooses the most beautiful woman in town as a challenge.” Yuuri splays his hands out in front of him, as if to push someone away. “The beautiful woman is immune to his advances, at least she is at first. As they play the game of love, she finds herself falling for him despite knowing he'll be moving on once he has her.”

Yuuri puts on an anguished, lovesick expression, and falls to his knees as if to beg god for mercy. “She falls for him anyway, and just as she thought, he casts her away and disappears, leaving her longing for him.”

“Kya! So hot! Take me now, Yuu-san!” Takeshi squeals in a falsetto, eyes starry and posing like a teenage girl. “That doesn't sound like you at all though, seriously.”
“Well apparently it is, how the hell am I supposed to recreate something like that?”

“Well are you supposed to recreate it? I thought you said he told you not to?”

A long-suffering sigh was ripped from Yuuri’s chest. “Victor said to think about what Eros means to me, but I have zero sober experience with that kind of thing!” He groaned, slumping onto the bench. He laid flat on his stomach and released a pained sigh. “How am I supposed to ‘find my own Eros’ when it just… isn't me?”

Takeshi turned away from Yuuri to begin his own stretches while he considered it, humming in thought. “You looked pretty sexy in your copycat skate, why not just do that again?”

Yuuri shot up from his laying position, overextending his back a bit in the process. “I can’t just fake emotions, I’ll never surpass Victor by copying him like that!” There was no way, that would be so disingenuous. Disrespectful, even. To everyone. If he builds his career on imitation rather than interpretation, then it’s a slap in the face to everyone who believes in him. It’s like spitting on Victor’s skates and saying ‘You’re not worth my effort’.

Takeshi turns around with a grin while Yuuri is engrossed in the ridiculousness of ‘faking it’. “Surpass…?”

Yuuri blanched.

“You really think you’re gonna become better than Victor Nikiforov just by trying to be sexy?” He taunted. He was a relentless tease when he found an opening, and never let up on Yuuri, not since they were little kids.

Yuuri’s flailing only encouraged the older man. “What?! No! I didn’t—I don’t mean—“

“Ha! How can someone as innocent as you beat the hottest bachelor on the planet?” Laughter filled the locker room as Yuuri planted his head into his hands. Takeshi was too much sometimes.

Bathing with Yurio was more of a chore than anything. The teenager couldn’t just relax and enjoy the bath, he kept demanding lotions and special shampoos and no not that one the other one no not that one the other one no idiot forget it just get the one in my suitcase it's blue not purple shut up where's the body wash why wouldn’t you grab the body wash too it was right next to the shampoo and god help him if Yuuri wasn't a full grown adult he'd kick the child's ass.

Yurio was rather abrasive tonight, given his earlier hesitation, but if he was feeling better, Yuuri wasn’t going to upset the delicate balance the boy had found. Finally able to relax after playing errand boy for the Russian Punk, Yuuri found that the silence and calm had his thoughts drifting back into less pleasant territory.

Yuuri’s hands drifted to his stiff neck, rubbing his washcloth over the aching area. Going dead weight, he brushed over his chest. Now that he'd dropped the excess body fat, his pectorals were shaping up rather nicely. They had a very Square kind of quality that made Yuuri proud. Now that he thinks about it, his entire body is shaping up nicely again. His stomach was toned again, his thighs were the same size but gone was the jiggle, replaced with the rock hard muscle that he was proudest of. His hips kept some padding but honestly Yuuri kind of loved it.
The soft contours of his body clashing with the hard angles gave his silhouette a slightly androgynous expression that Yuuri had always been drawn to. If only he’d had long gorgeous hair like Victor used to, his performances would gain an edge of shock value that would, at the very least, mimic an interpretation of Eros.

He was twenty three years old! Why was he having such a hard time with this! Mature sexiness should be a simple task for an adult but Yuuri was, by all accounts, a late bloomer. His first kiss wasn't until college, and it wasn't even a romantic kiss! The only actual feelings for another person that Yuuri had ever felt was a crush on Yuuko when he was a child, thinking this classmate or that senpai was really good looking in high school, and an ever-present adoration of Victor Nikiforov.

Yuuri had nothing to work with.

“Yuuri, hold my phone so I can post my favorite onsen to Instagram!” Victor shouted, barging in with only a towel loosely wrapped around his waist.

Yuuri didn't bother moving from his comfortable position over a rock as he smirkingly informed Victor that his dreams would be dashed. “Taking pictures in the bath doesn't sound very virtuous, Victor.”

The Russian man widened his stance, placing his hand to his chest in offense. “How rude! I only wanted to share the most relaxing place on earth with all my followers!”

“It's not allowed.”

Victor sulked, and his slumped posture had his towel dropping to the floor, mimicking Victor’s fallen mood as he groaned in defeat and pouted his way into the water.

Now, Yuuri was used to the culture of public bathing, was used to keeping his eyes on the face and never roaming elsewhere. No eye contact between strangers, keep to yourself, no splashing, no running, don’t disturb other people, never take the last milk in the fridge, all that good stuff. Having been raised in an Inn, Yuuri was a master of politeness in the baths.

But Yuuri couldn't help the quarter-second stray of his eyes. Mentally debasing himself for such a rude violation, Yuuri was distracted enough to allow a small bud of thought into his mind. Perhaps he did have something to work with.

“And here you are, Vicchan!”

Mama, the absolute traitor, sets an extra large bowl of katsudon in front of Victor. And then a slightly smaller one in front of Yurio, who was barely conscious. Yuuri stares down at his plate of broccoli and onions, then to his bowl of brown rice, then back to Victor’s heaping bowl of katsudon.

Shit was bad.

Yuuri hadn’t had katsudon since Victor showed up, hadn't tasted the perfectly crisp pork, hadn't felt the smooth egg on his tongue, hadn't experienced the steamy, starchy white rice just a little too hot to handle in his impatient mouth.

Yuuri chased a piece of meat with his eyes as Victor placed the chopsticks delicately between his lips, a soft sigh barely audible in the room. Yuuri knew that sigh, the satisfaction of the first perfect bite, the crunch of the breading, the pop of the peas, little surprises as garnishes often are.
Victor swallowed the mouthful obscenely, and Yuuri tracked the movement in the older man’s throat like a tiger on it’s prey, and Victor moaned. The sound went straight to Yuuri’s belly, falling low and coiling tight.

“So good~” Victor whispered. The absolutely filthy tone of his voice wasn't helping anything at all, Yuuri was completely wrecked, mind destroyed from the day’s exhaustion and the haze of hunger. Of desire.

Victor leaned forward to meet another bite of his dinner, mouth hanging open as another small of egg tangled sensually into the rice was placed upon his fat pink tongue. He shut his supple lips to chew his meal and Yuuri caught a stray grain of rice sticking to the corner of Victor’s smirking mouth.

Yurio is barely awake, but still notices something about Victor’s demeanor before Yuuri does. Which makes sense because Yuuri is too glazed over to notice anything besides Victor's mouth and cuts of pork, definitely not whatever Yurio is saying between lazy snarls.

“Oh, right! Yuuri,” And good lord the way he cradled the name as if it were a precious treasure. “Have you given any more thought to Eros yet?”

Victor’s tongue darts out of his mouth the finally—finally—catch that errant grain of rice, then flicks it back out to wet his lips, savoring the residual taste of katsudon that lingers there. What kind of experience would it be, to be as delicious as katsudon? To be as desirable, as maddening, even half as delectable?

God, what Yuuri wouldn't give right now just for a moment to be that—

“—Katsudon”

The world around him silenced. Yurio slowly turns his head towards Yuuri, eyes filled with manic amusement. Yuuri slowly reddens, processing what just escaped his mouth.

“YESHCHE RAZ!?” Victor shouts, slamming his hands to the table, jerking Yuuri from his cloudy fantasy.

Yuuri is strawberry red, and Yurio is turning blue he's laughing so hard. Yuuri can't meet Victor's face right now. He can't for the rest of his life probably. It's bed time, dinner be damned.

“I-I'm going to sleep now!” He announces, hours early. “Goodnight!”

“Goodnight, katsudon!” Yurio calls after him, doubling over.

Chapter End Notes

rough translations:

"Golodnoye bryukho ushey ne imeyet, Yuri" - A hungry belly has no ears, Yuri. (something my grandma used to say to me, albeit in a different language lmao)

"Hayaku, zolotse!" - victor means to say 'hurry up' which is 'isoge' (according to google and my grammar books, lemme know if i'm fucky here) but ends up saying "faster". Zolotse means gold, treasure, it's a tender word and y'all know i love victor being a huge sap
"Yeshche raz?!" - i'm hoping this means something like 'again?!' to give a feeling of 'i can't believe this shit is happening again'

i hope this was even remotely coherent i literally did everything in my phone and im dying.
The costume in Yuuri's hands is pastel orange, with neon-colored fake fur trim on the neck and sleeves. Imitation Topaz crystals make a gaudy design on the front, and the back is... nonexistent. It honestly looks like a badly dressed Creamsicle. Yuuri has never seen this costume before in his entire life. Yuuri has seen every skate Victor has ever performed, has tuned-in for every interview he's ever done, has clipped every photo in every newspaper and magazine that Victor has so much as slightly appeared in.

This costume doesn't exist.

The following morning, Yuuri has a new name.

"Oi, Katsudon, pick up the pace!"

Yuuri groans. Why had he spoken? Why had he let his thoughts stray so far into dangerous territory. Thank god the rest of the thought didn't come hurtling out of his traitorous mouth, Victor thinking he was aroused by food is leagues better than Victor knowing he's aroused by Victor.

"Picture the entangling of the egg!" He says, instructing the two Yu(u)ris through absolutely spartan practice sessions. "Feel the steam coming off the rice!" He says, when the only steam in the room is coming from the two on the ice who are actually working instead of snacking on Japanese candy on the sidelines.

Footwork and quads and drills and strength training and beach runs and only five measly minutes of rest in between and then all over again after lunch. The burn in his gut was surprisingly pleasant, however. Not being able to concentrate on anything but the next set of crunches was efficient at keeping his mind in the right place for competition. For this reason, Yuuri loved the intense workout part of training.

What he didn't enjoy at all was Victor's insistence that a waterfall needed to be incorporated into the
“Ritual purification, Yuuri! Invoke the spirits of Eros and Agape at the holy shrine!” Victor said.

“That's vaguely racist and a colossal waste of perfectly good training time.” Yuuri didn't say.

The roaring of the waterfall couldn't drown out the sounds of his own mind kicking itself, no matter how hard it tried. Though the rumbling pressure cascading onto the top of his head was delightful, he had to admit. Nothing felt quite as good as a head massage. Yuuri’s mind drifted to thoughts of Phichit, fresh faced and eager to demonstrate what he'd learned in his Easy-A class.

“Okay Yuuri, put your head between my knees—“

“No! You’ll be facing the tv you dummy! I'll be sitting on the bed for a better reach, come on!”

Yuuri nestled the back of his head against the edge of his awful little dormitory mattress and his best friend’s hands were immediately threading through raven locks, alternating hard and soft pressure on all the best spots. Hairline to forehead to eyebrows and back up the the crown, it was like pure contentment was streaming over his head.

Phichit was humming some cartoon song while he took Yuuri’s entire soul apart at the seams and gently stitched it back together again. Nothing had ever been so calming, and Yuuri could only yearn for his onsen back in Japan which would surely enhance this entire experience tenfold.

Phichit was a real, genuine friend. A kind guy with heartfelt sincerity in his every action. The sort of man who had your back no matter what embarrassing nonsense you got into. Phichit would definitely have been Yuuri’s Agape…

But there's no Agape to look for. Yuuri was stuck with Eros and several awkward conversations to dance around. Whatever happened to good old fashioned politely-ignoring-other-people's-embarrassing-slip-ups? How was he going to approach this? Hey Victor, could you perhaps let go of the fact that you basically, in front of my parents and a child, asked me what I felt aroused by, and I accidentally answered with a food?

Yuuri couldn't even muster up the decency to be really, properly embarrassed about this. He was mostly just angry with himself. Victor was at least doing his part by adhering to that 'virtue' joke, so why couldn't Yuuri? How difficult could it possibly be to Not Have Indecent Thoughts About One's Coach? Though they were on even ground by sticking to the no touching rule. Wait, it was only about touching, right? Did that mean thoughts were fair game?

Before he could finish the thought, something sharp drilled into his head.

Yuuri opened his eyes—when had he closed them?—to find a black twig with a single leaf quickly floating away from his feet. Nature didn't want him here at all, clearly. There was no way this spiritual waterfall nonsense would ever apply to his unique situation

“Yurio,” He said, shaking his head to get the water out of his ears. “I’m getting hungry, so let's head back.”

Yuuri had taken a number of steps before turning to realize the younger boy remained stock-still under the waterfall.

“Yurio? Can you hear me over the water?” Yuuri said a bit louder, hoping the boy hadn't gone deaf
from the roar of the falls.

The teenager’s breathing was even, measured. His posture was perfect, his stance solid despite the torrent of water on his head. Yuuri could see the bump of his eyes flitting back and forth under pale pink eyelids. A small stream of snot peeked out from the boy’s nostril, and Yuuri somehow noticed it. The falls were too cold to be using this time of year, and he didn't want Yurio catching ill right before a life-determining competition. Yuuri reached out to grab the boy’s arm and pull him out of the chilly water.

“Yurio! Are you alright?”

With a level of softness previously unseen, Yurio’s bright green eyes met with Yuuri’s deep brown, and they stood in silence, one stunned, the other dazed. Yurio looked so… vulnerable. As if the slightest breeze would break him, a huge contrast to the enduring, unwavering aura he was projecting mere moments ago. He ripped his eyes from the child's gaze and turned away from him.

"We're calling it a day." Yuuri declared, pulling him towards the shrine where their clothes were located. "Dinner is gonna be pretty great, so let's dry off and head back."

It was the fourteenth, which meant that a new shipment of food was coming in from the out of town supplier in the morning. Which meant Yuuri could finally, finally, eat something besides the leftover broccoli and onions with his rice, because there was no need to save food for unexpectedly hungry guests. Tonight was a free-for-all. Tonight was a cheat day.

Tonight was meat.

Yuuri sat down at the low table in the main dining hall, a small grill and huge bowls of sliced meat and vegetables surrounding it making a lovely decoration. Yurio wandered in from the direction of the onsen, rubbing at his hair with a fluffy, personalized towel.

"Where's the old man?" The boy grumbled.

Mari set a beer on the table and flopped down, immediately grabbing at meat to grill. “He's at Nagahama Ramen. Ken texted me a picture, here.”

Mari fiddled with her phone for a moment and then shoved it into Yuuri’s face, and what greeted him was an image of Victor Nikiforov, flushed from alcohol, one sake bottle upturned and the other dangerously close to the edge of the counter, and slurping at a bowl of beef ramen like an absolute mess.

“He’s definitely not waking up on time tomorrow,” Yurio scoffed. The boy stabbed at the last piece of beef with his fork. “I need the protein more than you, katsudon. Maybe pick up a vegetable for once—ow!”

Mari giggled as she launched another carrot across the table at Yurio’s head with a fancy spoon. “How’s that for a vegetable, Yurio?” She taunted, extending the end of his nickname to emphasize the difference.

Yuuri kept out of the food fight, nibbling at his hoarded grilled beef slices, hidden behind a large bowl. His thoughts drifted to Victor at the ramen stand. He was slam dunk drunk, would he get home okay? Did he even know the way? Maybe he should go grab the drunk Russian before he says something wrong in that stilted Japanese he barely knows.

Yuuri missed the sidelong glance his sister was leveling at him as she dodged another flying vegetable and stood up suddenly. "I'm gonna head out that way, have a few drinks myself. You kids
head to bed, you've only got like two days left."

Oh, right.

"Victor still isn't here..."

“He’s probably not going to show up for at least an hour,” Yurio grunted as he pulled on his skates in the Ice Castle locker room. “He wakes up with terrible hangovers even though he recovers quickly. He shames his country for being so weak.”

Yuuri snorted out a laugh, hurting the soft palette at the roof of his mouth. The sensation reminded him of the sharp pain on his hip every time he flubbed a jump. He was so tired of missing the jumps it was tangible through the rest of his body. He only had one day left and if he was going to keep representing Victor he needed more than just the Toe-Loop. Yurio already has the Salchow, which Yuuri can’t seem to land properly. The kid landed it in competition when he was twelve! Twelve! How was Yuuri going to surprise the audience more if he didn't even have any technical superiority? How was he going to prove to Victor that he's worthy of his instruction if he only had one quad under his belt?

"Ah, Yurio, wait a moment!"

The boy was getting ready to leave the locker room to head for the ice, and turned around at the call of his much-hated nickname.

"What."

Yuuri swallowed his apprehensions and clapped his hands together, bowing his head.

"The quad Salchow, please teach me."

The silence stretched through the locker room as the teenager stared at him, sizing him up. Yuuri peeked through his fringe to see that as Yurio's piercing green eyes were fixed on him intently, his nose was flaring. Was he angry? Of course he was probably upset. Who would want to give the enemy more ammo for his weapon? Yuuri squashed his hands together harder, bowed his head lower, knowing that the cultural intent would be lost on the boy, but hoping it would reach him in some way.

"Please."

Yurio started walking towards the rink entrance, was he going to refuse? When he continued walking to the door, it seemed like he would. His hand stopped on the push bar.

"Show me your salchow and I'll tell you why you suck." He muttered.

Yuuri stood staring at the boy's back, noting the tension in his shoulders.

"Let's go, Katsudon! It's not like we have all day!" Yurio hurried into the rink, pulling off his skate guards and beginning his warmup.

Yuuri followed suit, doing laps, then figures, then double jumps. He noticed Yurio picking up speed
and stopped to watch. He executed his quad salchow, a little shaky on the landing, but no fall, no touchdown, hands held out, legs straight. Objectively a pretty great jump.

"Now you."

Yuuri and Yurio traded places several times, taking turns performing salchows until the younger boy was flushed and panting. No breaks, no surrender. Spartan training for this elusive jump that a twelve-year-old landed before Yuuri did.

"You're wrapping your free leg too hard around your other leg. Your knee probably keeps buckling because of the pressure. Also your takeoff isn't forceful enough. You need to get more height or else your knee is gonna buckle no matter what." A fifteenth flubbed jump left Yuuri sprawling out on the ice under the Russian child, who shouted "You suck!" And demanded he be watched again.

The squeak of the rink doors interrupted their session, and they turned to see who was intruding on their secret practice. Victor was finally present with mussed hair, baggy eyes, and a pained smile.

"Sorry I'm late~!" He singsonged into the air of the rink. He smiled with a finger to his lips. "Ah, what's this? What were you two doing just now?"

Both skaters freeze for a moment before heading off in different directions while Victor prepares his coaching station, which consists of the cd player, many bottles of water, a camcorder, and several sweet snacks. "Yurio, drink some water and then start your run-through." Victor said, adjusting his snacks into alphabetical order.

Yuuri exited the rink and put his guards back on, sipping on his own water and chewing on some cola gummies. He took a shameless look at Victor, who was intently watching Yurio's performance. His shoulders were square and firm, his body straight and carried perfectly, not at all betraying the fact that he was getting sloshed all night at a ramen stand.

His face, however, was a different story. The purple under his eyes was deep and saggy, but his eyelids were rimmed red and puffy. His skin was more pale than usual, his hair a little greasy. He looked like he'd woken up at Nagahama and came straight to the rink, even though Yuuri was certain that Mari had retrieved him.

Trying to sleep was a hassle when Yuuri could hear Mari in Victor's room, trying desperately to get him into his bed. He could hear mumbled "I Know"s and "It's Okay"s and "Shhhh"s. Yuuri had been worried for a moment that Victor was crying again, and together with their big talk, it was starting to seem like Victor was simply a sobbing drunk.

"It's it wonderful, Yuuri? He's found his Agape."

The Russian's eyes were on Yurio, but his words were for Yuuri. Yuuri spared a glance towards the ice where he could tell that Yurio's face was dripping with reverence. His eyes projected deep longing for unconditional love and acceptance. His fingers were softly tenting as he gazed to the sky as if praying for love.

This was true Agape.

Victor's words pulled Yuuri back to the present. "He's ready for the next stage."

Next stage? There was more? Yuuri still hadn't tapped into the Eros of katsudon and there was still more to get through? There was only one day of training left! Yuuri wiped the sweat from his brow and huffed. He should have known he wasn't ready for this. He still hadn't figured out how to embody Eros through food. Yuuri still lacked the backbone that his program needed.
At dinner, Victor was fidgeting with his phone and glancing at the entrances, barely poking at his fish. A moment later, Minako lumbered through the main doors, asking Toshiya for a beer. Victor looked rather elated to see her sit down across the table from the three of them. She asked Yuuri how his training was going, asked Yurio if he wanted to indulge in some extra ballet training, and continuously glared at Victor every couple of minutes because he was sipping his own beer very loudly every time there was even the slightest lull in the conversation.

Minako sighed deeply.

“Oh, right,” she said, with no actual curiosity in her voice at all, instead sounding genuinely exasperated. “What are you two going to do about costumes?”

“I didn't bring anything with me.” Yurio responded.

“My seamstress lives in the states.” Yuuri added.

Victor slammed his beer to the table with a huge grin. “Worry not! I've had my costumes flown in from Russia! The suitcases are in my room as we speak!”

"Ah—for real?!!” Yuuri scrambled to his feet and booked it to Victor's makeshift bedroom, ignoring the indignant squawks from the left-behind Yurio. *Victor Nikiforov's* costumes? Outfits that *Victor Nikiforov* wore? Clothes that had been on *Victor Nikiforov's* body? Is this what people feel when they walk into the bright light and know they're heading to heaven? Yuuri made it to Victor's room, anticipating boxes and boxes full of costumes—Victor had been competing for quite some time after all—and tore the door open to find...

Two carry-on sized suitcases laying flat on the bed.

Yuuri stands frozen in place as Yurio skids to a stop next to him, suddenly just as bewildered. “I know for a fact you have more than this, old man.”

“How goodness me! It seems the others have been delayed!” Victor said flippantly, with absolutely no concern in his voice at all. “These must be the only two that made it all the way to Hasetsu!”

Victor prances over to the suitcases, already unzipped, and dramatically flips them both open. There's only like, four costumes in the tiny luggage. Yuuri and Yurio move forward, each standing in front of one suitcase, and both pick up the topmost outfits by the shoulders.

Yuuri’s is pastel orange, with neon-colored fake fur trim on the neck and sleeves. Imitation Topaz crystals make a gaudy design on the front, and the back is… nonexistent. It honestly looks like a badly dressed Creamsicle. Yuuri has never seen this costume before in his entire life. Yuuri has seen every skate Victor has ever performed, has tuned-in for every interview he's ever done, has clipped every photo in every newspaper and magazine that Victor has so much as slightly appeared in. This costume doesn't exist.

He glances over at Yurio’s costume, which is so deeply black it seemed to be pulling in all of the light from around it, sucking it in until it was a costume-shaped hole in the universe. It was a plain,
blacker-than-black leotard, which came with a light blue bomber jacket covered in yellowish-white greek letters. It looks like someone just tossed in an old jacket and body tights and hoped for the best.

This costume also does not exist.

“Victor,” Yurio grumbles, words dripping with hate. “What the hell is this?”

“Bozhe moi!” He shouts. “Those two were rejected previous designs! How on earth did they get in there? I suppose the only ones left are the other two in those suitcases!” His fake pout was utterly unconvincing and wholly suspicious, but Yuuri wasn't about to care, because the next costume in Yuuri’s unworthy hands was the shiny, black, mesh, bejeweled costume from Victor’s final Junior World Championship. In 2006, a 17 year old Victor Nikiforov stood on the ice in Ljubljana, Slovenia and smashed the world record for Juniors with a whopping 193.57 total score in This Very Costume.

Victor's eyes dart to a corner of the ceiling as he continues. “A-ah, I see you have in your hands my junior—“

“Your Junior World Championship Slovenia 2006 free skate costume in which you shattered the world record with a total score of 193.57 points…” Yuuri mumbled.

“Y-yes,” Victor stuttered. “That is correct! Would you like—“

Yuuri locked eyes with Victor in the gentlest possible way, the affection in his heart flowing from those deep brown irises like some kind of chocolate fountain that exuded love and nothing else. “I want this one!”

Victor’s face softened, blushing gently, and the corner of his mouth quirked upwards. “It's all yours.” He whispered back.

Yuuri lets the blanket fall from over his head, and the world is dark. Yuuri opens his eyes, and the room is dark. Yuuri spreads his fingers, and through the cracks he sees himself in his full length mirror, dressed in Victor’s old costume—no, Yuuri’s new costume.

His hands leave his face and trail down, feeling over the crystals that make a diagonal line from his shoulder to his belly button. He wraps his hands around his arms, and thumbs at the mesh. It isn't harsh or itchy at all, it's soft, not unlike silk. The solid black fabric on his left half is so smooth, he can't tell what kind of fabric is is, but he knows his chest likes it.

His palm brushes against one pert nipple and Yuuri gasps. The look on his own face is almost… sexy? His cheeks are flushed and his pupils are dilated, there's a barely-noticeable sheen across what little there is to see of his neck. The high collar looking much like… well, a collar. He’s trapped in, possessed, not really but it feels that way. He's tied into this second skin, Victor’s skin, and he can smell the light scent of cold that he knows came from the altitude of being shipped by air and the weather still being rough and dry, but he inhales deeply at his shoulder and imagines that perhaps Victor’s scent is similar.

Yuuri lets his hands drift from their crossed position, following the delicate curve of his waist and his right hand catches on a piece of asymmetrical fabric. It's a tiny skirt, red underneath, an eye-catching
pop of color on such a magnetic and enticing black, clearly meant to draw attention to his hips, or his ass. He fingers at the front hem of the skirt and his palm accidentally puts light pressure where he least needs it right now.

He wasn't wearing a dance belt, or underwear even. Just his own skin and the second skin enveloping him into this haze of desire. Desire for whom? For Victor? It somehow felt a little more complicated than that.

Yuuri was softly panting now, and his fringe was sticking to his forehead in a decidedly unenjoyable way. He ran his half-gloved hand backwards through his damp hair and—

And it stayed put.

With his hair slicked back, Yuuri looked absolutely… seductive. He moved into the first position of the intro to Eros, and held a sharp gaze with himself in the mirror with his lips gently parted. From the strong line of his jaw, to the hard angles of his chest, mesh entangled with his shoulder and right arm like a freshly cracked egg, to the perfect line of his hips and the curve of his thighs, not unlike the dome on a perfect bowl of rice, all the way down to his dancers calves, which could move so expertly you could hear the crisp, sharp snap of the air, there wasn't a single part of his body that wasn't crying out to be devoured.

He was truly desirable.

Yuuri began to connect the dots between the choreography and the banquet. The dance styles incorporated into the program were almost identical to the dances he and Victor shared months prior. Yuuri was cast as a playboy, present for a night of fun, and then scattered to the winds when he was through.

But Yuuri was no playboy. He didn't capture one heart and then toss it away to capture the next, no. He captured the exact heart he wanted—needed—and simply pulled back. Baiting.

Waiting for the right time.

And the time was now. Yuuri Katsuki, standing in front of his mirror, slick with sweat and need, angled perfectly to be the most seductive creature on the planet, was finally, finally Eros.

An hour later, Yuuri was knocking on the door of Minako’s apartment with a determined glint in his eye. Minako didn't chew him out for coming by so late without calling. In fact, she was smiling broadly, as though she knew exactly why he was there.

“Minako-sensei,” Yuuri declared, standing firm. “I need you to teach me how to seduce Victor.”

Her sharp, toothy grin seemed almost predatory. Her eyes glowed in the light of the moon, her lithe body backlit by an ethereal orange haze. Her voice was low, satisfied, prepared.

“We’ve got work to do, little Katsudon.”

Chapter End Notes

"Bozhe moi!" means My God!

anyways Victor is a great actor but i suspect did not care to make it a Real Act. I
decided that the eros and agape costumes were incredibly important to Victor and since he was worried that his antics might have changed anything significant, he wanted to make absolutely sure that they picked the Correct Costumes. i decided to be silly about it for funsies.

I also decided that yuuri is embarrassed abt what he might look like in the costume (which i decided he loves dearly) and has to cover his face to slowly look at himself. i wanted a more sensual "sexual awakening" type deal but decided against it in favor of a pretty average "i'm hot" revelation because i want the future lovemaking to have more emotional impact. (lov me a slow-burn)

pls comment i'm dead inside and am desperate for validation thank u i lov u all so much
Chapter Summary

She must have been just under two meters tall, radiating diamond light from the crown of her flaxen hair to the tips of her sparkling stilettos. The woman shoved past Takeshi with no small amount of force and dropped to her knees in front of Yurio, her shimmering sundress making a soft ruffling sound as it settled around her like a misting fog upon a valley.

“Slavnyy! Moy syn krasivo!” The goddess whispered. Her voice was just as beautiful as she looked; if songbirds and lullabies had a child, that child would be very jealous.

Chapter Notes

oh my god. oh my god. it was just gathering dust for five entire days and i thought "this is it! this is the end of my streak!" and then the inspiration bat capped me and i fell into the "typing for two straight hours" pit.

it's been a WHOLE WEEK I'M THE WORST.

i love all of you so much thank you so much for putting up with me omg

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After four hours of training with Minako, Yuuri sneaks back into Yutopia at 3:45 am. The exhibition skate starts at noon, so he has six hours to sleep and just over an hour to prepare. It isn't the first time he's snuck out or back in, so he knows where the squeaky spots are on the floor. One of them takes up a large space in front of Victor’s bedroom door, so Yuuri has to move slowly and carefully to avoid waking anyone up.

He successfully avoids the trigger plank and is ready to continue to his room when he hears it. Again.

For what seems to be the millionth time, Victor is sniffing. The babbled Russian language filters softly through the shoji doors and tinkles in Yuuri’s ears, and he feels that pang in his chest again. Is he sobbing into Makkachin’s fur? Into a pillow? Is it Yuuri’s fault again? Or is it Yuuri’s fault still?

A higher voice joins in, clearer.

“Ya ne prostit vam, Victor.”

“Ya ne khochu proshcheniya. Ya khochu chtoby moy muzh.” Victor hisses in response.
Yuuri knows he's intruding again, knows he shouldn't be listening, knows he is violating the privacy of the two Russians regardless of whether or not he understands their language. But he can't help feeling drawn to the agonized tone of Victor's voice. Yuuri can't comprehend a single word, and yet feels wholly responsible once again.

“You will *never* understand—“

“I understand enough to know that you're being a coward!” The teenager spat.

Makkachin whined, bringing Yuuri back to the reality that he's standing in a dark hallway at nearly four in the morning listening to a conversation that doesn't concern him. He continued to his room and flopped onto his bed. He expected to stay up and think about what he'd overheard, he was expecting to have the thoughts consume him until the sun came up, but instead Yuuri had passed out immediately.

Yurio blushed when Yuuko hugged him tightly, wishing him luck. Even as he pushed away and declared he didn't need luck, his face remained flushed with satisfaction. Yuuri suspected that Yuuko had developed a vaguely maternal bond with the Russian Punk, and smiled at the thought. Yurio was joking with Yuuko and the triplets as if they'd known each other their entire lives, language barriers be damned. The banter between them didn't need coherent sentences, only the playful intent of having fun.

The triplets dodged beams of color as the overhead light reflected off the jewels and crystals on the Agape costume. Happy shrieking and playful “pchoo!” sounds filled the air of the locker room while the audience was filtering into the rink just on the other side of the wall. Yuuri couldn't imagine a more familial sight to behold.

And then a goddess strode through the door.

She must have been just under two meters tall, radiating diamond light from the crown of her flaxen hair to the tips of her sparkling stilettos. The woman shoved past Takeshi with no small amount of force and dropped to her knees in front of Yurio, her shimmering sundress making a soft ruffling sound as it settled around her like a misting fog upon a valley.

“*Slavnyy! Moy syn krasivo!*” The goddess whispered. Her voice was just as beautiful as she looked; if songbirds and lullabies had a child, that child would be very jealous.

All the blood in his tiny body must have rushed to Yurio’s face, because he was swaying back as the woman prostrated before him suddenly wrapped her arms tightly around the boy’s stomach, babbling incoherent Russian into his bedazzled belly.

“What.

“Eh?!”

A chorus of disbelief sounded off from behind Yurio as he futilely pushed his mother, apparently, away from his body. Yuuri could only stare slack jawed at the literal angel that was gracing their presence. Yuuko looked as though she were about to faint, she was so giddy. The woman’s platinum
ringlets cascaded down her back like a fountain, swirling with every shove of her son’s hands as she squealed with delight, fussing with Yurio's costume and smoothing out his hair, babbling in Russian.

"Anna!" Came Victor's voice from the direction of the exit.

"Vitya!" The woman cried.

The two beautiful adults crashed into a hug and twirled, much the way a music box figurine would. Yurio's mother left her arms slung romantically around Victor's neck as she bounced and giggled with happiness, gazing deeply into his eyes. The two shared a short exchange in Russian before Victor caught Yuuri staring, and suddenly pulled back from her.

"Ah, this is Yurio's mother, Anastasiya Plisetsky. She taught me everything there is to know about modeling!" His thousand-watt grin only grew as he "I told her about this exhibition and she was surprised—insulted even—to be informed second hand!" Victor shot a teasing look at the angry teenager. "Thankfully, I was able to fly her in for the competition! Isn't it wonderful Yuuri?"

"Yuri? Yego takzhe nazyvayut Yuri—?" She gasped, eyes suddenly the size of dinner plates, and zipped right into Yuuri's personal space. "Yuuri Katsuki?!"

Yuuri could only blink.

"The Yuuri Katsuki? Bozhe moi! Please—your autograph, please!" Anna ripped a notebook from an unseen pocket and held it out for the Japanese skater to take. Her eyes were the color of sea glass and just as sparkly. She stared at Yuuri as though he hung the stars in the sky, there were even noticeable tears pricking at the corners of her thick, dark lashes.

Victor stood proudly off to the side as his mentor fawned over his student, beaming happily at the sight. Yuuri was confused, but Victor’s smile was infectious, and a shy grin crept onto his own face as well. Yuuri tentatively took the notebook and pen from Anna, scribbling his name in both English and Kanji, as well as doodling a couple of little stars around the page, distracted by thoughts of how the woman’s eyes shimmered like the ocean. No one had to know they were starfish.

"Th-thank you for your support.” He stuttered out, handing the notebook back to the happy mother in front of him.

“Thank you so much Yuuri! Is big fan! Fate bring you victory!"

“Khwatit, Mama! Stop trying to speak English!” Yurio shouted, shoving his mother out of the locker room. Yuuri was a little annoyed on Anna’s behalf. So what if her English was stilted? No one in this room spoke it natively, probably not anyone in the entire building. Yurio was young, though, and younger people had a better grasp at learning languages(Something about neurons and plastic, his college education was flowing out of his skull faster and harder than that waterfall), so perhaps he was holding higher expectations for his mother.

After finally getting the woman to leave, Yurio spun around, blushing furiously. The boy stomped up to Yuuri and shoved a finger to his nose.

“I'm not letting you win, fate can kiss my ass and I’m going to grind you into the ice.”

“O-okay?”

The blonde turned on his heel and stalked towards a bench to tighten his skate laces. He pushed his earbuds in and turned the volume all the way up, and something with very heavy drums and screaming electric guitar blared from his ears. The poor kid would go deaf if he kept that up. Luckily
Victor had the same idea, snatching the phone from his hands and absently turning down the volume as he smiled gently at Yuuri.

“Did you enjoy meeting Anna?”

Yuuri reddened. “I guess so, I didn't know she was a fan of me. I thought my only fans were Japanese.” He noticed Victor sporting an exaggerated pout and added “And Russian, apparently.”

“I'm glad you like her, she's like… hmm… she's my Minako-sensei!” That explained a bit, If Victor hadn't already sought out friendship with Minako, Yuuri would definitely be eager to acquaint them with each other. There's nothing quite like showing off your pedigree and making your mentor proud.

Yurio bristled with rage. “She's not your anything you dirty old man!”

“How hurtful, Yurio, I would never! She's like a mother to me!”

"She's my mother! Now get out so we can concentrate!"

Another shove, another slam, another ten silent seconds of teenage heaving while Yuuri stares on in confusion. For the second time, Yurio stalked towards his competitor and levels a glare at Yuuri that holds all the menace of a wet kitten.

"If you fuck this up I won't forgive you."

That was kind of the plan—not fucking up. But whatever psychs the kid up psychs the kid up, it seems. Yuuri had to start focusing on psyching himself up, it was getting closer to performance time and he needed to stretch more and walk through his choreography on last time. This was the skate that would determine the rest of his life, apparently.

If he failed here, it would be the end. Of his career, of his hobby, of his passion, of skating. But if he managed to do this, if he honestly, seriously managed to win, he could end his career on a high note. He wouldn't be a disgrace to his family, to his country, to Victor, to himself. If he could win here, he could win anywhere. Yuuri would have the greatest final season anyone could ever ask for.

He would be a champion.

---

Yuri Plisetsky was a monster.

He'd obviously found his Agape, and it showed in every movement he made. Every spin, every lunge, every jump. It showed in the way he gazed to the sky, in the way he reached out towards his mother—who was sobbing, by the way—with such naked longing that Yuuri questioned if Yurio had ever been hugged in his life.

(He had, especially so once he'd stepped off the ice.)

Yuuri's world was fogging, and it wasn't just because he'd handed his glasses off already, or because the cheers of the audience were vibrating his head. He looked at his feet and could picture his skates melting, slipping through the floor and taking him with it. Yurio's performance was unbelievable, incomprehensible. Yurio was an angel beckoning the audience with him towards the heavens and
Yuuri was crashing right back to earth with all the grace of a shot bird.

"Are you ready, zolotse?" Yuuri's eyes shot up, and he slapped his hands to his mouth. Victor was right in front of him, so close he could smell the faint scent of the tea he'd spilled on his shirt at lunch. He wanted to grab that shirt, stuff his face in it. He longed to bathe in that scent, the earthy mixture of home and excitement that was making his head spin. He wanted to be brave Yuuri, confident Yuuri, Eros Yuuri, the fatale persona that Minako helped him cultivate. He wanted to pull the man close and enthrall him with his own scent while immersing himself in Victor's.

So he did.

If he was falling from heaven, he may as well play the part.

Yuuri wrapped his arms around Victor's neck, mirroring the position Anastasiya was in earlier, hoping it came off a lot less friendly than hers did. His wrists connected with each other behind the Russian's head, and the crystals on his right shoulder clacked against the large buttons on Victor's designer coat as their chests pressed together. He gazed into Victor's eyes through thick lashes and willed his desire to fall off him in tangible waves.

"V-Victor..." He stuttered. It was embarrassing, but one slip wouldn't ruin all his hard work. He was better than that. "I'm going to be an extra delicious katsudon, so..."

It was now or never.

"So please taste me." He whispered.

Something dark glimmered in Victor's eyes, they drifted closed as he took a deep, searching breath, and he opened them to level a gaze at Yuuri so warm and inviting it was as though they were the only two people in the rink. He looked like Yuuri was finally present, like he was seeing him properly for the first time. Victor placed his burning hot hands on Yuuri's hips, but did not pull or push, merely held him in place, like moving would crumble reality around them.

"Of course. I love the taste of katsudon."

Yuuri pulled back and made his way to the center of the rink as his name was called. Hip cocked, neck bared, the guitar began. Yuuri dragged his hands down his chest, pinky catching on one distractingly hard nipple. Thank god for dance belts. He swirled his arms around his head invitingly, and pushed on air, gliding backwards. Sticking his toepick to the ice, he struck a flattering position once more and whipped his head around to face Victor with a smirk.

If Yuuri's left eye wanted to wink, he didn't make any move to stop it.

He met Victor's bright eyes across such a dark room like a magnet, and a low whistle cut through the silent, infinite moment they shared.

He won.

The cheers in the tiny rink were deafening, the bouquet in Yuuri's arms had thorns piercing through, the zipper on his costume was cold against his wet neck, the microphone in his shaking hand was giving slight feedback, Victor's hand on his hip was on fire,
And he'd won.

Victor was going to stay.

Yuuri muttered through the podium, through the local news journalists clamoring for a word, he let the words fall out of his head without filter, not even attempting to pay attention to anything he was saying. He shook hands with fans, accepted flowers and cards, stood smiling next to Yurio for pictures for the press and for Anna, ghosted through hugs and goodbyes and Yurio shouting and then more pictures, and walked and talked absentmindedly all the way home from the rink with Minako, the entire Nishigori family, and Victor.

He issued vacant goodbyes to his friends, and distantly accepted congratulations from family, guided the entire way by an invisible force that insisted he was exhausted and needed rest. Yuuri's glazed eyes came back into focus when he felt a tap under his chin and was faced, yet again, with Victor—inches away. He attempted to step back, but only met cold, hard wall, and realized quickly he was in the onsen locker rooms.

"My little katsudon." Victor whispered, his eyes focused not on Yuuri's but around where his own finger was tilting Yuuri's head high enough to feel unnatural. "You deserve to relax, don't you agree?"

Yuuri swallowed the drool collecting in his mouth and nodded.

He continued in a soft, lilting voice, not anything like his normal goodnights, "Take a bath and head to sleep, we can wake up late tomorrow. You deserve it."

Victor ran his knuckle across Yuuri's cheek, and slowly stepped away. He smiled, not his usual teasing heart-shaped grin, but an easy curve of the lips both tender and hungry. He stepped out the locker room and Yuuri heard footsteps retreat, move up the stairs, tip-toe down the hallway, and the tell-tale slide of Victor's shoji screen coming to a locked position. Yuuri sunk down the wall and landed hard on his ass, which took a fall during his performance and so desperately needed that bath.

He would have to wait a few moments before he could bathe, unfortunately.

Chapter End Notes

(im so tired and didn't proofread this a single time please forgive small things for now i cry)

featuring our old friend: google translated russian, staring wistfully out the window because i'm too shy to ask my new friends how things are supposed to be.

"Ya ne prostit vam, Victor." - I don't forgive you, Victor.
"Ya ne khochu proshcheniya. Ya khochu chtoby moy muzh." - I don't want forgiveness. I want my husband. (i hope i'm getting across here that there is a serious conversation going on at this point, which will be fleshed out in the future)
"Slavnyy! Moy syn krasivo!" - Glorious! My son is beautiful!
"Pochemu ty zdez, Mama?!" - Why are you here, Mama?!
"Yuri? Yego takzhe nazyvayut Yuri—?" - Yuri? He is also called Yuri—?
"Khvatit, Mama!" - Stop, Mama!
"Bozhe moi!" - russian omg

Thank you SOOOOO much for reading another chapter! i'm floored that you all have stuck with me and i rly hope i can continue to deliver the top-quality garbage you all want for some reason ;u; to answer a comment from a previous chapter: yes, I intend to flesh out these conversations in *drumroll* a companion fic! from Victor's perspective! i'll just connect it to a series right now so that you can sub if you want to! it won't be out until this one is finished though, and according to my outline masterpost it's looking like 29 chapters, but it very well could get out of hand. We Just Don't Know.

i love all of you so so much leave comments they're my life blood
"He's got it so bad for you, dude. Even I can see that and I'm like four hundred miles away."

"Don't be ridiculous, Phichit," Yuuri retorted, rolling his eyes for added effect. "It's not like he—"

"—He does and you're letting the sesame seeds burn while you cook the beans."

Yuuri was… afraid.

He'd been so forward, so incredibly, embarrassingly direct. Yuuri Katsuki did something that quite a few people would genuinely murder him for. He'd done something he never in a billion years thought he was capable of.

He held Victor close and asked him to Please Taste Him.

Another full-body shudder had Yuuri writhing under his blanket with humiliation. How did he do that! How could he have done that! What possessed him to put his arms around Victor and say something so… suggestive?! Victor would think that it was part of the performance, right? He wouldn't just assume Yuuri pressed their chests together and said something so vulgar because he was a fanboy, right? This is what teenage fans with no boundaries do, not professional adults!

The sound of knocking startled Yuuri to the point of stilling, his warm breath making the blanket cave very uncomfortable. Was Victor here to wake him up? Was he going to talk to him about last night? He was going to tell Yuuri that he was super uncomfortable and didn't they agree to keep their hands to themselves and he's totally going back to Russia and—

“Yuuri-chan?” Yuuri’s sunken stomach floated back to its proper spot as he realized it was just his
father.

“Come in, Dad.”

Toshiya entered the bedroom quietly and took a seat at the computer desk. He looked nervous, and was wringing his hands in front of him as though something were terribly wrong—Holy shit Victor already left didn't he.

“Did Victor leave—?” He couldn't stop himself from asking.

“Eh? Vicchan is in his room sleeping still.” Yuuri let out a breath, relieved. So Victor hadn't been chased off by his actions. “I actually wanted to talk to you about Vicchan….” Yuuri’s stomach sank right back into his feet. “Your mother couldn't make it last night, but I came by to watch your performances and… uh… How do I say this…”

Yuuri slammed his face into his hands and groaned in mortification. “I would prefer if you didn't say it at all.”

“Yuuri I have to have this conversation with you, you're my only boy and I love you so much. I raised you from a tiny little bud to the beautiful flower you are today, and I can't just trust any old gardener to treat you properly—“

“Dad! Please!” He slammed a pillow over his head and begged his brain to wake up and end this nightmare.

“You've idolized this man for so long, Yuuri-chan.” A hand on his shoulder squeezed, and Yuuri removed the pillow, finally looking directly into his father’s eyes. They were the same reddish brown, but duller, fogging slowly with age and tinged with concern. “I can't say I understand your sport, but I understand power dynamics and I understand feeling pressured—“

“Oh my god, Dad. I am begging you to stop—“

“I won't!” He shouted forcefully, shocking Yuuri from his embarrassment and landing him squarely in scolded-child-mode. “You are an adult but you are my son! You are a grown man, you have your own life, your own career, but I love you and I will not let anyone hurt you! Please, Yuuri, we have been apart for so long but I know my own child. This… type of attitude is not comfortable for you, I can see it in your eyes.”

Toshiya placed his calloused palm on Yuuri’s face, stroking one puffy cheek with his large thumb.

“My boy, I'm not going to tell you how to live your life, I just need you to reassure me that you're making these kinds of decisions for… for the right reasons.” The hand left his face and Toshiya sat back in the chair, his gaze pointed at the floor.

This had to be hard for him too, not many people expect to give the ‘don’t lose yourself to lust’ talk to their twenty-three-year-old son. Yuuri sighed, his embarrassment waning quickly, and he thought about it a little more deeply.

Was he behaving this way for Victor? Was he pretending to be something he wasn't just to keep Victor around? Eros Yuuri was confident and seductive and sure of every move he made, but was Eros Yuuri truly an extension of Yuuri or was Real Yuuri just using him as a mask? As a security blanket against the biting cold of the reality that Victor isn't going to want what Yuuri truly is? Not as a student, not as a competitor, not as a friend, not as... anything. Victor could insist otherwise all he wanted but that didn't change the fact that Yuuri was obviously performing.
But... he wanted to.

He wanted to be that person, to be Eros Yuuri. Confident Yuuri, Seductive Yuuri, Self-Assured Yuuri who isn't afraid of the tumultuous feelings in his heart and could face them head-on without getting stuck in his own head to the point where everything collapses in on him. Yuuri wanted to explore these feelings and grow as a person.

“I am uncomfortable,” He began. Toshiya winced, but before he could say anything about it, Yuuri continued. “I'm really uncomfortable, but I think that's a good thing. I'm not trying to become a different person, I want to become more—I just... I wish I could explain this but I can't.”

The old man stood up from the creaky computer chair and ruffled his son’s bed-tangled hair. “I want you to be happy, Yuuri-chan. That’s all I ever want for you.”

Yuuri smiled.

It was eight in the morning and Yuuri felt like his skin was pulling him straight to hell.

Every limb was heavy, each step was torture, moving even slightly was hell. It hadn't occurred to him to bandage his feet before passing out like he did after every major competition and he was regretting it deeply now, the raw scabs and tender bruises having endured his wool blanket and fitful sleep.

He tenderly walked himself to the main dining hall for breakfast. It was nearly nine and he hadn't slept so late for weeks now, thanks to Victor's spartan training. It felt nice to get the extra sleep at the time, but after being awake for a little bit he just felt tired still. Yuuri splayed his legs wide at the corner of the table, not wanting to irritate the scabbing by sitting on them. Mari handed him a small breakfast plate and pointed him towards the serving plate at the center of the table. It was a cheat day, so big fluffy waffles with lots of butter and syrup were stacked high on the serving plate. It was when he shoved half an entire waffle in his mouth that a sound from the hallway caught his attention.

Victor was standing stock-still, staring at Yuuri. The two held eye contact for what felt like a few minutes but was only about ten seconds. Yuuri, with half a waffle hanging out of his mouth and cheeks puffed full, syrup trailing down his chin. Victor, spine rigid and face flushed, both hands gripping tightly to his robe, his expression distinctly one of surprise. A moment later, Victor spun away and stomped back up the stairs.

“What’s his deal?” Mari asked, placing another two plates of waffles on the table. One of them must have been for Victor, since their parents usually ate at sunrise.

“Maveh Vikuh doen lie Averihan fooh?” Yuuri had momentarily forgotten that his face was still stuffed with waffle, earning choked howls of laughter from his sister. He blushed and took the time to chew and swallow his food while Mari recovered. “Sorry, I meant to say that maybe he doesn't like American food?”

Mari took a few deep breaths to stabilize her heart rate and aching lungs before responding. “Nah, I've seen him eat waffles out in town before. And he definitely likes American food.” She shrugged,
taking more reasonably-sized bites of her breakfast than her brother had.

"We have a place in town that sells waffles now?"

"Oh that's right, while you were gone, Ken's sister opened up a little café. She sells western breakfast food all day long and nothing else. It's been kind of nice but I've been gaining weight because I can't help eating there every once in awhile."

Yuuri laughed. "You think you're in weight trouble... You should see the way Victor glared at me when I made a move on his dinner the other day. The guy thinks he can just pick and drop food on my plate and then when I try the same he whacked my knuckles with the chopsticks. It was like I was staring into the eyes of a demon for a moment."

"What about me, little brother? Am I not the most intimidating person in your life anymore?" Mari feigned a hurt tone, then smirked. "Oh dear, is Katsuki Yuuri... dare I say... whipped?"

"Geez, Mari! I already got an earful from Dad this morning—"

"Yuuri, can you turn your ankle a bit?"

"Sure, Victor—And that was plenty embarrassing talking about Vic—Victor?! What are you doing?!!" Yuuri jerked his leg away from Victor's grasp just as the sneaky Russian was spreading a startlingly cool gel across the top of his foot. Victor didn't look up to meet his surprised gawking, merely grabbed Yuuri's foot and gently placed it back in front of him, now with a small towel underneath. He smoothed the gel over Yuuri's aching right foot, and a sharp sting had his toes curling as he hissed.

"Relax, solnyshko," He cooed, rubbing gentle circles on Yuuri's thigh with his left thumb while he spread the gel across the ankle bone with his right hand. "We have to bandage it. You'll feel better if we do it now."

Yuuri silently thanked the heavens that Victor didn't understand the conversation between him and Mari that was held in quick Japanese. Thankfully he wouldn't know that they'd been talking about him. Victor smoothed his hands firmly down the sides of Yuuri's foot and gently placed it back in front of him, now with a small towel underneath. He smoothed the gel over Yuuri's aching right foot, and a sharp sting had his toes curling as he hissed.

"It's too early for this." She mumbled with exasperation.

Yuuri slapped his hand over his mouth and his entire body stiffened, he shot an embarrassed look at Mari, whose wide eyes were planted firmly on the kitchen entryway as she immediately got up with her breakfast and walked away.

Yuuri continued to make little sounds into his hands as Victor gently wound a bandage around the aching foot, and he wasn't giving any indication that he'd heard the sounds coming out of Yuuri's mouth. His hands continued rubbing and his eyes stayed planted on Yuuri's feet. The dull pain mixed with gentle pleasure radiated up his leg and through his spine, settling at the base of his jaw and Yuuri couldn't stop the small moan that escaped.

Before he could say anything, Yuuri felt Victor plop down on his other side, pulling out a small blue box from behind Yuuri's back that had to be where the gel and bandages had come from. The older man dragged another towel under Yuuri's left foot and set to work gingerly rubbing cool gel across the scuffed and bruised skin. Thankfully, Yuuri was able to stifle the groans of satisfaction, turning them into shaky exhales.
“Yuuri, let’s discuss your free skate,” Victor said with a gentle smile. Of course he would be ignoring the elephant in the room.

Yuuri did not trust his voice to behave, but he had to respond. The words came out breathy, with a distinctly humid quality. “I haven’t thought of any choreography.”

"Hmm."

A silence stretched between the two as Victor carefully wound the bandage around Yuuri’s foot and ankle, making gentle thumb strokes from the knuckles of his toes to the connection of his ankle. Yuuri stared, and Victor either didn't notice or didn't care. He could watch Victor all day if he'd let him. He watched Victor’s slender fingers trace patterns on the fabric of the bandage, breathing out rhythmically as if humming—but no sound could be heard beyond the ticking of the wall clock and the shift of fabric as Victor moved his arm back and forth, swishing his robe sleeves as he worked.

"And your music?"

“I’ve never chosen my own music before.”

“Have you really? Never even once?” The tone of his voice was feigned surprise, but not sarcastic. Badly concealed, perhaps, considering Victor’s motions hadn’t stopped or stalled for even a moment.

“There was one time that I had a friend put something together for me, but Celestino didn’t seem to like it, so I didn’t push.” The music major friend of his had worked straight through a holiday to compose a piece just for Yuuri. She met with him often to consult about whether this bit was emotional enough or if that bit had enough impact, she cared deeply for her work, but in the end, it just wasn't good enough for competition, apparently. He'd been assigned an instrumental from an old movie in the end, and while he'd done fine with it, there was that nagging feeling in the back of his head that the personally composed music would have been better.

“Perhaps you should have pushed.” Victor said softly. He clipped the bandage down, locking it firmly in place, and then sat up. Victor's eyes locked onto Yuuri’s and memories from last night flooded back, reddening his cheeks.

Victor's waffle was getting cold.

“Why don't you give Phichit a call?” He suggested, folding up the excess bandage and placing the first aid items back into their kit. “I'm sure he'd like to know how the exhibition went since there were no streams. I'll eat my breakfast and we can regroup in the afternoon and talk about the free skate.”

"It's not funny, Phichit!"

The Thai skater continued to cackle at his friend's whisper-screeches, an errant hamster sniffing into her master's mouth as he lay sprawled on the floor only just within view of the webcam.

"It's incredibly funny, Yuuri! Just how thirsty are you that basic first aid gets you all hot and bothered?” Yuuri's best friend continued writhing on the floor, hollering as if he weren't in a tiny apartment in one of the most densely populated cities in the world at the break of dawn. A series of
dull thuds came from the wall behind Phichit, jostling some décor on a wall shelf, and Phichit tried his best to calm down. Their conversation lasted about an hour, half of the time taken up by Yuuri's blushing and silent treatment against Phichit's teasing.

"Cornering you in the bathroom? Cute little nicknames? He's got it so bad for you, dude. Even I can see that and I'm like four hundred miles away."

"Don't be ridiculous, Phichit," He retorted, rolling his eyes for added effect. "It's not like he—"

"—He does and you're letting the sesame seeds burn while you cook the beans."

Yuuri groaned at the well-worn idiom. Phichit had repeated it constantly when they'd lived together in Detroit during times of necessity but also times of Phichit's boredom. From important things to trivial things, from assignments to socialization to skating to clothing choice, Phichit chided his indecision and warned he would lose the opportunity altogether if he took too long to act.

"It hasn't even been twenty-four hours since—that—and he's already started asking me if I've chosen free skate music, I'm pretty sure he was just teasing me last night. If it wasn't a joke then wouldn't he be like... I don't know, following up? Or something?"

"Maybe he's trying not to spook you like the tender little doe you are,"

"Oh come on..."

"Maybe he wants to gain your trust before begging you to eat out of his hand—"

"Phichit—!"

His best friend—the bastard—ceased his incessant teasing before another round of hearty laughter could get his walls kicked in. "So, have you thought about your free skate music?"

"Not really, you know I usually had Celestino choose for me..."

"What about that conservatory student who made that demo for you? Oh—! I actually ran into her before I left Detroit! She took some intensive spring courses and really improved! She told me she thought the music you ended up using was beautiful and that she would have been embarrassed if you had used such an unpolished demo anyways."

Yuuri thought back to the moment he'd handed Sabrina's demo CD back to her on that windy May afternoon. It had been exactly what he wanted, they'd spent three days a week on it together, holed up in her dorm room and searching for the perfect transition or the most impactful bridge. It was a tribute to all his accomplishments as a skater, and his career had been weak. Ashamed, he'd held out the CD to her and apologized profusely. She'd flushed deeply and told him to keep it, that it was for him after all, not to feel bad about not using it, it's so rough of course he wouldn't use it, he totally deserved actual good music, no no it's fine don't worry, see you on Thursday. She hadn't shown up on Thursday.

"Things got awkward with her after that. Even though she's a great composer and the problem was my vision... There's no way I could bring myself to ask her..."

"No way!" Phichit assured him. "She wasn't mad or anything at all! How about I put out some feelers for her and we'll see where it goes? Ah—! Sorry Yuuri, Celestino is calling me. I'll talk to you soon, okay?"
"Okay." Yuuri smiled.

Chapter End Notes

yuuri calls waffles american food even though they're european in origin whatever i know that but my boy doesn't okay

i lov u all sry abt the filler thx for putting up w me <333
It's Not Selfish

Chapter Summary

Did friends corner each other in their bedrooms? Did friends usually eat through moans and talk about being aroused by food? Did friends ask each other to Please Taste them? It would be hard to imagine the odd intimacy he and Victor already share as merely—

“—Just friends…”

The dissatisfied tone in Yuuri’s voice was unrestrained and obvious. He flushed deeply and proceeded to bite his tongue so hard for the betrayal that he could taste a bit of blood. That damnable tongue would be getting super hot tea this evening. Yuuri dared a glance in Victor's direction and briefly saw the man's eyes positively sparkling before settling back into his neutral mask.

“A lover, then. I'll work hard.”

“Hmm.”

Chapter Notes

THE BEACH

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes) [there are no translations in this chapter]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had been a week, and Sabrina still hadn't responded.

Perhaps she wasn't interested in re-doing the piece. Maybe Yuuri was right, and she was still upset. It had been a pretty long time, and they hadn't spoken even once since then, what's in it for her, after all? Yuuri would have to find a different piece if he wasn't going to get Sabrina's help, but he and Victor hadn't even agreed on a theme yet.

"Eh...? You still haven't chosen your free skate music yet? We only have a couple of months to polish this you know!" Victor had just put him through the wringer with speed training. He'd gone back and forth between the boards lengthwise until he was hanging onto them for dear life. Sweat dripped from his hairline, his neck, his arms, and Victor was just standing there with a self-satisfied grin doing a whole lot of nothing. He hadn't even said anything all afternoon until just now, asking about whether he'd figured out his free music.

How could he have chosen in such a short time? Victor had refused to choose for him, insisting that it had to 'come from Yuuri's heart' or something. Easy for a genius to say, Victor never ran out of ideas! Yuuri wasn't a composer, he didn't have any particularly useful favorite songs, it's not like he
even anticipated competing this season to begin with, after all.

"Try to take from experience!" Victor said flippantly, as though there was any experience to take from. "Something like how you felt with a lover—"

An awful growling noise ripped itself from Yuuri's throat, stinging with the reality that there was obviously nothing for Yuuri to reference, was Victor stupid? Was he making fun of Yuuri's inexperience? After all this time with Victor being gentle with Yuuri and Yuuri getting comfortable with Victor, he chooses now to start mocking him again? Of course Victor wouldn't understand, he's Victor Nikiforov and—and Yuuri just shouted at him.

"Ah! I-I'm sorry I don't know what came over me just now—E-excuse me, please I just—I didn't —!

"Yuuri," Victor smiled warmly. His eyes crinkled at the corners and his bright blue irises sparkled with impatience. “Come with me to the ocean.”

"I took my comforts in Saint Petersburg for granted." Victor had finally said.

He had led Yuuri to an overturned log in a small cove on the beach. It seemed like the perfect place to have a bonfire, if someone would only set the area up properly. At one point, Yuuri stumbled over a rock and Victor caught him. Yuuri looked up, expecting Victor to shoot him a teasing smile or something. Instead, he held his arm out at the exact moment he'd tripped, as though he'd seen it coming. Was Yuuri that clumsy? He knew he was a little frazzled in times of stress, but it's hard to miss a trait so severe in a sport that requires such pinpoint focus. Victor held his hand out to assist Yuuri in seating himself on the low log, and he took it before he had the chance to think too hard on it.

He didn't let go.

For ten long, silent minutes, Victor continued to clutch Yuuri's hand at regular intervals, their knuckles grinding against the dead, wet wood with every tiny movement.

"When I was young, I hated the seagulls because they would wake me up and sounded annoying. I hated them. But I haven't been back home for so long, and now as I listen to these seagulls in Hasetsu I'm reminded of my childhood home, and the sounds I woke up to every day, what a simple life I used to have."

"Do you... do you miss Russia?"

Yuuri had mumbled the question, expecting Victor to immediately wave it off, to loudly insist that he didn't miss Russia one bit and so on and so forth. Instead, Victor stared out at the ocean with a wistful look in his bright blue eyes as the sunset tinged his face with deep red-orange.

"I should," He whispered. "I think I do."

Yuuri fixed his gaze on the horizon, unsure of how to continue the conversation. There were plenty of things he could say, Do You Want To Go Back or Is Hasetsu Not Good Enough or How Can I
Make You Feel More At Home, but none of them felt like the right thing to say at the moment. Yuuri settled for squeezing back at Victor’s hand and letting the silence drift between them as the tide slowly came in.

“Do you ever have that kind of feeling?”

“I think so,” Yuuri responded. He wanted to tell Victor all about it, he wanted to let out the weakness in him for once, without fearing the consequences. There, on that tiny hidden slice of shoreline, with the sun sinking slowly and their hands intertwined, Yuuri felt safe. He felt like his weakness was safe here.

So he told Victor about Michael, about how a newer rinkmate trusted his opinion, took it too far, and was hurt as a result of Yuuri’s carelessness. How the young boy prefered Yuuri’s method—fit for adults—over Celestino’s—best for growing children—and snapped his ankle so hard the bone came through. How Michael, only 14 years old, stars in his eyes and music in his feet, would never skate again.

"And his older sister, she came up to me in the emergency room and I thought she was gonna yell at me... I probably would have preferred if she'd yelled at me if I'm being honest. She was talking, and I just... completely tuned her out. She must have been speaking for minutes on end."

Breathe In. Breathe Out.

"When I started listening she said something like he was my biggest fan and that I shouldn't blame myself or something. I wasn't looking at her, so it startled me when she put her arms around my shoulders. I stood up and pushed her away. I couldn't even feel embarrassed about being so rude, I was just... so angry at her for intruding on my weakness."

Yuuri suddenly realized he was squeezing Victor's hand a little too hard, and released it slowly. He began to inch away, but Victor had gently grabbed the hand and lightly squeezed as he guided it back to their original position. It wasn't the same—it never is, once you move a little bit.

"It wasn't just that I didn't want my weakness seen, I also felt like she was... co-opting my feelings? If that makes sense? It's stupid, her little brother was just critically injured and I was sitting there upset that she wanted to pull me into her feelings, or try to crawl into mine." With his other hand, Yuuri rubbed the back of his neck, feeling the slightly longer hairs there. Maybe he should get a haircut.

“I barely knew her and she threw her arms around me like an old friend. Only the people closest to me know how weak I am and don't judge me for it, so I definitely didn't want a stranger rooting around in there. My family, Yuuko and Takeshi, Phichit, they already know I'm a screwup. They love me even through my weakness and show their love by allowing me to be distant when I'm being selfishly anxious.”

“It's not selfish, Yuuri,” Victor whispered, running a thumb across one of Yuuri’s knuckles. “And you're not weak. No one thinks that.”

Yuuri scoffed gently. “That's a sweet thing to say but ultimately empty. You were literally there during my freakout before, it's kind of plain as day. Plenty of people think I'm weak, me included. I appreciate that everyone looks past it, but I'd rather they just not see it at all—“

“Yuuri.”

Yuuri flinched at the sudden volume in Victor's voice. Their conversation had gotten so quiet
without him realizing, it was a wonder they could hear each other over the crashing of the waves. The commanding tone had him spinning his head to meet Victor’s piercing blue gaze, looking through him as if he, too, could see every single one of Yuuri’s shortcomings and failures.

Strangely, Yuuri didn't mind much.

Victor straightened up, the atmosphere changing slightly with the subject.

“What do you want me to be to you, Yuuri?”

That was an unexpected question.

“A father figure, I doubt, since your father is pretty great. Its clear that you're the authority here anyways.” The chuckle that escaped from those plush pink lips was akin to the earthy chords of a bamboo wind chime, and Yuuri felt a little more relaxed. “A friend, I suppose. Someone to cheer you on and keep you in check.”

What did he want Victor to be? He was his coach, even if he was subpar at it. At least he wasn't awful, Yuuri was grateful for that much. What else was Victor here for?

*Only you, Yuuri.*

A friend would be nice, he'd be more relaxed with Victor being in a more casual role, but what about Victor’s comfort? He's a touchy and affectionate guy, obviously, but would he be truly okay with being friends with a nobody like Yuuri? Friends… With Victor Nikiforov… Did friends corner each other in their bedrooms? Did friends usually eat through moans and talk about being aroused by food? Did friends ask each other to Please Taste them? It would be hard to imagine the odd intimacy he and Victor already share as merely—

“—Just friends…”

The dissatisfied tone in Yuuri’s voice was unrestrained and obvious. He flushed deeply and proceeded to bite his tongue so hard for the betrayal that he could taste a bit of blood. That damnable tongue would be getting super hot tea this evening. Yuuri dared a glance in Victor's direction and briefly saw the man's eyes positively sparkling before settling back into his neutral mask.

“A lover, then. I'll work hard.”

“Hmm.”

Yuuri averted his gaze and stared out at the ocean. The red-orange sun was finally reaching the horizon, and it would be dark soon. The cold wind would come in with the moon and their light jackets would not be enough to keep them comfortable in the spring chill.

“I don't want you to play a role, I just want you to be Victor. And if Victor is a friend or an authority o-or…” Yuuri trailed off for a moment, blushing. “I just want you to be you. I don't want you to pretend to be something or to give me fake support. I want you to be honest with me, and I want you to be happy and comfortable.”

“I am happy and comfortable, Yuuri. I've never been more happy in my life.”

Yuuri scoffed again. “Didn't I just say—“

“*Yuuri.*” Again, with the commending tone that sent Yuuri’s back perfectly straight at attention. “I told you I'd be sincere with you going forward, didn't I? What would I gain by lying to you now?”
“The kind of student who doesn't question every single move they make and hyper-analyze every conversation until they explode?” He’d meant it as a joke but Victor wasn't laughing. It was a bit unnerving, the intensely serious stare fixed so intently on him.

“I want you as you are, Yuuri.” A gentle sea breeze whipped Victor's hair up and about, the harsh orange glow of the sun reflecting like fire. His eyebrows knotted together in worry, though Yuuri couldn't understand why. "I don't want you to pretend you're comfortable when you're not, I don't want you to pretend you're okay when you're not. I want you to feel that you can be honest with me, I want to earn your trust, I want to make you happy."

Yuuri briefly registered Victor's unheld hand twitch in his peripheral vision, where it had apparently been close to Yuuri's cheek. As soon as he'd noticed it, the hand snapped back to Victor's side, gripping at the decaying wood of the log they were still seated on.

"I want you to be comfortable and happy, and I'll do anything to make that happen."

Yuuri's face reddened hot and fast, but he wouldn't dare let himself think too hard on what Victor's words could mean. Instead he immediately pushed his thoughts down and took it at face value. Victor wants him to be happy. Victor wants to help him. That's exactly what a coach or friend should want. Yuuri could absolutely work hard for that.

Yuuri slipped back into reality as his forehead hit the keys of his laptop with a clattering thunk. He'd been spaced out all morning, afternoon, and evening, replaying yesterday's conversation with Victor in his head again and again and again, until finally his chin slipped out of his sweaty palm, sending his face forward with the kind of force only an unconscious person can muster. He had been working on answering sponsor emails and thanks to his spaciness had accidentally sent one that wasn't finished.

Scrambling to retype and re-send another reply that included an apology for the previous one, Yuuri's phone went off with a schwing that signaled a new email. He had expected the sponsor to be upset, but not 'immediately reply' upset. Yuuri winced and opened a new email tab to check the inevitable scolding about professionalism or some other berating thing, only to find that there was nothing in his inbox. Confused, he looked to his phone, only to find that the new email was indeed present in the notification.

Looking closer, Yuuri discovered that it wasn't his professional email it was sent to, but rather the childish one he'd made in middle school and would give out in college so as not to clutter his work-related communications. The sender was one he hadn't recognized, and the subject line only said: "sry for th ewait". Opening the email, Yuuri blanched.

sabbytheteenagewretch@gmail.com
to katsudokidoki

9:38pm (0 minutes ago)

yuuuuuuuuuuuurri ! ! ! my fav skater ! (dnt tell chuchu) im so sosososoooo happy chuchu emailed me (◕◡◕✿) im srry about not responding quickly, i saw his email and immediately got 2 work
i was SO excited ! ! ! i will actually have it done in a couple of days, and obv i will need payment but we can talk about that over LUNCH which u have OWED ME for an ENTIRE YEAR (even tho I got hella sick and had 2 take a semester off but whatev) so b prepared for truly excellent and improved music and DONT forget to hmu next time ur near motown ok??? promise ! ! ♡♡♡

A full body shudder shot through Yuuri as relief flooded him from tip to toe. She hadn't been mad at all, she didn't hate him, she hadn't been avoiding him, their distance was a result of life, not dislike, and most importantly, she was already working on the music.

Yuuri stood up from his chair and nearly vibrated with excitement, then slapped his old laptop closed and rushed into the bathroom to prepare for bed, Victor would definitely enjoy this good news in the afternoon, and would probably make tomorrow's practice extra severe in his elation.

He changed into his comfiest pajamas, flopped onto his bed, and immediately dozed off, completely forgetting about the unfinished reply he'd accidentally sent to a JackUltina representative that read only "Hi Jeffrey, I am afraid"

Chapter End Notes

it's my fave post dont hate me pls

anyways sry this took so long??? breath o fthe wild is so good. so good.

also i kind of,,,,,deviated from the outline by a surprisingly large margin and had to redo most of it and some things changed but not anything super important just the placement of emotions and lines and shit dont worry abt it i lov u so much thank u for putting up w me <333

(sabrina talks like a memer bc she is one and i'm projecting pls let me live)
Plant The Seeds

Chapter Summary

Someday far in the future, this day will be remembered for some major event or tragedy or something, and when someone says to Yuuri ‘Where were you on the day the thing happened?’ he will answer ‘Popping an inconvenient erection in my family's hot spring because Victor Nikiforov scraped his nails against my scalp for half a second.’

Chapter Notes

ooookay. okay uhm. this..... wasn't supposed to be 5300 words. it's probably never going to be like this again, dont get yr hopes up. double the wordcount double the time pls dnt b mad at my lateness ;w;

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Yuuri wasn't entirely certain if he had feet anymore.

He knew, factually, that he did indeed have feet. He could look down and see them, he could reach down and touch them, he could take his skates off and smell them, and with the throbbing feeling coursing through them and up into his sore legs and quivering thighs, he could definitely feel them.

But did that really mean he had feet anymore?

He decided no.

His entire body was draped over the locker room bench, face down, ass up. A deep inhale was difficult with his body weight restricting his lung capacity, but the internal pressure made the exhausted groan tearing itself from his chest that much more satisfying.

Takeshi’s voice reverberated through the room from where he was just outside, tinkering with a door dampener. "Keep it in the bedroom, Yuuriman~!"

"Eat shit, voyeur!" He called back.

Yuuri didn't usually speak in such a vulgar way in front of company, but thankfully Victor still only had an elementary understanding of Japanese, definitely not enough to know exactly what kind of garbage spews from Yuuri's mouth when he's over-tired.

Victor zipped up his duffel and plopped himself down on the bench right next to Yuuri’s head, stretching one arm across his chest and grunting. “What a day, Yuuri!”

“And what exactly did you do other than press play and eat candy...” Yuuri mumbled.
“How cruel! I got up at five in the morning to make breakfast!”
“You boiled a single egg and Mama made everything else.”
“I left the house at six for our morning exercise you know!”
“You rode the bike.”
“I warmed up right beside you once we got here!”
“You made lazy circles for eight minutes and then stopped when Yuuko brought you new snacks.”
“Oh, my Yuuri simply doesn't appreciate me anymore.” Victor whimpered with a dramatic sniff.

Yuuri sighed into the slats of the bench, his exhaustion causing him to completely miss what had just been said. “What I would appreciate is a beer.” He lifted his head to see Victor making waggly eyebrows and Yuuri realized what he'd said. “No, Victor.” He huffed, pushing himself off of his resting place with no small amount of effort.

Dragging his feet towards the exit was an ordeal, and having to walk all the way back home was a punishment. Every step felt like it would be Yuuri’s last and the burning squeezing pressure of his sneakers was close to unbearable. Nothing out of the ordinary for a profession focused on the feet, but god help him if he didn’t get to the onsen soon he would chop them off. And his eagerness to wade in the hot springs had absolutely nothing to do with Victor’s eagerness to rub Yuuri’s aching feet.

Ever since Victor had bandaged him up a few days ago, Yuuri was reluctantly allowing the talented man to put his magic fingers to work on the sorest feet in human history. Victor insisted that as a coach, it was his duty to comfort and pamper his student to keep his feet happy. Yuuri had retorted that this ridiculous hyper-training coming to an end would make his feet even happier.

They fought like cats and dogs over whether it's better train harder before or after receiving the music, but both of them were absolutely stubborn arguers.

Yuuri dumped the washtub of water over his head and proceeded with a third scrub down with his favorite new body wash. He never felt clean enough with just one, and while the second time usually did the trick, he was so tired and sweaty all day that a third seemed like an okay idea. And who could resist that shea butter scent and silky texture? Yuuri made a mental note to thank Yurio for forgetting to take home the greatest body wash of all time in his rush to leave the country. It was probably expensive, and it was still basically full when he’d found it rolled behind the cubbies.

It probably wasn't a good idea to exfoliate so much in one sitting, and his arms were starting to get tired, but Yuuri adored the apricot seeds and peach leaves too much to not pamper himself during these trying times.

Yuuri was finally starting to relax as he finally started conditioning his hair, another thing Victor had insisted on. Apparently simple shampoo wasn't good enough. It had to be chock full of vitamins and oils and extracts and lacking anything that exacerbated hair loss and followed by a matching conditioner. Phichit hadn’t even gotten Yuuri to start conditioning—no matter how much he pleaded —and Victor Nikiforov just waltzes in and shoves two weirdly shaped bottles of All Natural Organic Peach Extract Collagen Boosting Not Tested On Animals shampoo and conditioner with some special ingredient from some country he didn't recognize.

It was a little much, but his hair had been less of a nest in the morning recently, he had to admit.
Yuuri finally finished rinsing his body and head, and made his way to the outdoor baths, not feeling like using the tiled one indoors, considering there was a very embarrassed child and his very loud sibling having an animated discussion in it. It was an incredibly clear night, and the sleepy town of Hasetsu had barely any light pollution, thankfully. Conditions were perfect for viewing the Spring Triangle, a combination of stars that he could pick out even if he were spun around with his eyes closed.

Slipping one bruised and battered foot into the hot water, Yuuri clamped his eyes shut and let loose a sigh that ended in an almost imperceptible moan. He would have ignored it, had he not immediately heard a low chuckle from the other end of the bath.

"Does it feel that good?" Came Victor's wet voice, interrupted by Yuuri's splashing as he flailed into the water.

Yuuri composed himself and relaxed into the water, sinking lower until his chin was wet. "With the icy hell you've been putting me through these past few days, this near-boiling water is a godsend." He grumbled.

It was getting much easier to speak frankly with Victor, and a lot harder to bite back any potentially rude remarks. Just one week ago Yuuri was carefully choosing every word that came out of his mouth out of worry that he would offend Victor, but Yuuri was quickly finding that offending Victor with blunt words seemed nearly impossible.

Just as long as he never mentioned Victor's luxuriously thick, shining, healthy, platinum blonde hair in a negative light.

Ever.

(A customer's granddaughter had made the comparison between the greying old woman and Victor, and the sensitive man had locked himself in the bathroom for three hours, mumbling through the door about how he could manage to get weird supplements through Japanese customs.)

Victor's bubbly laugh bounced across the stone of the outdoor bath, and the plants surrounding them seemed to billow along with it. The sound made something in Yuuri's chest flutter warmly and flush.

From the heat of the water.

Not because of Victor's laugh.

Yuuri sunk his entire head into the water for a moment, regaining his composure, when he felt himself being yanked back into the chilled night air. Spitting water from his mouth and wiping water from his eyes, Yuuri noticed his skin was a bit oily.

"Yuuri! I thought you had to be completely clean before entering the onsen?"

“You do…?”

Victor huffed. “You didn't wash the conditioner out of your hair!”

“What?! B-but I did rinse!” Yuuri sputtered.

Victor tsk'd condescendingly and hauled him out of the onsen, grabbing a washtub and a forgotten bath toy. He sat Yuuri down on the cold stone floor and kneeled behind him, dipping the washtub into the bath and hauling some spring water to where he’d placed Yuuri.
Victor dipped the bath toy, a small green cup with drain holes in the bottom, into the washtub and lifted it above Yuuri's hair. The water streamed out of it slowly, rinsing the peach conditioner from the skater’s jet black hair. Yuuri could feel the slippery texture of the oily water down the back of his neck, and the sensation was all at once pleasant and awkward.

Someday far in the future, this day will be remembered for some major event or tragedy or something, and when someone says to Yuuri 'Where were you on the day the thing happened?' he will answer 'Popping an inconvenient erection in my family's hot spring because Victor Nikiforov scraped his nails against my scalp for half a second.' And because this will never ever happen, imagination-Yuuri is free to be as honest and vulgar as he likes without worry.

The rinse lasted all of two minutes and Victor took meticulous care not to yank any hairs or create any unnecessary parts. Yuuri, beet-red and stiff as a board, didn't want to enter the onsen again until after he was certain he was... calm, but that moment seemed to never come.

There was no way he'd be able to deal with Victor's now-daily foot massage. Victor would probably pout later, but sparing himself the embarrassment was probably going to be worth it, so Yuuri quickly left the onsen and went straight into his room.

At 1:46 in the morning, Yuuri is trying his hardest to sneeze quietly.

He's a notoriously loud sneezer and really isn't in the mood to wake up everyone in the inn. He finally gets the brilliant idea to stuff his face into his pillow to sneeze, and as he does so, unloads a hot wad of throat snot all over his sleeping space. There's no way he’s sleeping there until he can grab a new pillow. Unfortunately, the laundry room is in the basement, which requires his mother’s key when it's after closing hours.

Yuuri startled when his phone began buzzing in his back pocket, a quiet staccato sound specifically set to signal an email.

_The email._

He nearly fell head-first into the floor from his scramble to get off the bed and straight to his computer. The screen blinded him in the darkness as he'd gotten used to his dimmed phone during the sleepless night. As his vision returned to him, so did his good mood.

---

**sabbytheteenagewretch@gmail.com**

to **katsudokidoki**

1:47am (0 minutes ago)

heeeeeey buckaroo! jus poppin by to tell you it'll b a few more weeks :( :( :(

...
It couldn't possibly have come at a better time. Yuuri couldn't sleep, Victor was definitely awake if the muffled giggles through the shared wall were any indication, and the decrepit old laptop was fully charged and ready to be taken anywhere for ten to fifteen minutes until the battery gave out.

Yuuri set the attachment to download and placed it into his media player, then grabbed his laptop and raced down the hall into Victor’s room.

“Victor!” He whispered through the door. “Hey Victor, the music is finished!”

When there was no answer, he cracked the door open to find Victor doubled over in front of his open laptop on top of the king sized bed, clutching his stomach with his face in a pillow and shaking violently. The sight was so frightening Yuuri nearly dropped his computer to the hardwood floor.

Was something wrong? Was he hurting? Was he ill? Oh god, what if it was a panic attack? Victor was only human, he has worries and stressors too after all, so it wasn't out of the question.

Yuuri raced over to the bedside, Victor seeming horribly small on such a large surface, and Yuuri had to climb atop it and forcibly flip Victor over to get a good look at his face. The motion was difficult, given Victor's muscle density, and Yuuri's shoulder collided with his own head, jostling his glasses and leaving them crooked across his face. But there was no time to fix them, because Yuuri had to quickly take stock of Victor's condition.

Flushed cheeks, check.

Tear tracks, check.

Wild eyes, check.

Sweaty forehead, check.

Tousled hair, check.

Heavy breathing, check.

Yuuri was about to ask Victor to Calm Down and Tell Me What Happened but he was interrupted by spit in his face and peals of laughter coming from the sweaty man below him.

"Darl—Yuuri, you look—look just like—" Victor was heaving the words as if they took tremendous effort, and seemed to be having a terribly difficult time catching his breath. He pointed shakily to the laptop, where Yuuri found a paused comedy movie, one he recognized as an old favorite.

The still image on the screen depicted the protagonist splayed out on the floor, glasses askew, after a memorable and hilarious series of mishaps that Yuuri usually found to be gut-busters, but could only find exasperating presently.
Victor continued shoving his fist into his mouth and clutching his stomach as if he would burst at any moment from the effort of keeping quiet.

It took a moment to connect in Yuuri's mind, but when it did, waves of relief and frustration pulsed through his body, and out of that frustration he shoved Victor's shoulders into the bed and whisper-shouted at him.

"I thought you were hurt! I thought something was seriously wrong!" As Yuuri chided him for the misunderstanding, Victor was still desperately trying to catch his breath, waving his hand and giving breathless apologies. Yuuri simply hung his head, finally relaxing.

"Nantekatta..." He sighed. "You scared me..."

The two of them stayed that way for a solid minute, breathing heavily and calming themselves down. Yuuri suddenly felt Victor's hand brush against his cheek. His eyes snapped open and met Victor's strangely bright orbs—orbs, what a strange way to see eyes, but that’s the vibe they were giving off. Like marble or quartz or some other perfectly spherical and shiny stone that would be correctly labeled an 'orb'.

Victor's low voice broke him from the trance of badly-named eyes. "Are you going to pin me to the bed all night, zolotse?"

Yuuri made a valiant attempt to scramble sideways and remove himself from atop his idol, but succeeded only in whacking his skull against the headboard with the force of a sneeze. Rubbing his head, he looked back to Victor—well, Victor's ass apparently.

The half-naked man was bending over the side of his enormous bed, mumbling something in Russian and gently shoving Makkachin aside from his current relaxing spot on the floor. Yuuri's face combusted as he mumbled something vaguely sounding like "what are you doing" into his hands.

Victor hauled an old laptop onto the bed next to his own and a grin split his face in two. "Did you barge into my room unannounced to watch a movie with me, Yuuri? Oh—are we having a sleepover?!” Victor bounced excitedly, jostling the bed and forcing Yuuri to wiggle to keep his balance.

"I did announce myself," Yuuri retorted, gently snatching his laptop from Victor's hands. "I came to tell you that the music is finished. I thought we could... we could listen to it together... maybe..." Yuuri's voice trailed off and he cast his eyes downwards as his frustration waned and embarrassment took over.

He was on Victor's bed. It was nearly two in the morning and he was half-dressed only wearing a beat up old t-shirt that hung low on his shoulders and loose athletic shorts. Victor was completely shirtless, but thankfully he had pants on. They looked soft and expensive. And warm. And soft. The reality of the situation was not lost on Yuuri, but he elected to push his embarrassment down because the music was ready and it was important, dammit!

He looked back up to where Victor was supposed to be only to find him gone, but a turn of his head locates the sneaky man at the head of the bed, making a small pillow nest against the headboard and pulling the softest throw blanket from the nightstand over his legs. Finally settled in, he scoots to leave enough room for Yuuri—as if the king sized bed didn't have enough room or something—and flipped Yuuri's half of the blanket open.

"Come, come, let's listen! I'm so excited!" He whispered, patting the space beside him that he constructed just for Yuuri to sit in.
Very red and very surprised, Yuuri's body decides on it's own to scoot in next to Victor before his mind can register what's happening. His shirt is riding low on his shoulders, the right one being completely bare as the sagging t-shirt is tugged with the force of Yuuri's hand trying to find balance on the plush bed without falling entirely into Victor.

It was useless, however, as Yuuri learned when Victor placed the blanket over their legs and the jostling motion sent Yuuri's shoulder straight into Victor's armpit. Electricity danced where they touched, and with his shoulders so bare, Yuuri felt more exposed than Victor was. He couldn't calm his flushed neck and torso no matter how hard he tried while Victor fiddled with Yuuri's laptop, trying to open a media player on an operating system he wasn't even remotely familiar with.

"Damned Windows computers—we really must get you a MacBook, Yuuri, they're so much easier to use and—aha!" The frustrated Russian exclaimed. He accepted Yuuri's location without the slightest hesitation, he hadn't even reacted at all to the fact that his student was in his bed, under his blanket, against his side, under his arm—god, it was like christmas. Victor plugged a pair of earbuds into the laptop and handed Yuuri one end of it, then hovered his finger over the touchpad.

"Are you ready?" Victor asked.

Yuuri nodded.

The tinkling of the piano flooded his ears and it was... full. It was the same basic tune as the original, but so much... more. A low note burst through a short pause and thrummed in his veins, flowing like cold water and still warming his soul. The way the notes flitted up and down was like snowfall, like he was bounding through a wintry mountain forest and running, sprinting, flying through the air and landing on a frozen lake. The melody twirled—spun, even—and his heart was pounding.

He could imagine the choreography already, it was hard not to. As Yuuri closed his eyes he felt a shudder at his shoulder. He thought that perhaps Victor must feel it too, he really hoped the music was good enough. He couldn't imagine not using this—no, even if Victor rejected it, he would fight for this. It was perfect, it was sunken into his bones already and nothing short of pulling him apart would separate this music from him.

The end was nearing, and it was still holding him, still clawing at his heart, at his soul. This bit would be perfect for a surprise quad at the end—Yuuri's stamina could take it. Another bit was probably best for a biellmann spin, but they'd discuss it. Yuuri imagined what his final pose might be, what it should represent. They could think about that later, now was the time for gushing about the most perfect composition ever, now was the time to celebrate.

Yuuri loved this song.

Loved.

Love was a good theme.

The music came to a perfect end and Yuuri sat up straight, ecstatic. He turned to face Victor, prepared to discuss choreography and what the story should convey and possible costumes and Yuuri's wonderful idea of Love being the theme for the season.

He took in the image of the man next to him.

One hand gripping hard over his mouth, huge, fat tears pouring down his face like someone just dumped water over his head. The other hand held hard across his body, knuckles white from the strain of holding onto his arm like a man hanging off a cliff. His normally pale and perfect cheeks are
covered in angry red splotches from just under his eyes all the way down his neck and to his heaving chest. Victor's entire body was shaking, his eyes screwed shut as if someone had glued them that way. Now that the song had ended, Yuuri could hear the barely-withheld sobs huffing out of Victor's nose.

"V-Victor—!" Yuuri wriggled out of his comfortable position and turned Victor's body towards his own. "What's wrong, are you hurt?!"

"N-no, no, Yuuri," Came a pitifully choked sound, throat clearly raw from the strain of trying not to make any noise. Was he crying the entire time? Was it that bad? Did he hate it so much it made him weep? "I'm fine, I promise—"

Yuuri couldn't help a disbelieving scoff. "You're definitely not fine. What is going on?"

Yuuri settled back on his heels when it was clear that Victor was trying to catch his breath. He wiped the wetness and snot from his face with a shirt from the floor, but the tears still came, as well as pitiful snuffling noises that made it sound like Victor had the flu. After several minutes Yuuri's patience was wearing thin, he was just as bad with other people's emotions as he was with his own. He was confused, worried, concerned. He needed to know what was wrong.

"Victor, please..."

A deep sigh came from Victor's chest as he finally made a move to speak. "I... did not expect... feelings."

"...Feelings." Yuuri repeated.

"Feelings." Victor confirmed.

"Did... did you hate it?"

"No! God, no I could never—" Victor waved his hands about, as if to chase away the mere thought that the song was disliked. "Yuuri it was perfect. It was so perfect. It was... exactly what I pictured for you. It fits like a glass slipper. It works so... well with you. So... perfectly..." Another sob wrenched itself from Victor's throat and he slapped a hand over his mouth, trying to hide it.

"Then why are you crying?" Yuuri whispered. Maybe if he kept the tone of the conversation low, Victor wouldn't be as likely to start up again. The sound alone was already heartbreaking—lord knew he'd been well acquainted with it for this long—but his soul might collapse if he sees him like that again. To say the image is 'unpleasant' would be the understatement of the century.

Yuuri placed his hand over Victor's, which was bunched up in the throw blanket near his ankles. The warmth emanating from Victor's hand was unsettling, unnatural. If Yuuri hadn't known he was crying he would assume Victor had a raging fever and rushed him to the hospital.

Victor's quiet voice came through almost inaudibly. "I miss y—this. I miss... this so much."

"...This?"

Victor's head snapped up and he plastered on the world least-believable smile and began to gesture wildly with his hands. "The uhm... the excitement of a new piece, and all the planning and choreography that comes with it. Skating your... deepest feelings to the world, baring your soul... I just... miss this. So much."

Victor missed the ice.
Of course he would miss the ice, it was his calling, his first love, just as it had been Yuuri's. Victor belonged on the ice like a fish in water. He was the champion for a reason, the best for a reason, his calling—his purpose—was out on the ice.

And Yuuri was holding him back.

As if he could read Yuuri's thoughts, Victor spat out, "I love... coaching you, Yuuri. More than anything. I want to be here, with you, skating with you, please—please don't forget that." He desperately clutched at Yuuri's lopsided tshirt, which only served to worry Yuuri further.

"Victor calm down, you need to breathe," Yuuri attempted to wrench his shirt from the Russian's death grip but found that he couldn't. Victor's hands were clamped down like a vice and he refused to let Yuuri go for even a moment. "Victor!" He snapped. He had to grab Victor's shoulders and give them a firm shake just to get him out of his own head and back to reality.

Victor's eyes snapped to his and Yuuri could see the red-rimmed puffiness that promised bags in the morning. Victor would probably complain about it, but definitely wouldn't cancel practice over it. Victor's eyes refocused and he hung his head. He was making progress on catching his breath but was still panting and sweating with the exertion of his mini-breakdown.

"It's okay," Yuuri whispered, stroking a thumb over Victor's exposed, warm shoulder. His other hand pushed Victor's bangs out of his face and came down to rest on his flushed cheek. Using the force of his pinky, he led Victor's chin up to look him in the eye. "I know, Victor. It's okay."

Victor's eyes shone with something unreadable as a final small tear trailed down to meet Yuuri's thumb. He swiped it away and smiled, attempting to put Victor at ease from... whatever this was. Victor's eyes fluttered shut and Yuuri heard him sigh. Yuuri shifted to seat himself in a more comfortable position but Victor's eyes shot open again and he gripped Yuuri's wrist tightly. Too tightly. It kinda hurt.

"Stay."

What.

"What?"

Victor released Yuuri's arm, apologizing with his eyes. "Please, don't go... y-yet. Just... just sit with me for a while."

Clearly, whatever was actually bothering Victor, he wasn't willing to talk about it. Yuuri didn't like being pushed either, so he decided to indulge his coach for a while. He needed to distract Victor, to shove whatever the issue was to the side so that he could compose himself properly. Maybe when Victor was more comfortable with him, he would tell Yuuri what just happened. But for now, the issue at hand was to relax him.

A small stack of DVDs on the other bedside table supplied Yuuri with a solution. "Let's watch a movie, okay?" He leaned through Victor's personal space and grabbed one at random. "Let's watch —Totoro? When did you buy Totoro?"

Victor huffed into Yuuri's shoulder, a truly relieving sound, as Yuuri rifled through the other DVDs. Victor owned every single Studio Ghibli film. "I got all of those when I landed in Fukuoka. I wanted to start my collection back up."

"You had a collection before?" Yuuri hummed.
Victor suddenly tensed, and Yuuri realized the position he was in. His right hand was still on Victor's shoulder, using it for balance as he leaned over Victor towards the nightstand. Victor's face was in the perfect position to place his nose into the crook of Yuuri's neck, but he hadn't taken advantage. Instead, Victor's forehead was up against Yuuri's shoulder as he choppily explained that he used to have a collection but it got lost in a move a few years back and he just had to have the original Japanese packaging and so on and so forth, Yuuri was barely paying attention.

Yuuri quickly popped the disc into Victor's laptop—Yuuri's was already dead—and the two of them, equally flustered, settled into their pillow nest and watched My Neighbor Totoro. With subtitles.

Hours had passed when Yuuri finally regained consciousness if the alarm clock across the room was any indication. That damned theme song somehow always put him right to sleep as a child and he'd hoped to outgrow it. Shows what he knew about his own body, apparently. He could still hear it in his head—no, that was real. Victor was softly humming the Totoro song and rubbing soothing circles into Yuuri's shoulder with one hand and gently weaving his fingers through locks of Yuuri's hair with the other.

Yuuri's hair that was on Victor's shoulder.

Because Yuuri was nestled into Victor's side.

Because he was asleep on Victor.

In Victor's bed.

Because fucking Totoro knocked him out.

He tried hard not to make it obvious that he was awake but his hand was on Victor's chest—his chest!—and probably twitched once or twice by now with all the revelations occurring. Victor's stubbled cheek pressed up against Yuuri's forehead, and wow did he love that, but he prepared himself for the inevitable Oh You're Awake Okay Off To Your Own Room conversation. This wasn't a safe situation in the least, but Yuuri found that he didn't actually want to leave. His usual instinct was to run away immediately but there was probably nothing on this earth that could pry Yuuri away from this position at this moment, where he was in that perfect spot between awake and asleep where his body was honest.

Yuuri's ears strained in the silence to hear something mumbled into the darkness as Victor gently held him tighter. He couldn't understand it, so allowed himself to drift back to sleep in the warmth of Victor's arms.

"Dasvidaniya, lyubov moya."

Chapter End Notes

OOOOKAY that took twice as long as it needed to it just... got away from me i'm so sry ;n;

but i'm not sorry for making victor cry it's my favorite thing and also it's in the tags so dnt b mad @ me i lov my sad boy
translations:

takeshi calls yuuri "yuuriman". it's a play on words combining yuuri's name with "yariman" which is.... a very rude word. i headcanon these two as horrible country boys who say terrible things to each other because they're bros.

"Nantekatta" - i googled "whats the japanese equivalent of JEEEEEZ" and thats what i got.

"Dasvidaniya, lyubov moya." - goodbye, my love

anyways thank u so so so so much for everything i love you all so much and your comments bring me light and life in these trying times thank u for putting up w me <33333
The door they were standing in front of slid open a bit and the siblings nearly jumped out of their skin.

"Are you two fighting?" Victor asked worriedly. "If this is about last night I'm so sorry —" He froze as he took in the sight before him. Yuuri blushing, Mari looking smug, and a tray holding two mugs of fresh, hot, black coffee.

"Last night...?" Mari said, switching to English. She side-eyed her cherry red brother with a Cheshire grin. "Now what could have happened last night?"

"Nothing happened! Go clean a toilet!"

**Chapter Notes**

welcome to the summer of sexual tension!
...or so i wanted it to be, but i contained it to one chapter because i'm WAY too excited to get to the cup of china. (just a couple more chapters!!! *squeals like i'm not the one writing it*)

anyways the second half of this installment takes place in late July!
(i rly rly love the end theme okay just let me giv this 2 u before the canon comes back)
also heads up i don't know a goddamn thing about ballet or skating or any way that the body moves i'm very sorry to all people who do have that information, i'm certain my ignorance will physically harm you.

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

Yuuri wakes up to a ruffling feeling on the back of his head.

He doesn't want to open his eyes just yet, he can already tell the room is bright enough to annoy him. He's trapped inside an incredibly tightly-wrapped blanket burrito, something he's never been able to achieve on his own. The perfect pressure at all the right spots on his body has been elusive—as far as blanket burritos go. His sleep-addled mind allows himself to feel some measure of pride before the blanket wraps itself tighter around him and Yuuri's eyes shoot open.

Blanket burritos should not be able to wrap themselves tighter.

A small noise comes from behind Yuuri's head and his entire body goes rigid as the previous night floods his memories. The onsen, the music, the breakdown, the movie, falling asleep in Victor's bed because a children's movie lulled him to sleep, waking up on Victor's chest while he hummed and
mumbled in Russian.

“Yuuri… ya khochu… coffee…” Victor mumbled into Yuuri’s hair. The wet, hot breath on his scalp would normally have Yuuri recoiling in embarrassment, this entire situation would normally have Yuuri recoiling in embarrassment, perhaps even straight out of the room, but Yuuri was focused on something else.

“Coffee?” Yuuri sat up, supporting his weight on one hand and snatching the blanket off the both of them with the other, exposing Victor’s shirtless body to the cold of the morning. Victor immediately squirmed at the change in temperature, curling in on himself and flipping over.

Yuuri has read every magazine piece Victor has ever participated in. He’s watched every interview from his junior debut to just before last season's Grand Prix. Yuuri knows Victor's favorite songs and least favorite foods, his favorite colors and least favorite patterns, Yuuri knows how Victor feels about coffee.

"Victor, you hate coffee."

Victor snatched the blanket back, wrapping it tightly around him to ward off the chill. "You already know there's never anything else in this house," He slurred. "Four sugars this time, milyy."

Yuuri blinked a few times, taken aback, and found himself tilting his head like a puppy encountering new sounds for the first time. While, yes, he had just woken up in Victor Nikiforov's bed, curled up beside him, there was a lot more going on here. To the point that the awkward situation he was in was nothing compared to the fact that Victor Nikiforov was demanding a drink he hated, implying that there's nothing else in the entire inn, and suggesting that this discussion has happened several times. There was something about Victor's condescending tone, something about the confusion welling up in his stomach that made Yuuri... rude.

"There's tea, and juice, and water," Yuuri said with irritation. "You can head across the street and buy a soda. It's an inn, not a prison." Yuuri punctuated his sentence by flipping one decorative pillow onto the back of Victor's head.

The unconscious man startled, shooting up from his prone position and losing his grip on the edge of the bed. His hand slipped and he was sent tumbling to the floor at the force of his own tired weight. Yuuri felt no sympathy as Victor hit the tatami with a dull thud and a low grunt.

"Y-Yuuri!" Victor squeaked—*squeaked*—as he bundled the blanket around his chest in a meager effort to cover himself. He was probably embarrassed about last night, Yuuri knows that he's usually embarrassed after someone sees him cry. Maybe he should be feeling sympathy for the man who spent most of last night caught up in a feelings spiral before crying himself to sleep probably and then waking up with a hankering for *coffee* of all things and practically **demanding** that Yuuri go **fetch** some like he's some kind of **secretary**—

Deep breaths.

In. Out.

"I didn't realize you were here," Victor mumbled, rubbing the fresh bump on his forehead.

"Were you telling someone else to fetch you some coffee then?"

"N-no! I wasn't— I thought—! Ugh!" Victor flopped backwards, defeated.

Yuuri continued to glare with all the menace of a rubber knife while Victor writhed on the floor,
groaning in frustration. Victor flung an arm over his eyes and heaved a long-suffering sigh, clearly too tired for the nonsense going down presently.

“I was…dreaming.” He whispered after a moment, almost too quiet to hear. “I was dreaming and wanted coffee, that’s all.”

Yuuri softened. “You’ve always said you hated coffee.”

“I used to,” He said. “Coffee is… important to me now.”

A warmth spread through Yuuri’s core. That Victor suddenly enjoyed something he loved so much was a pleasant feeling.

Coffee had always been important to Yuuri. As a teen he often self-medicated with caffeine, and the million different ways one could have coffee had always surprised him. Where some would see ‘bitter bean water’, Yuuri would see ‘warmth’ and ‘comfort’, sometimes even ‘art’. (Coffee art is a Real Thing and no one could convince him otherwise.) Being able to craft something so comforting and then tangibly enjoy the fruits of his labor was both relaxing and meaningful to him.

In another life, one where he’d never even seen the ice, he’d probably be a barista, crafting happiness for five dollars and drawing scenery in the foam.

"Sorry for falling asleep," Yuuri chuckled, rubbing the back of his head with shaking fingers. His hair was getting longer. He wondered for a moment whether he should cut it or just let it grow out. "I should have gone back to my room when I realized I was feeling tired."

"You know, Yuuri," Victor whined, lips pouting dramatically as he leaned back over the bed. "As your coach, it's best that I learn your habits and routines. We should sleep together more often!" He grinned, patting his side of the bed and batting his eyelashes.

Yuuri flushed and threw another pillow at the Russian's face as he bolted out of the room, shouting "Make your own coffee!"

"Tsundere."

Yuuri halted, shaking the tray holding two mugs of coffee that he was taking down the hallway. He turned slowly to meet the eye of whomever just insulted him—and of course, it was Mari. Yuuri rolled his eyes and trudged forward, knowing that any protests would only be evidence to her claim.

"No, no, that's not right is it?" She teased. "You couldn't be mean to him if you tried, could you?"

"Mari-nee..." He warned.

"I mean you're bringing him the coffee after all, a real tsundere would make his own only and then enjoy it in front of Victor, trying to make him jealous."

"Mari I'm holding hot coffee—"

"You'd do every little thing he asked of you, wouldn't you?" She hopped to Yuuri's right side and
placed one hand on her heart, dramatically holding the other out to the empty room they were walking past. "Yuuri." She mimicked in a terrible Russian accent, sounding horribly misplaced in Japanese. "I have come here unannounced with my beautiful Russian ass to bother your family, move your life around for me as my whims demand!"

"Mari I swear—"

"Oh, Victor!" She hopped to Yuuri's other side, clasping her hands in front of her and sporting big sparkly doe eyes as she pitched her voice up. "I'd do anything to keep you here, even publicly humiliating a child prodigy by shaking my ass on the ice to a song about sex—"

"MARI!" He snapped. "I will pile-drive you into the freshly fertilized garden don't think I won't—!"

The door they were standing in front of slid open a bit and the siblings nearly jumped out of their skin.

"Are you two fighting?" Victor asked worriedly. "If this is about last night I'm so sorry—" He froze as he took in the sight before him. Yuuri blushing, Mari looking smug, and a tray holding two mugs of fresh, hot, black coffee.

"Last night...?" Mari said, switching to English. She side-eyed her cherry red brother with a Cheshire grin. "Now what could have happened last night?"

"Nothing happened! Go clean a toilet!" Yuuri pushed through Victor's door and slammed it shut, turning the lock forcefully, loudly. He attempted to catch his breath leaning against the door, and Victor kindly lifted the tray from his shaking hands. Victor placed the tray on the small table off to the left, not taking his eyes off Yuuri. He smiled, taking Yuuri's hand and softly pressing his lips against a knuckle.

"You got me coffee..." He whispered.

Yuuri nodded slowly, a habitual sound of affirmation lilting gently from his throat. "Un."

Another press of the lips against a different knuckle. "You put sugar in it, didn't you."

"Un." Another.

Victor took a quarter-step closer. "Four."


Yuuri's eyes were drifting closed. What was he doing? What was Victor doing? Where were they again? And why does it smell like coffee? Their noses were only a couple of inches apart when Yuuri's text notification went off, a sharp staccato sound slicing through the air that signaled a family member's text.

Victor startled away from Yuuri, stumbling over some discarded clothing and flopping backwards onto the bed. Yuuri snatched his phone from his back pocket and quickly opened the message, assuming it was his mother needing help with something.

**Sender:** Mari

**Body:** うんでれ。
“It's time for a break!” Yuuri called out to the sea.

Axel and Loop immediately broke into a sprint back towards Yuuri and the towels but Lutz was still in the shallows, being swung around in a circle by Victor. Her shrieks of joy drowned out Victor’s laughter but Yuuri could hear him all the same.

“Yuuri, are we going to split a watermelon?”

“Yuuri, where's the fireworks?”

Yuuri chuckled. “It's the middle of the day, we can't do fireworks yet! Yurio hasn't even gotten here yet!”

“Yuri Plisetsky?!” The two shouted.

Yuuri mentally facepalmed, the cat was out of the bag. “Yes, Yurio is visiting for a few days. Can the three of you behave while he's here?”

“Hai!” Said three voices, one more than he was expecting. Lutz had made her way back to the towels, which meant Victor was somewhere as well. Yuuri didn't have to search for him, however, as a pressure atop his head clued him in.

“Yuuri, it was supposed to be a surprise!” Victor whined, arms over Yuuri’s shoulders and chin resting on the crown of Yuuri’s head. “Now he's going to be mad at us.”

“Are there going to be more surprises?” Lutz asked. “Are mama and papa coming too?”

“No, they're going to be in Okinawa until tomorrow, like they told you.” Yuuri explained.

The girls grinned mischievously.

***

After a frantic search along the beach, Makkachin was found frolicking with a stray dog in the waves. He had dragged the giant bag of extra clothing at least a hundred yards away, probably because the treats were in the same bag.

Live and learn.

Yuuri instructed the triplets to shower and get dressed before food was ready and then hey could play some games while they ate and waited for Yurio to arrive from his train.

“Shower?” Victor asked, confused.

Yuuri hummed in affirmation as he maneuvered the umbrellas to make a convenient dome around the towels for shade and protection from gulls. “We need to shower off too, obviously, I just wanted to get this set up first since they're looking tired.”

“There's showers on a beach?”

Yuuri froze a moment and then laughed. “Of course? There needs to be so you don't track sand and
salt back into your house or car.” He punctuated the sentence by standing up and brushing the sand from his knees. “It's also for rinsing off beforehand so you don't bring weird stuff into the ocean.”

“But I didn't do that!” Victor gasped.

“It's fine, it's fine,” Yuuri waved him off. “Let's head over and get this brine off our bodies, okay? I'm getting hungry.”

Victor followed him to a small concrete slab with a metal pole sticking from the ground. Yuuri pressed a button and incredibly cold water sprayed from an overhead nozzle onto Victor’s unsuspecting body. He shrieked and stumbled backwards into the sand, hair a muddy mess.

The girls' laughter rang from beside him and Yuuri did his best to cover his own. Victor hauled himself from the ground with surprising speed and dropped a handful of beach sand onto Yuuri’s hair.

“Victor!” He laughed.

The two of them smeared sand into each other's hair and laughed under the freezing spray of the water until the shivering became too much.

***

“Turn left, Yurio!”

“Don't tell me what to do old man! I'm going right just to spite you!”

Yurio did, in fact, move a bit to the right. He took a huge swing of the metal bat and hit the watermelon with a resounding ‘thwack’, the giant fruit cracking open. The girls screamed, Yurio tore off his blindfold in celebration, the sun was setting and Makkachin was napping under the umbrella.

“I don't think I've had this much fun in… years probably.” Yuuri chuckled.

Victor sidled up beside him with two slices of watermelon and handed the less seeded one to Yuuri. “I can think of maybe one thing that was more fun than this.”

“Oh?” Yuuri asked, genuinely curious.

Victor grinned.

Rolling his eyes in fond exasperation, Yuuri gave Victor's shoulder a light shove. Well, he'd thought it was a light shove, but Victor toppled down into the sand, smoothly rolling back up and wrapping his arms across his shoulders for presentation. The finishing pose from his Stammi Vicino routine.

"Are we hopping around in the sand now, Victor?” Yuuri laughed.

Victor reached out to Yuuri with one hand, leaving the other in place. With one finger he booped Yuuri's nose. "Only if you hop with me, zaichik.” He replied quietly.

Framed by the setting sun, Victor was bathed in a golden halo of... god, Yuuri didn't even know what. He looked almost celestial, like the sun had come down from the sky and kissed the crown of his head to drape him in a golden light and coronate him as the eventide prince—

"Oi, Victor!” Yurio shouted, interrupting Yuuri's horribly corny train of thought. "There's children present!”
"Krasivo zhit' ne zapret'sh', Yurio!" Victor sang, yanking Yuuri's hand towards him and taking a backwards stride to dance along the shore.

They jumped and spun in the sand as the sun took it's sweet time dropping below the horizon, the ocean glittering as they chased one another and splashed in the waves. Yuuri watched as Victor danced, the light of the sunset almost solid in the air. Makkachin barrelled out from behind Yuuri—he hadn't even noticed the dog approaching—and tackled Victor into the sand, bringing his performance to an end.

By the time they made it back to the towels, the sky was dark and the watermelon was gone.

***

"Alright Katsudon, you ready?" Yurio called from the shoreline.

"I've got them at a safe distance! Light it when you're ready!" Yuuri shouted back.

Even from a distance, Yuuri could tell that the teen was having trouble with the lighter gun he was using to light the fuse. They let him practice with the sparklers earlier but the resistance on gun-style lighters was always annoying and difficult. It didn't help that you could just light the next sparkler with the one fizzling out, leaving little use for a lighter of any kind at all.

Yurio had been irritated at first by the sizzling noise that the sparklers made, but warmed up to them as the colors blended together beautifully. He supervised the girls as they held one at a time, even as they had whined about wanting more 'like Victor had' and wanting to spin and dance 'like Victor was'. Yurio had chided him for setting a bad example for the children but Victor ignored the teen and jumped double toe-loops in the sand, sparks surrounding him as he leapt.

Yuuri decided to let loose as well, dancing around Victor's sloppy rotations with even sloppier ballet. He toed into the rapidly cooling sand to stabilize himself for a beautiful arabesque, looking every bit as glamorous as he'd intended, if Victor's delighted gaze were any indication. Yuuri trailed blue ribbons alongside him as Victor swirled in pinks, a violet song carved into the air. Yuuri hopped lazily into a grand jeté, falling just short of slipping into a split into the dirt.

If Minako were present she'd have caned him across the shins.

His train of thought was interrupted by a screeching whistle, followed shortly after by a colossal boom. Yuuri turned his attention towards the sky and was met with a gigantic bloom of turquoise reminiscent of Victor's eyes. The explosion willowed downwards and crackled with white.

The next was a bright green peony that burst a second time in yellow. Several smaller eruptions coated the sky in pinks and blues and oranges and purples. He didn't know what kind of fireworks Yurio had managed to purchase, but he clearly didn't get them in Hasetsu.

Yuuri gazed elsewhere in the rolling expanse of black above them, wondering if the light would reflect off of any nearby clouds, but there were none. It was a clear night, and the only things in the sky were bursts of chemical light and the ever-present stars watching over them. As the sky lit up blue once again, he turned to his right, expecting Victor to be watching the sky like the others were.

Instead, their eyes met, soft and joyful in the flickering colors, Victor smiling tenderly. Yuuri extended the fingers of his right hand and intertwined them slowly with the one he'd blindly met, squeezing gently.
if you're reading this i love u so so so so much and thank u for everything you're doing for me bc even just by looking at these lil pixels it means so much and makes me so so happy i lov u

so, about these two. they're getting...? softer...? i think??
i keep writing them softer and softer. i can't seem to get them to be where they were anymore. they're soft now. maybe it's a consequence of the situations i've been writing them into? maybe i'm bad at consistency?? this is literally my first fic in over a decade... maybe i'm doing something wrong lol. but they're soft now. (for now *wringing my hands together like a goblin*)

but moving on, i literally cannot believe this story made it to almost 20k hits i'm literally crying.
speaking of crying.. you know, the other day i was going thru the yoi ficrec blog and my fic—THIS FIC—was on a rec post!!! i couldn't believe it!!! and i cried for like six full minutes. my husband thought something was actually wrong but no my sensitive ass was overwhelmed with happiness that this fic was recommended by an actual person to other actual people and i'm sobbign again bye

translations!

ya khochu... - i want...
milyy - darling
うんでれ - undere - a dere subtype (link)
zaichik - bunny
krašivo zhit' ne zapretîš' - you can't forbid living beautifully

(it's 2 am lemme kno if i fucked anything up that i can easily fix i lov u)
Chapter Summary

From sports tabloids to sponsors to family and friends, people were deeply concerned about Katsuki Yuuri—but he didn't want it. He just wanted to skate one time just one time without worrying about what everyone else was thinking and speculating about his worthiness to be on the ice. Just once Yuuri wanted to be able to voluntarily shove away the anxiety and enjoy his favorite thing.

Would he ever get to do that? Just... skate? For himself? Just once?

Chapter Notes

i'm not going to make excuses for my lateness, i was visiting family and simply did not pay enough attention to my writer obligations ;~;

i actually had been deleting and rewriting over and over and over again that part where yuuri is skating eros and i just could NOT get it the way i wanted it to be so i was whining to my husband and he was just like "why not just not write that part?" and i was like "....bro. i did not think of that." so 2 spare my fried brain i just,..., took out the commentary on eros because it's going to happen so many more times like is this one time truly necessary? i dont think so honestly. (free skate commentary is staying in obv)

so again, sry times ten billion for my lateness!!!!!! this fic is definitely not abandoned and i'm working hard on chap 18 rn and this time i won't let it murder me >:3

pls enjoy the chu-shikoku-kyushu championships (part one! short program!) and pls 5giv me

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"I know they're all significantly younger than you," Ouch. "But you need to remember that they're your competitors and they deserve your respect and recognition." Victor was wagging his finger at Yuuri as they exited Kurashiki Station into the cool bite of the night air.

Minako scoffed from ahead of them. "Quite a statement from mister 'commemorative photo'."

Victor flushed deeply as Yuuri quietly giggled. He'd long since forgiven Victor for the commemorative photo incident, but Victor was consistently apologizing in small ways. He would ask Yuuri to take a selfie with him instead of wording it as though he were offering one. He would bring up Yuuri's past performances with a startling level of detail even though as a coach, it was normal. Victor was even caught a few times skating Yuuri’s own programs, but wouldn't defend himself as he blushed.
Victor's blush had become a common sight, more so than Yuuri's, surprisingly enough. After their first night together, Yuuri spent the occasional day off with Victor, slowly working through his Ghibli collection and “accidentally” falling asleep. Yuuri would sneak out of the room in the mornings and come back with coffee, knocking politely before entering the room despite having been drooling on the pillows not fifteen minutes prior.

They spent the summer at the beach when they weren't on the ice. Victor insisted the swimming practice was worth it for the exercise but Yuuri could see through him—Victor simply loved to swim. When called out by Mari on how the two of them went swimming so often, Victor simply turned red and defended himself by mentioning how hot it was outside and how refreshing the ocean breeze is.

Yes, Victor's blush was gorgeous. Way different than the sheet-white, horrified face Victor was currently making as Takeshi pulled up to the curb in a white van and Minako immediately began loading all of their luggage into the trunk.

“Wh-what is that…?” Victor murmured.

“It's… a van?” Minako answered, confused. “Did you expect us to walk the last five miles from the station to the hotel?”

“Yes? Or a-a-another train?” Victor dropped the handle of his suitcase and ran a hand through his fringe, shoving the other in the pocket of his loose sweatpants. “I thought—I didn't think we—a car? Do we really need a car for this? I-it's not like it's a far walk!”

Yuuri stepped towards him carefully, mindful of the jerking motions of Victor turning back and forth as if looking for something in the crowd. "Victor, what's going on?"

From just behind Yuuri, Minako quietly cursed and dropped the last bags she was loading into the van. She pulled Victor to the side and began speaking quietly to him. "Is this about—?"

"Da." Victor whispered shakily, making quick eye contact with Yuuri before sending Minako a worried glance. The older woman looked back at Yuuri, cursed a second time, and switched languages.

"Nous avons besoin de la voiture," Minako whispered, entirely underestimating Yuuri's hearing. "Ç'est trop loin pour aller seul."

"Je ne le ferai pas. Je ne peux pas!" Victor bit back. French was a lovely language out of Victor's mouth, or Yuuri would think so if the man didn't look like he'd seen a ghost.

Minako grabbed Victor's hands, seeming to plead. "La nuit est dangereuse, cette ville n'est pas sûre!"

"Mourir est également dangereux!" He shouted. People outside the station began to stare, and Yuuri could see tears pricking at the corners of Victor's eyes. He couldn't handle that, not again.

"Victor!" Yuuri called to him.

Their eyes snapped to meet from twenty feet apart and Victor's angry, furrowed brows loosened and drooped in desperation. "Yuuri, I—"

"I'll go with you. I'll walk with you to the hotel. It shouldn't take more than an hour—"

Victor's shoulders immediately sagged with relief, then suddenly tensed again as he put his hands up
and waved the idea away with a fake smile. "—Yuuri no, you need to rest for the competition—"

"I'm walking." Yuuri says with finality, tossing his one bag into the open van and turning to walk away. "You can follow if you want to."

A moment passed where Yuuri’s steps faltered, not hearing Victor moving to catch up. He almost stopped and turned around in embarrassment before he heard Victor sigh and move to catch up, whining "Je suivrais ce cul directement en l'enfer—"

"Victor!" Minako shouted behind them.

Yuuri’s feet were... uncomfortable.

Every time Yuuri attempted to breach the subject of why Victor wanted to walk to the hotel, Victor dodged the question and pulled him into a store. It didn’t matter that they needed zero things from any store, Victor clearly needed a distraction.

They’d procured two armfuls of omiyage to bring back to Hasetsu before Yuuri tried a final time, assuming that with no room to purchase anything else, Victor would just outright admit he didn’t feel comfortable talking about it instead of dodging and ignoring like a child.

Yuuri had assumed wrong.

Victor immediately ducked into yet another shop and placed his boxes down, miming to the clerk in a square fashion and then plunging his hand through the air like a bird, then motioning to the pile of souvenirs. Amazingly, the clerk seemed to understand. She nodded and left as Yuuri entered the shop and placed his items on the floor as well. Victor was making a very deliberate lack of eye-contact and smiling after the salesgirl artificially.

When she returned, it was with a large rolling suitcase, and she began loading their boxes into it with Tetris accuracy.

They had left with a single suitcase rolling behind them and a soft, tissue-wrapped item that Victor handed to Yuuri. An item that was currently murdering Yuuri’s feet.

"Wow, Yuuri-senpai!" Shouted the excited teenager next to him. "You look like your feet are in heaven! Are those cashmere?"

"They are, and they suck. I've totally got swamp foot." Yuuri mumbled in response. His feet were very sweaty, and sweat does not make for comfortable cashmere socks that are already too-plush for Yuuri’s athletic shoes. Yuuri could practically hear the indignant huff from across the room, offended that his gift wasn't appreciated.

"Swamp… foot…?" The younger competitor sounded out in heavy English. "What's that—? Oh! Is it American slang? Tell me what it means!"

Yuuri chuckled as he and the boy next to him had a pleasant conversation about all the terrible things that can occur to the human foot—spine-chillers of blisters and cracked heels, calluses that refused to stay hard, typical foot-profession horror stories—until a woman’s voice broke through the comfortable discussion.
"Skater Katsuki, please approach."

"Victor, how will it affect Katsuki's pacing that he has to go through qualifiers—"

"Victor, why did you decide to—"

"Victor, over here—"

"Victor, how do you respond to the speculation that—"

"Minna-san!" Victor sing-song'd with slight irritation. "I'd appreciate it if you would slow down a bit! Yuuri and I have timed him to peak at the Final, so these rounds aren't an issue at all. I'm having him take it easy here! Maybe earn a new PB, huh?" A rolling chuckle from the audience of reporters had Yuuri zoning back in and backtracking on Victor's words, suddenly realizing something important.

Victor is a good skater.

He is the literal best male skater in the professional circuit. Victor Nikiforov has won the gold for the past five consecutive World Championships. Victor Nikiforov has been to the Olympics—has won the Olympics—he's very very good. He probably hasn't had to deal with the pressure of a qualifying round since he entered Seniors a decade ago.

"Victor, I haven't entered a single competition since I bombed Nationals, and when I slunk off back to Detroit I didn't set foot on the ice again until... the video... a-and just because I got lucky against Yurio doesn't mean these other skaters are going to just hand over the spot." The reporters were silent as death, and Victor's blue eyes were wide and sparkling with an unidentified emotion. "Every single one of these skaters beat me out at Nationals," His speech wavered, but he pressed on. "There's no reason they can't do it again here!"

A camera bulb flashed and Yuuri's face immediately relaxed, apparently from a hard, determined expression aimed directly at Victor, who was grinning like he'd just won a bet. More cameras flashed and clicked as the murmuring of the reporters gained in volume, and Victor stepped between them and Yuuri to call an end to the interviews, citing rest and practice for the night's competition.

Yuuri had been training with Victor for months, and if you asked him, he'd tell you himself that he was already feeling like he had a real actual shot at this. Whatever 'this' happened to be at the time, he was feeling good about it. As he finished up practicing his Eros choreography, Yuuri tried to reflect on his progress and strategize any last minute changes to the program, but a warm tingle sat at the top of his spine as he noticed he was being watched.

The boy from earlier—Minami Kenjirou—was distractedly gliding along the barrier, not using his public practice time. The teen's wood-brown eyes were glued to Yuuri, sparkling with admiration.
Yuuri turned the top half of his body to throw a wave in Minami's direction and the boy's face immediately reddened deeper than the dyed portion of his fringe.

"Minami-kun, you need to focus!" A woman called out from behind the star-struck boy. "Remember how focused you were at Nationals? Don't get caught up in the energy!"

Yuuri removed himself from the rink as the loudspeaker announced that public practice was drawing to a close. Slipping his skate guards back on and taking a seat in the locker room, he allowed his mind to wander back to Nationals. Back to how he flubbed pretty much everything, to the point where even his proficient footwork couldn't elevate him beyond 20th place. Yuuri had been serious earlier when he'd informed Victor that the other three boys competing today had placed above him at that time.

His phone had exploded with google alerts and articles speculating why Yuuri—pride of Japan—was suddenly terrible. It wasn't really their fault, though. None of them had a clue that he wasn't 'suddenly terrible', he'd always been terrible. It makes sense to wonder about something when you're only seeing it for the first time, right?

If Yuuri had his way he wouldn't have even bothered competing in Nationals, none of his sponsorship contracts required it except one, who dropped him immediately as a result of placing sixth at the GPF. Though, now that Victor was coaching him, sponsorship offers had come pouring in for months now, including from the athletic underwear company that dropped him(it had felt good to ignore that email).

Missing Worlds wasn't a problem for his sponsors, but they did express concern that Yuuri hadn't explicitly stated he would be returning for the following season. He'd received emails and phone calls and Celestino dealt with all of them, Yuuri had stopped paying attention.

From sports tabloids to sponsors to family and friends, people were deeply concerned about Katsuki Yuuri—but he didn't want it. He just wanted to skate one time just one time without worrying about what everyone else was thinking and speculating about his worthiness to be on the ice. Just once Yuuri wanted to be able to voluntarily shove away the anxiety and enjoy his favorite thing.

Would he ever get to do that? Just... skate? For himself? Just once?

"You're worrying too much, Yuuri." A velvety voice whispered from just beside his face.

"V-Victor! I thought you went back to the hotel?"

Victor blinked once, twice at Yuuri's face, his own expression blank. "I just came back? I left over an hour ago, you're starting in like, thirty minutes—How long were you sitting there?"

Yuuri blinked a few times himself, attempting to will away the fog of confusion hovering over his head. "I... I don't know? I just sat down after practice and started to think about—and then you were —ah, I don't know, nevermind, are you wearing a suit?"

Victor's face brightened considerably. "Why yes, I am wearing a suit! I'm making my debut as a coach after all, right?"

Yuuri flushed a bit at the way Victor's jacket hugged his waist perfectly and averted his eyes. "Y-yeah, you're right."

Victor hummed, tapping his finger against his lips in a familiar gesture that comforted Yuuri(though sometimes worried him). "You don't have a lot of time zvezda," Victor murmured, helping Yuuri to his feet. He placed his hands on Yuuri's upper arms, as close to a hug as he was going to get, but
relieved that Victor wasn't outright embracing him during public practice. Victor gently squeezed the
tense meat of Yuuri's bicep and smiled reassuringly. "No more spacing out alright? Time to focus on
winning this competition."

Yuuri geared up to reply with a confident nod, but Victor leaned in close to whisper.
"Seduce me, Yuuri. If you can charm me, you can charm that entire audience out there."

Surprisingly, Yuuri didn't immediately combust and then die.

"94.36! A new personal best for Katsuki Yuuri!" The small crowd rumbled a cheer as Yuuri saw
Minako jumping up and down on the other side of the rink. Takeshi's body was shaking back and
forth with the force of Minako's clamped hands on his shoulders in excitement.

A humming sound from in front of him brought Yuuri out of his excitement. He looked over to
Victor, whose shoulders were slumped a bit and face was drooping with a pout. "I thought since
there was less pressure this time, you would have scored higher."

"Ehh~?" Yuuri groused. "Is that so? If only I were World Champion Victor Nikiforov, who
consistently scored 100s in the early season, breaking world records like it was a chore."

"Is my Yuuri sassing me?" Victor gasped with a hand placed dramatically against his cheek.
"Perhaps if he is so unconfident, he should lower the difficulty of his free skate jumps?"

Yuuri jerked his head back in confusion, "Why would I do that?"

"Well, you haven't been nailing those jumps reliably during practice yet, right?" Victor said cheerily,
waving his Makkachin tissue box around like it was the one telling him to downplay his technical
elements.

"But—!"

"You should be lowering the difficulty early in the season or you'll burn out, you know?"

"Victor—!"

"It's not like you need to ramp it up yet, you should be peaking during the Grand Prix Final, right?"

"I'm not doing that, Victor!" Yuuri shouted, drawing the attention of the backstage staff. "I'm not
going to... to dumb down my performance just because it's a regional competition! I've already told
you but these kids already beat me once, I'm not going to hold back just because I'm older or because
you're my coach or because—because— Ugh!" Yuuri physically shook the jumbled thoughts from
his head and clenched his fists, staring directly into Victor's eyes with challenge and irritation.

These other boys were just kids, still teenagers, older than Yurio but still stuck in regional and
National competitions, never having broken into the international circuit. But did that matter? Did it
matter that Yuuri was more experienced? Did any of that matter when all of them had already beaten
Yuuri?

Yuuri bombed because he had broken down, who's to say it won't happen again? Who's to say
Yuuri won't panic and screw up? Who's to say these other kids don't have absolutely killer FS
programs? Anything could happen, *anything*, and if Yuuri slowed it down now? With his luck? He'd certainly regret it.

Victor relaxed his posture and smiled. "Are you saying you can't obey your coach?"

"I can obey, I'm saying I won't. That's disingenuous to my fellow competitors, Victor. I respect them and I'm not going to limit myself like we're playing some game. In fact, *you're* the one who told me that they deserve respect and recognition just as much as I do, which *you* should know more than anyone!" Yuuri punctuated the statement with a finger jabbed into Victor's chest. "So I'm going to *watch* my fellow skaters, I'm going to *talk* with them because they're my *equals*, and I'm *not* going to trivialize their hard work by over-simplifying my own. *Our* own. We *both* worked hard and I'm going to make that very clear to everybody out there."

Victor's smug smile slowly became a satisfied grin. "We'll see, then."

Yuuri huffed out an indignant "Fine!" Before turning on his heel to wash his face of sweat and grime before heading back into the rink to watch the other skaters. *Then* he would allow interviews.

Chapter End Notes

some rough french!

**Nous avons besoin de la voiture, Ç'est trop loin pour aller seul** - we need to use the car, it's too far to go alone
**Je ne le ferai pas. Je ne peux pas!** - I will not do it, I cannot!
**La nuit est dangereuse, cette ville n'est pas sûre!** - The night is dangerous, the city isn't safe!
**Mourir est également dangereux!** - Dying is also dangerous!
**Je suivrais ce cul directement en l'enfer** - I would follow that ass directly into hell

i love u all so so much thank u for putting up w my horrible update schedule <3 <3 <3 <3 <3
Confession

Chapter Summary

"Yuuri," Minami called out when they met in the locker room. "I want to... tell you something. It's important."

Chapter Notes

i've watched episode five maybe 30 times now......

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes) [there are no translations in this chapter]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A score was announced, and Minami stepped away from the gate with a dejected groan. "And I even managed to land the Triple Axel too..."

"It was your best performance yet, Kenjirou!" His coach reassured him with a pat on the back.

The bottle-blond teen pouted. "But I didn't even come close to Yuuri-senpai's score! I probably never will." He mumbled, tearing up. Minami, not paying attention to where he was going, bumped straight into Yuuri's chest. Gazing up into a matching pair of red-brown eyes, Minami suddenly flushed.

"Minami-kun! Your program was amazing!" Yuuri said with a genuine smile.

Minami seemed to explode right there in his... achingly familiar costume, sparkling like a child's art project. "Yuuri-senpai! Y-you were really watching?!!" He squeaked.

"Huh? Of course I was!"

"Wow! I'm so embarrassed! I'm so happy! Kanako-sensei did you hear that? Yuuri-senpai was watching—!

"—Yes, yes, Kenjirou—"

"—What did you think? Criticize me, tell me everything I can totally take it!"

Yuuri's cheeks dusted with pink and he stumbled over his words. Criticize? Why would he want to do that? Minami's program was very good! Yuuri recalled his junior days when he skated to the same difficult song, and the elements were different enough that to Yuuri, it was like a completely different beast altogether. Minami didn't have a single quad under his belt just yet, but with the absolutely perfect landing on his triple axel, you wouldn't have guessed that at all.

"Criticize...? Haha, No way Minami-kun!" Yuuri chuckled, patting the boy's shoulder. "I'm in no
position to judge—"

"Of course you are!" Minami interrupted. "I even had my costume made to look similar to your Lohengrin costume from your JGPF bronze short program!"

Yuuri's eyes widened. "I thought it looked familiar! Ahh, no way, this is so...!" Yuuri buried his rapidly reddening face into his hands and let out a small whine.

Victor nudged Yuuri gently with a concerned look. "Yuuri, what's going on?"

Yuuri switched to English. "Ah, sorry Victor, Minami-kun is wearing a costume similar to one of my old ones because he's a fan. I'm pretty embarrassed right now." He chuckled, self-consciously rubbing the back of his head.

"Embarrassed? I thought I knew that word..."

"Hazukashii." Yuuri supplied.

"Embarrassing?! It's my favorite of all your old programs!" Minami shouted, excluding Victor with the Japanese language once again. "To skate it—to skate with you—it's always been my dream!"

The words came out in a rush of emotion with Minami's hands shaking at his sides with a dusting of red reaching to the tips of his ears and a wet, challenging look in his eyes.

Yuuri sent a sidelong glance towards Victor, meeting the Russian's crystal blue eyes and blushing slightly himself. "I know what that's like, Minami-kun." He gave the teenager a small smile and held his hand out for Minami to take, which took the boy quite a few moments to do. Yuuri clasped his other hand around Minami's and squeezed gently. The boy squeaked as though his hand were a dog toy.

"Thank you for your support, Minami-kun. I'm pretty embarrassed but I'm also... happy? I don't know," He said through a gentle smile.

Yuuri suddenly felt a weight on his shoulder as his body dipped and over-corrected, stumbling for a moment before realizing that Victor had plopped an arm around Yuuri's neck and pulled possessively.

"Yuuuri~! We have to get back to the hotel, you know?" Victor's voice seemed to whine into Yuuri's scalp. He couldn't see Victor's face—as it was currently pressed into Yuuri's hair—but he could still see Minami's, and the boy was flushed red yet again with a distinct twinge of fear in his eyes. If only the child knew that Victor wasn't the intimidating legend everybody thinks he is!

"Ah, I'll see you tomorrow for the free skate, Minami-kun, I can't keep my coach waiting." Letting go of Minami's hand, Yuuri turned around to leave with Victor, wondering why he had become so clingy all of a sudden.

“I don't know what's gotten into you Victor, but I need to finish my lunch soon or I'm going to end up losing it on the ice.”

"You have two entire hours," Victor mumbled into Yuuri's shoulder, leaning against him while he ate his kind-of-alright salad. Victor's silver head impeded the range of motion in Yuuri's shoulder and
arm, making it pretty difficult to consume his lunch. "I'm tired. Let me recharge."

"Recha—You haven't done anything since we woke up this morning! You were barely even paying attention when I was trying to go over last minute choreography with you over breakfast!"

Victor slumped further into Yuuri's personal space, squishing way too close to be publicly appropriate. Thankfully, they were in their shared hotel room. Unthankfully, this basically told Victor he could do whatever he wanted, which was beginning to exasperate Yuuri entirely.

Maybe four months ago Yuuri would have been pushing Victor off of him and locking himself in his room, which they definitely wouldn't be sharing, and spending the next two hours until competition time freaking out about Victor getting too close and if he was being mocked or whatever, but they're too close for that kind of anxiety anymore. There's far more important things to worry about, like the fact that Yuuri shouted at Victor yesterday in front of several reporters. Twice.

"I'm emotionally tired," Victor mumbled, continuing on in babbled Russian. Yuuri didn't bother asking for a translation. He just ate his lunch with great difficulty and ran through the Free Skate program in his head a few hundred times.

"Yuuri," Minami called out when they met in the locker room. "I want to... tell you something. It's important."

Yuuri couldn't imagine why he'd be called out right before the competition began, by all accounts it was actually a little suspicious, but regional competitions weren't a field for mind games and Minami was a good kid and looked very serious. Yuuri couldn't possibly leave him hanging. They moved to a quieter corner of the locker rooms alone and the teen turned abruptly to face Yuuri.

"My program is about how much fun I have while I'm skating," Minami began quietly. "How I feel like a true performer, and how it makes me so happy when I can tell the audience is having fun with me." He wrung his hands together nervously at the hem of his sparkling yellow vest. "When I'm skating, I feel like I can really get people to understand, you know? How great the ice is."

Yuuri understood, he just didn't understand why the young skater was unloading his love of the ice onto him. In the back of his mind, he briefly registered that Victor wasn't around like he said he'd be. The forefront of his mind stayed focused on the boy in front of him, to get distracted while he was pouring his heart out would be rude, after all.

"Yuuri, I..." Minami was staring at the floor, blushing. He ran his hand through his hair and took a deep breath. "Your skating is what inspired me to skate when I was younger. Your skating is... it's everything to me." A rush of warmth flooded Yuuri's cheeks. He certainly didn't expect to be praised in a smelly locker room. "When there were rumors you'd retire, I was scared they were true, I practiced hard every day so that I'd be ready when you returned to the ice, I was sure you would! And now you're here, you're right in front of me and I finally get to skate on the same ice as you again and I just... I'm so happy."

Minami inhaled deeply and shouted. "Yuuri, I love your skating!"

From just behind himself, Yuuri heard a soft gasp. He turned around at the surprise eavesdropper, only to find Victor standing there in his tailored suit, looking like he'd just dropped a million dollar vase. Yuuri felt a tug on his arm and he was spun around to face Minami again, this shining brown
eyes locking with his own, full of determination. "Today, I'm skating for you," He said with conviction. "So... Please watch me!"

He didn't even give Yuuri a chance to process, let alone respond. Minami ran out of the locker room and straight to the rink gate moments before his name was called for the Free Skate.

"152.14, For a total score of 214.97! Minami Kenjiro scores a new personal best!"

Minami screamed and hugged his coach as both cried and suddenly became engulfed by interviewers. Yuuri smiled as the boy fumbled over his words, too excited by his new score to really articulate properly.

Minami's Free Skate was indeed fun and expressive, the jazzy tune had immediately fired up the crowd and garnered huge reaction with every jump and spin, successful or not. He was inconsistent, and his choreography was lacking, but his energy and enthusiasm was enthralling and Yuuri was reminded of himself as a younger skater. Minami would be a force to be reckoned with very soon, if he kept up his training and continued improving at the same speed.

Yuuri wouldn't be able to fool around as much in practice. He'd be usurped as Japan's ace soon enough, that much was clear.

When their eyes met, Yuuri gave Minami a nod, then slipped his earbuds in, turning down the hallway to find a quiet place to warm up and focus. That place happened to be behind the building. The sun had long since dipped below the horizon but the sky was still bright, the stars somehow shining against the green-blue sky and the clouds rolling past lazily.

The second skater finished his routine, yet another child that Yuuri would have to watch out for. It was getting to be time that Yuuri made his way back into the rink, and Victor was hovering on the edges of his vision. The confident look he usually had on his face was nowhere to be found, despite the coach's insistence that Yuuri was going to blow the audience away. If Victor was worried about Yuuri's performance, Yuuri just had to prove there was nothing to fear.

Yuuri took several deep breaths, holding them tight to stretch his lungs and then releasing them in slow, measured huffs, then entered the rink area.

Walking past a heavily blushing Minami, he placed a hand on the younger skater's shoulder, squeezing gently. Victor was waiting near the rink gate with an unreadable look on his face, as Yuuri approached. Yuuri took off his training jacket and handed it off to Victor, who looked at the costume with a wet look in his eyes, finally graduating from bursting into tears every time Yuuri wore it during practice.

Victor reached out and smoothed some stray hairs down on the right side of Yuuri's head, and he leaned into the touch. It was tender, reverent, and Yuuri held onto the feeling. Victor's fingers trailed down Yuuri's cheek and stopped softly at his mouth, brushing gently along his lower lip.

"They're a bit chapped," Victor murmured, pink staining high on his ivory cheeks.

Yuuri leaned forward and parted his lips a bit, offering them, and Victor reached into a pot of some kind of balm, smoothing it along Yuuri's bottom lip in a warm and soft gesture than had Yuuri's cheeks warming to match Victor's. Yuuri faintly registered Minami making some kind of noise
somewhere near them, and was going to turn to acknowledge the skater, but was suddenly wrapped up in an embrace.

He wasted no time in moving his arms to hold Victor as well, probably for more time than was necessary—no, Yuuri needed this, it would always be necessary.

The announcer called Yuuri’s name to enter the ice, and he skated on to his starting position.

The lilting piano notes tingled his spine as they always did, and he raised his hands to his chin, overflowing with feeling and letting it spill out of his arms and onto the ice.

The first combination was supposed to be a quad-triple, so he changed it to a quad-double to make room for his original quads. Victor hadn't been paying attention during this morning’s negotiation, so maybe he'd pay attention to this.

The beginning of the composition was supposed to represent his career before Victor came into his life, alone and perfectly beautiful on his own but obviously missing something crucial. The violin accompaniment barges in as did Victor, and Yuuri's movements become stiff, slowly and rhythmically loosening his step sequences until he's on his back inside edge and launching into a quad salchow that was meant to be a triple but, again, to hell with lowering his performance.

Yuuri touched down on the landing but quickly shook it off with a combination spin and smile shot to the judges. Salt flooded his senses as he recalled the beach, Victor's dancing, he executes a perfect triple loop and conjures the warmth he felt in his heart that day to the forefront of his mind and he spreads his arms, feeling the air rush past his ears the way the wind did that night and he's **flying**.

The love he felt on that beach, his love of his home, and the endless starry sky and dark ocean he's come to regard as comforting. His love of the triplets, who look up to him. Their parents, his friends, his family, who unconditionally support him. His love of Yurio, who motivates him. His love of Victor, who inspires him.

The second half of the song begins, and Yuuri is tired, but love does that sometimes. Love makes you tired.

Outside spread eagle, Ina Bauer, triple axel, his favorite and most beautiful moves. Because that's who he is, he's beautiful, he's fluid, he's high-flying and unstoppable. A triple flip comes next, and he briefly wonders how it would feel to turn it into a quad flip, but decides against it in favor of presentation.

But **god** does he want to! If he had his way he'd turn every jump into a quad flip if only to see the expression on Victor's face. Would he be angry? Would he cry? Would he be happy? Would he rake his fingers through Yuuri's hair, or caress his face, or swipe along his lips? He imagines Victor's tender touch, imagines being held by Victor, imagines the warmth of it all around him. In his daydreaming he loses a fraction of a second of timing with the music and touches down on a combination jump, he's already feeling impatient.

Which makes sense, as this is the part of the music that symbolizes his hope for the future, of course he's impatient. He spins and flies and his hands touch every part of his body at least once and he prays. He prays to any higher power there might be to please, just for now, allow him Victor's time, Victor's attention,

**Victor's love.**

He attempts one more quad, and a sharp intake of breath from across the rink throws him off and he
launches himself directly into the boards, a sickening crunch filling his head and he can taste blood but he doesn't care. He'd bleed for this, he'd do it twice.

Yuuri spins and the blood is being pulled from his nose through centrifugal force, a red halo dotting the ice around him like a spotlight screaming here I am, look at me, and Yuuri wraps his arms around himself, places his fingertips over his heart the way Victor did on the beach, and points that garnered attention directly at his coach.

This is it, the action seems to say. This is where I direct all this love.

A fat glob of blood spills over his lip and the crowd goes wild. He can barely hear himself think over the sound of cheers in the tiny arena but he doesn't need to think. His body moves on instinct the instant he sees Victor at the gate, arms spread wide open and Yuuri is flying again, straight into the arms of his coach, his friend, his inspiration, his Victor.

His forehead meets smooth Armani cloth and he's sobbing, wailing into Victor's suit, enveloped completely by warm arms and feeling tears soak into the crown of his hair. He's gripping so tightly around Victor's waist that the pressure on his face causes more blood to gush out of his nose. Surely Victor can feel the wetness of it by now, he probably looks as if he'd been shot in the chest, but Victor only tightens his hold.

Distantly, Yuuri hears his scores, hears the congratulations and the media beginning to attempt to interview him, hears the medics pleading with him to let them treat his injury, but he can't bring himself to move, he wants to stay in this warmth forever.

It doesn't last, as Minako rips them apart and chastises Yuuri for not stopping the blood flow sooner, shouting that he might pass out or worse, and Yuuri still doesn't care one bit. The medics sit him on the rinkside bench and stuff tissues in his nose and shine lights in his eyes and he still doesn't care.

A week later, after the women's singles entrant to the Grand Prix series, it's Yuuri's turn to present his theme.

"My theme for this year's Grand Prix series is 'Love'," He says, turning over his theme board. "I've been blessed my entire life with love from all possible angles, but I'd never thought to utilize that support, always thinking I was alone. I'd never even thought about love until recently. When Victor came to me and bowed to the floor in front of my parents, asking me to let him be my coach, I was afraid. I thought that I would never live up to the expectations that Japan had for me, but since he's been coaching me, I've realized my mistake.

"There is so much love all around me from my friends, my family, and my fans. I've been taking for granted the wealth of love in my life, and I want to show everyone that I return that love. The kind of love I want to convey is the many abstract feelings of love I hold in my heart for all of my relationships, towards my family, my hometown, towards Victor, and towards skating itself.

Thanks to Victor, I'm able to understand that something like love exists all around me whether I'm aware of it or not. For the first time, I've found something I want to hold onto and express this new feeling of love. And I intend to work hard and prove it to myself, and to the world. Thank you."

The cameras click, the press conference ends, and he slides quietly through an unmarked door that leads to the exit. Victor leads him by the hand through the backstreets and into their hotel, into their
hotel room, into the bed they decided to share that night.

"This is a lovely color on you," Victor says, gently untying the silk lavender tie from Yuuri's neck and folding it to sit on the nightstand. He pushes Yuuri's hair back from his sweaty forehead, carding his fingers through the black softness. "Aren't you glad I came with you to get rid of that ugly periwinkle monstrosity?"

Yuuri leaned his weight against Victor, tired from vomiting his feelings and the show of nerves he just displayed for all of Japan. "I'm glad you're here, Victor." He whispers.

"I'm glad I'm here too." Victor replies.

Chapter End Notes

writing this was like..... like when you work out and while you're doing it you feel like you're gonna die but you get home and shower and your muscles r sore and it just feels so so good.

writing this for you guys always feels so good. thank you for the opportunity to write for you all <333

TEMP EDIT 5/3 - this is totally gonna suck and i apologize in advance but may is looking to be Absolute Garbage for me so updates will slow as stated in the edited fic summary until maybe mid June, possibly late June if i'm unlucky enough. i can feel an episode gearing up, my inlaws r coming, my house is a mess, etc etc excuses excuses, but MOST importantly, the cup of china plotline is coming through in the next few chapters and i want to spend the time making it like....... right, u know? it's The Big Shit and i need 2 do it properly tbh. i dunno. im rly sorry tho pls 5giv me ;~;
Victor made it clear what he wanted. Coaching Yuuri was his choice, what he decided to do and loved doing and wanted to continue to do. Yuuri wanted to respect that, wanted to believe that Victor was making the right choice for himself, because who knows Victor better than Victor?

But Yuuri saw the changes in his expression when people told him to come back to skating, a condescending look that seemed to say 'obviously I can't do that'. Yuuri heard the sobbing at night, agonizing sounds tinged with longing and regret. The stutters when speaking about the future, the averted eyes when reporters asked him questions about himself, the subtle subject change when Mama asked questions about his previous season.

Yuuri would never mention noticing these things, but he always did.

Chapter Notes

yall......... i'm so sorry this took so long.......... pls 5giv me OTL

it feels... off honestly. like it's not the way I want it, but i can't keep obsessing over one chapter for literally three straight weeks so like..... yeah. it could be because i'm terribly sick, but u never kno

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes)

"Ya hotel tebya ves den."

Yuuri stopped his conversation with Phichit to turn towards Victor, who had suddenly become shirtless in the forty five seconds between the last time he'd laid eyes on his coach and just now. "Eh? What about the hotel?"

"Moya krasivaya kotletka," Victor purred into the soft juncture between Yuuri's neck and shoulders. It seemed that was his chosen spot now after consuming a frankly heroic amount of alcohol in the hotpot restaurant they were seated—thankfully—in the very back of. "Skazshi chto tylyubish menyai!" Victor whined, mouthing against the sensitive skin of Yuuri's pulse. "Pozhaluysta, Yuuri, please."

Phichit looked like his face was about to explode outwards from the cheeks, his little brown dimples spelling trouble. "Please what, Victor? Yuuri doesn't understand Russian!"

"Phichit don't think I don't know you're recording this somehow—"
"You can see both of my hands right here—!"

"You'll find a way." Yuuri glared.

Phichit chewed the inside of his cheek in playful resentment while Victor swayed Yuuri back and forth by his shoulders. "He's looking mighty comfortable draped all over you, you know."

"He's just... very affectionate. On Yuuko's birthday this summer I lost him for a while, right? And when I found him he and Nishigori were holding each other and crying like long lost lovers." Yuuri paused to let Phichit catch his breath from laughing. "He's pretty much always doing stuff like this when alcohol is involved." Despite the confident promise he'd made months prior to keep his hands to himself.

"Ya budu delat' eto kazhdyy den', yesli ty mne pozvolish," Victor whined, grabbing Yuuri's chin from behind and tilting it upwards to expose Yuuri's neck to the cold air of the restaurant.

"Hey, public!" Yuuri hissed. He swatted a hand off his face while Victor's expression soured, looking very much the same as Celestino did while the coach worked very hard on not falling over in his cramped seat. Actually, Celestino understood Russian!

"Ciao-Ciao, you can speak Russian, right?" Phichit said innocently, obviously having the same epiphany Yuuri just had. "Can you tell us what Victor is saying so sweetly over there?"

The Italian man—in the past having boasted about his wine tolerance—was busy trying not to upheave his entire day’s meals over one plate of raw shrimp, but tried his best to answer. "He's being pretty—hrk—inappro—gh!"

But it was no use, the only available translator was desperately out of commission.

"Eh, what's going on?" A high pitched voice asked from away from the table. Yuuri turned his body out of the booth to apologize to who he assumed would be waitstaff from the restaurant, but was met with the soft presence of Guang-Hong Ji, the skater representing China on his home turf here in Beijing. His light brown hair matched his sparkling honey-colored eyes which were focused on a point directly over Yuuri’s shoulder with barely-concealed alarm.

"I think I'll get my fan selfie some other time..." Guang-Hong whispered.

"Yuuri, it’s your competitors!" Victor slurred loudly. He draped himself over Yuuri’s shoulders heavily and sighed with a forlorn undertone. "Is the onsen big enough for this many?"

Leo de la Iglesia gently lowered his phone from its documenting position and ran a bronzed hand through his lengthy brown hair, wondering aloud if this wasn't perhaps getting too adult for the two under-20 skaters. What with the rapidly declothing Russian and the Italian coach foaming at the mouth in an early hangover state. Phichit was snapping pictures in a half-panicked half-amused way, which wasn't outside the realm of normal for him but was still probably jarring for the teens watching them in frozen horror.

"Victor just gets like this when he's drunk," Yuuri said flatly. "Pay him no mind or you might encourage him."

Victor only tightened his grip. "So mean, Yuuri! How will I get back at you, hm?" The drunk man probably intended to smirk but could only manage a dopey grin. "Phichit, take a picture of me and my Yuuri!"

"What?! No!"
“I’m already on it Nikiforov!”

“Phichit I swear—“

“Relax, dorogoy,” Victor whispered, and the world screeched to a halt.

Hot breath in Yuuri’s ear traveled straight to his lower stomach and settled just behind his belly button. Victor’s gentle breaths tickled and Yuuri giggled despite himself, eyes trained on Victor’s shoulder, just barely visible out of the corner of his eye. He tried not to stare but it was understandably difficult. Yuuri was suddenly very aware of Victor’s body—pressed flush against him in the cramped seating of the back booth and using Yuuri’s lower back as a shield, keeping prying eyes away from his scantily-covered lower-half. Victor’s legs were crossed and one hairless thigh was pressed close enough to Yuuri’s lower back that he could feel the silky slide along the sliver of Yuuri’s skin that was exposed from his shirt riding up a bit.

The momentary touch was electric, sending sparks of warmth through Yuuri’s entire body was as Victor whispered roughly in his ear, “Yuuri prinadlezhit mne,” And Yuuri wasn’t proud of it but he let the words sink into his brain and travel into his blood, spreading through his body like a disease he’d never recover from.

And god the smell, there wasn’t a trace of the shrimp or alcohol that he was consuming, Victor smelled like cloves and cinnamon and a dusky cold quality that was shaking Yuuri to his very foundations. Victor was clinging around his shoulders, practically pinning him against the seat of the booth, and if there was ever a time to go back to the hotel this was it, this heady, drunk feeling despite the fact that Yuuri hadn’t touched any of the food aside from picking at some steamed vegetables. Victor’s bare chest gleamed in the low light, a few stray beads of sweat catching Yuuri’s eye. If there were ever a meal Yuuri would gladly dive into headfirst it was sitting right next to him, clinging and staring and breathing—

Click!

A shutter sound pulled Yuuri out of his temporary stupor and back into the reality that Phichit was an absolute dead man.

Guang-Hong huffed with impatience and stomped his foot on the carpet. "Leo and I managed to keep the pics we took private!"

"I couldn't help it!" Phichit whined. "They were being so cute!"

Yuuri was frozen in the lobby of the arena, staring dumbly at the Instagram picture taking up slot number one on Phichit’s profile. It wasn’t nearly as bad as Yuuri thought it would be. The feelings Yuuri stomped down and completely ignored last night weren’t even remotely reflected in the image on the screen. Victor didn’t look particularly intense or predatory, and Yuuri didn’t look nearly as debauched as he’d felt.

Victor’s eyes were soft and his smile was gentle and kind of dopey as he was leaning in towards Yuuri, encroaching on his space, certainly, but not in any particularly overbearing or inappropriate way. Yuuri was caught mid-giggle with a dusting of red across his nose and to the tips of his ears, his eyes pointed demurely away and a finger covering the middle of his lips like he was attempting to hide his laughter.
Before he knew it, Yuuri was saving the image to his phone.

"I saw that, lapinou," came a voice from directly beside Yuuri's ear. Before Yuuri could even react to the shock of a voice so close, he could feel a gentle caress on his ass, a thumb carelessly slipping into the back pocket of his training pants. "Now I really wish you all had invited me along."

"C-Chris—!"

Yuuri had experienced friendly contact with the Swiss skater in several previous competitions, but only last year did they... hit it off, so to speak. Yuuri recalled the pictures from the banquet, the enticing poses the two of them shared on the pole and the obvious competitive edge to their tandem dancing. Yuuri wasn't entirely attuned to this new level of Chris' friendship, but it seemed he'd need to learn fast.

Chris hummed. "I guess Victor whipped you into shape, yeah? Judging by the definition I'm feeling." Yuuri yelped as Chris gave his ass another gentle squish.

"Chris! It's been too long!" Victor shouted, smiling happily as he reunited with his best friend. Chris left his position behind Yuuri to open his arms in eager acceptance of their joyful embrace.

"I'm not motivated without you on the ice," Chris pouted into Victor's chest. "I can't focus if there's no one around to rival me!"

"You won't be saying that when my Yuuri wipes the floor with all of you!"

Chris broke their hug and whipped his head back with deep belly laughter. "Will he now? I've always wanted to see him at full power. I'm so excited!" Yuuri's body warmed with delight at the vote of confidence from the two.

"Victor!" Two female voices called out. They were wearing Russian team jackets, probably from Yakov's rink?

"Vera! Irina! How was the ladies skate this morning?" Victor called back happily as he moved over to speak with them.

"Forget about us, are you really coaching now?" The blonde one asked.

The brunette one scoffed. "Isn't the joke wearing a little thin by now? Come back to the ice, Victor!"

Victor twitched. Yuuri could only see his back, but he saw it. Victor's neck was visible from behind and it was like something was alive inside and throbbing with the beat of his heart, if the suddenly tense line of his neck and imperceptibly lowered shoulders were any indication. Distantly, Yuuri registered that Chris had said something. Hopefully it wasn't important, because Yuuri was not taking his eyes or ears off of this.

Victor's voice took on an eerie quality that Yuuri was used to hearing when he dealt with difficult shopkeepers or obstinate reporters. His head tilted quite a bit. He must have had on his Ditzy Face. "Eh, why would I do that?"

"Don't you feel bad for him? He was dead last in the previous Final, right?" The blonde smirked smugly and reached out to straighten something on Victor's lapel and—oh dear, he does not like that.

Victor grabbed her wrist gently with two fingers as though it were rotten meat, releasing it unceremoniously away from his body as far as his arms would allow. "Do you have room to talk
though? Placement seems negligible considering he still scored 15 points higher than you even though you medaled."

Background noise to this event included the din of athletes and coaches milling about, the roar of the audience in the arena on the other side of the wall, and Phichit Chulanont releasing a high-pitched, incredulous whooping noise while gaping at Victor from twenty feet away.

"You can't just say something like that, Victor!" Yuuri hissed as the Russian man pulled him away from the Russian women, slipping his arm around Yuuri's shoulders.

Victor plastered an innocent smile over his face. "I didn't say anything incorrect, what's the problem?"

"Won't that cause trouble later? They're your rinkmates aren't they?"

Victor stopped short a few strides away from the men's locker room. "What on earth makes you think those ill-mannered people are my rinkmates?"

"Th-the jackets...?"

"Hah! Yuuri no!" Victor laughed wildly. "No, no, Yuuri, lapochka, just because we're both Russian doesn't mean we're from the same rink!" Victor was clutching his stomach with the hand that wasn't wrapped around Yuuri's shoulders, gripping with the force only a man struggling to breathe could muster.

"Well how was I supposed to know!" Yuuri defended stubbornly. He should have, though. Minami wasn't his rinkmate just because they were both Japanese. It was kind of rude to think so, actually. But what Yuuri didn't understand was the level of familiarity they seemed to have with him if they weren't his friends and weren't his rinkmates. "Why did they say those things so casually if they aren't friends of yours then?"

"Plenty of Russians seem to think they're my friends just because we share a nationality," Victor scoffed, finally calming. "No one actually wants to be friends with the real me, they just want their name next to mine in some article or an in with Yakov. Yakov only takes the best of the best you know—" Victor trailed off suddenly, his face softening from smug pride to resigned sadness.

Victor must miss Yakov.

Yuuri was keeping Victor to himself, it seemed. It was selfish, wasn't it? Victor missed Yakov, missed the ice, missed the excitement of competition and all the work that goes into it. From the music to the free skate costume to even doing Yuuri's hair for the first time, Victor had never once been shy with voicing his lament with no longer being a part of it all. He looked heartbroken at best, and Yuuri was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with keeping him away.

Victor made it clear what he wanted. Coaching Yuuri was his choice, what he decided to do and loved doing and wanted to continue to do. Yuuri wanted to respect that, wanted to believe that Victor was making the right choice for himself, because who knows Victor better than Victor?

But Yuuri saw the changes in his expression when people told him to come back to skating, a condescending look that seemed to say 'obviously I can't do that'. Yuuri heard the sobbing at night, agonizing sounds tinged with longing and regret. The stutters when speaking about the future, the averted eyes when reporters asked him questions about himself, the subtle subject change when Mama asked questions about his previous season.

Yuuri would never mention noticing these things, but he always did.
It wouldn't be too much longer though, Yuuri would retire after a fulfilling season having proven that Victor's time wasn't wasted, and then he would let him go. Back to what he really wanted, what he clearly needed.

"That's stupid." Yuuri said. Victor spun to face him, confused. "Who wouldn't want to be friends with the real you."

It wasn't a question.

Victor beamed.

Phichit was giving everything he had to this season.

It was his first Grand Prix Series, and he was performing something of extreme sentimental importance to himself and his country. He'd often remark that while many people had skated to the song, it was he that would win to it. The first Thai skater to skate to a song about skating in Thailand. He had the weight of an entire nation on his shoulders with not even one other skater to carry it with him, and he fully intended to win.

Yuuri watched the red blur fly across the screen while he stretched in the skaters lounge. His best friend was truly making the music his own. He noted that he needed to bring the same level of energy to the competition, he had to pour his soul into each performance as if it were his last.

The crowd roared as Phichit nailed the step sequence at the climax of the song, entering a camel spin. The entire arena was clapping on rhythm to the beloved staple of figure skating music, and as Phichit entered his final pose, the cheers were deafening. The entire audience was on his side.

Comparatively, Yuuri anticipated just the opposite for himself.

He'd never have the crowd's sympathy. They would never be on his side. People who wanted Victor back on the ice would never be satisfied with Yuuri's skating. Similarly, his own fans wouldn't be satisfied if he came back with the same old Katsuki Yuuri. It had to be different, he had to prove that Victor's hard work and sacrifice wasn't going to waste. He had to be worthy of the titles they'd bestowed upon him.

He was the man who stole Victor from the world. The last-place skater who demanded the living legend's undivided attention, and then got it. The selfish dancer who tangoed with a god and then flaunted his conquest on world tour.

If that's the skating they wanted, that's the skating they would get.

"It's time, Yuuri," Victor whispered over the barrier of the rink. He placed his gloved hand over Yuuri's own and stroked gently."Are you ready?"

When Yuuri met his eyes, he expected Victor's face to be sporting a knowing smile or a sensuous smirk or something, but what he found was worry written all across his face. Yuuri leaned forward gently and rested his forehead against Victor's and whispered back.
"Are you?"

Victor's expression softened, but did not change.

Yuuri skated to the center of the rink, taking his starting position.

The trill of guitar filled the rink, and Yuuri licked his lips. His head blanked, working through muscle memory as his thoughts zeroed in on one thing: being beautiful.

Everyone wanted to get to know this new Yuuri. Everyone was dying to know what made him so special to take Victor's attention, Victor's time, Victor's love. Who among them thought it was a viral video and a whim? Who among them thought it was sixteen glasses of champagne and a well-placed pole? Who among them knew the truth? That Yuuri was the most beautiful thing on the ice. That Victor was a curator of beautiful things.

Yuuri is the only person on the planet who can satisfy Victor, who were they to think anything else would suffice? Yuuri is the only one in the world who knows Victor's love, his tender caresses, his eyes full of longing, his chest puffed with pride and admiration. Did these people expect any less?

Foolish.

They wanted proof, and Yuuri would give it to them as much as they needed.

The walk back to the hotel was silent and thick with tension. The moonlight, usually glittering over Victor's hair and eyelashes, was snuffed out by rolling clouds. Yuuri was exhausted and appreciated the lack of conversation, but noted that Victor was behaving strangely, even for him. After Yuuri was finished skating Victor had given him a genuine smile, but his eyes were closed. His eyes had pointed away from Yuuri's since he kicked off for his short program.

Those normally bright blue eyes were reduced to a dull grey as Victor huddled in on himself, occasionally glancing at Yuuri, mostly darting his eyes from place to place as if looking at one thing for too long would destroy it.

Yuuri had intended to lean into Victor’s shoulder in the elevator up to the room but the taller man had jumped as if just realizing Yuuri was there. When Yuuri pulled back to allow him space, Victor pulled him back against him in a sort of placating gesture. His arms were stiff. It was awkward. Yuuri pulled back anyway.

While ordering room service Victor was jittery and easily distracted. He'd dropped the menu three times and changed his order just as much. At one point he took off his suit jacket while still on the phone and dropped the receiver. There were more ‘um’s coming out of his mouth than Yuuri had ever witnessed from any one single person. Something was wrong.

"Yuuri, are you alright? How do you feel?" Victor asked over dinner, staring at his plate of pasta.

Yuuri shrugged, speaking with his mouth full of food. “Honestly I'm pretty nervous but—“

Victor slapped his hands on the table, interrupting. “Do you need anything? How can I help?”
The sudden noise startled Yuuri, causing a small piece of lettuce to get stuck in his windpipe. He coughed twice, immediately dislodging it, but the sudden presence behind him confused him into accidentally inhaling it once more. Victor was waving his hands wildly in the air, not sure where to place them. He’d apparently decided to forgo the heimlich maneuver and instead slapped Yuuri’s upper-back with the heel of his palm three times in quick succession.

“Victor!” Yuuri choked out between coughs.

“I know, lyubov I know, I'm trying I'm sorry should—should I call 112? Wait no what is it in China… 110! I'll call 110—“

“Victor stop!” Yuuri coughed one last big cough and spit the lettuce into his napkin. “I'm fine, you just startled me. Please calm down.”

Victor froze in embarrassment, trying to catch his breath. “I'm calm, I'm completely calm,” he said in a voice that was completely not calm.

"You're completely not calm, Victor."

"I'm the most calm person in this room." Victor denied with his eyes closed, nose pointed towards the ceiling. "You're not calm, You're freaking out about being in first place after the short, and—"

"Excuse me?" Yuuri said with an undignified squeak. "I am not freaking out, I'm nervous as hell but I'm not exactly hyperventilating over here, meanwhile you can't seem to catch your breath to save your life! What is the matter with you today?"

"Nothing! I'm fine I'm perfectly normal! Look listen you did a great job today, alright? How about we celebrate! I'll order some cake." Victor tripped over his own feet trying to turn quickly to pick up the bedside phone.

Yuuri stomped over and snatched the phone from Victor's hand, slamming down the receiver. "You're not ordering cake. I can't have cake. What the hell is going on."

"Nothing! Nothing is going on Yuuri why would—why do you think something is going on!" Victor spat, his hands shaking, still not meeting Yuuri's eyes. This had just officially become annoying.

"Something is wrong, if nothing was wrong we wouldn't be having this discussion!"

"Then why are we having it?!” He shouted in exasperation, flopping his butt to the bed.

"Maybe because you're freaking out about something and I don't know what it is and you won't let me help you! Maybe because you haven't looked directly at me for three hours now! Maybe because your hands are shaking and your eyes are frightened and you've been off since... since regionals, actually, and it's honestly more stressful than anything my brain could manufacture on its own." Yuuri's voice had been steadily gaining in volume, but suddenly dropped to a whisper, his chin tucking into his chest. "It's getting pretty obvious that you... that you're nervous because you... you don't think I can do this..."

Victor dropped to his knees in front of Yuuri, the too-plush carpet attaching little flecks of lint to his expensive suit pants as he gripped at Yuuri's team jacket, injecting himself into Yuuri's line of sight. Yuuri could see that his eyes were becoming puffy. He was probably causing Victor just as much stress but he couldn't curb how angry he was. "No! No, Yuuri, absolutely not. I know you can do this! I know it for an absolute fact—"
"Then why! Why are you acting like I can't handle whatever the problem is!" There was a slight burning under his eyelids, and Yuuri noted that his eyes were probably reddening as well. He attempted to blink back the tears but it was futile.

Victor sputtered, becoming frantic. "That's not—!"

"It is!" Yuuri shouted. "You think I can't handle it, that's why you're lying to me and being evasive and—and you're acting so weird and... ugh!" He tensed his shoulders and punched a sigh from his chest, dropping to the bed and slapping his face into his hands, elbows resting on his knees. "This is stupid. You're being so annoying right now and it's stupid."

Victor flung his body backwards to the floor with a thump, then rolled over to shout frustratedly into the carpet, his legs stiffening. If Yuuri hadn't known any better he'd think he was watching a large child throw a tantrum. The sound was muffled greatly, but Yuuri could make out a few words.

"What do you mean 'not supposed to be like this'?" Yuuri air quoted. "What is 'this' and what's it 'supposed' to be—?"

"It's wrong!" Victor shouted, flipping over. His knees were pulled up to his chest and his fingers were pulling on carpet and his face was red and splotchy. "This is all wrong because I'm messing everything up! We weren't supposed to yell we were supposed to eat and then have cake and then sleep in the same bed! Tonight was supposed to be better it was supposed to be... to be nice and it's not because of me! Because I'm scared!" Victor's eyes were unfocused and back and forth in front of him, he was gripping so tightly at his knees that his knuckles were whitening. Tears began to fall and he immediately hid his face, talking into his lap. "I'm scared and I keep screwing everything up I keep screwing everything up and I'm worried that if I keep messing up that everything will be different from before and I can't! I'm going to lose it again Yuuri and I can't and I'm so scared—"

"Victor, Victor it's okay. It's okay, I'm sorry," Yuuri rushed to his side, his first instinct to hold him but unsure if it was alright to do. "I didn't know—I don't know—I just... I'm sorry." Victor wasn't hyperventilating but seemed to be having trouble catching his breath. Yuuri placed his hand flat over the expanse of Victor's upper back, and Victor melted into the touch. "Your name i-is Victor Nikiforov. Today is October 28th. You're in Beijing. You're wearing... A-Armani...? I think—"

Victor scoffed, probably at Yuuri's lack of knowledge of men's fashion. Yuuri rubbed his hand up and down over Victor's too-warm back, occasionally allowing his nails to scratch through the fabric of Victor's soft white shirt. It was only a few minutes before Victor finally calmed his breathing and leaned against him.

"I'm sorry, Victor," Yuuri whispered. "I shouldn't have yelled."

Victor's breathing hitched for a moment, then settled as his raw voice filtered from between his legs. "I deserved it. I must be pretty annoying."

"You're not annoying and you didn't deserve it," Yuuri said firmly. "We're adults, we don't need to be yelling at each other."

"You said I'm annoying."

"You being annoying and me being annoyed are two different things. I'm sorry I yelled."

Yuuri expanded his rubbing area to include the bottom of Victor's neck, catching the fine platinum hair between his fingers and massaging the little divot at the base of his skull, the way Victor did for him months ago. The way he sometimes did when they fell asleep in the same bed.
Victor sighed.

"Can I... ask you something...?" Yuuri said, hesitant.

Victor sighed again, different. "I'll tell you anything you want to know, Yuuri."

*This wasn't supposed to happen it wasn't like this before—!*

"This is going to be a stupid question," he chuckled, scratching at Victor's scalp. "You're gonna laugh at me."

*This is wrong this didn't happen!

"I won't laugh." Victor whispered.

*It's not supposed to be like this!*

"Are you like..." Yuuri took a deep breath, curling his fingers through those soft silvery tresses. He would absolutely laugh at him. "Are you psychic?"

Victor barked his laughter so hard that his head flew back, knocking Yuuri's knuckles hard against the wall behind them.

"What the *fuck* that hurt!" Yuuri squeaked, cradling his battered knuckles. "You promised you wouldn't laugh!"

Victor laughed even harder at Yuuri's curses, tearing up in a good way. A much better way. "I'm so—I'm sorry Yu—Yuuri I can't—pffffha—dermo, okay okay," Victor unfurled his body, hand to his chest. "Okay okay, I'm sorry Yuuri I just—psychic is so much funnier than time travel somehow, I just... good lord my chest hurts."

What.

"What."

Victor took a few moments to slow his breath, a melancholy look taking over his face. The atmosphere in the room seemed to settle like a fog over a swamp, thick and humid and uncomfortable.

"Yuuri, I died."

Chapter End Notes

**ITS HABBENIGN**

GOD the month of may is kicking my ass..... thanks for putting up with my horrible schedule guys i really love and appreciate all of u so so much

also i'm thinkin abt using hover translations instead of listing them all out. do you all think thats a good idea? would it ruin immersion or whatever?? pls do tell i've decided to do both!!! be hover doesn't work on mobile oops. if you're seeing this, all chapters have been hover-text edited!! yayyy!!!
anyways jaimie in the comments helpfully pointed out that mens and womens scoring is different, making women's scores lower than mens scores for the exact same performance(PCS- and TES-wise), which makes one of these lines quite ridiculous, but i don't know anything about anything so try not to think abt it 2 hard pls OTL (@ all actual fans of skating, i hav failed u yet again)

translations: (THANK YOU veritykindle for the corrections, you're an absolute angel)

Ya hotel tebya ves den - i've wanted you all day (changed word gender)
Moya krasivaya kotletka - my beautiful cutlet
Skazshi chto ty lyubish menya - say that you love me
Pozhaluysta - please (changed mispelling)
ya budu delat' eto kazhdyy den', yesli ty mne pozvolish - i'll do it every day if you'll let me (changed grammar anf formality)
dorogoy - darling
Yuuri prinadlezhit mne - yuuri is mine
lapochka - sweetheart
lyubov - love
dermo - shit
Page 1

Chapter Summary

"Do you want me to convince you, Yuuri? Tell you something about the future?"

Chapter Notes

okay soooooooo as it turns out, the irl barcelona gpf was in 2015. But I've been operating on the assumption that yuri on ice takes place in 2016 so fml. BUT as it turns out the sochi gpf was in 2012? And Barcelona was like... twice in a row?
So here's my retcon timeline fuck canon: barcelona 2016, sochi 2015, marsaille 2014, fukuoka 2013, and then following irl gpf locations from sochi 2012 backwards as listed on wiki. Not that any of this actually matters, considering I'm only making it this way to make it so that barcelona wasn't twice in a fucking row lolol. If canon can take liberties w real life then so can I !! >:3c

anyways i literally churned this whole thing out a few hours ago i'm sick as a dog and ready to accept my nonsense WHOOOOO

Added 5/24: Now with hover translations! Non-English word? Hover over it! (does not work on mobile, translations also listed in end notes) [there are no translations in this chapter]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Yuuri, I died."

What.
"What."

"I died. I'm dead."

"Wh—"

"Stop saying what."

"Wh—I—uh, um. Okay?"

Victor Nikiforov was dead? As in, dead-dead? Then... what was he doing here? Was Victor trying to say he's a ghost? But Yuuri could see him. And so could pretty much everyone else. And also TV cameras and pictures and he was touchable. Right? Yuuri gently poked Victor in the ribs and was met with a squeak.

"Not like right-now dead! I'm ticklish, Yura!"

Yuuri froze. "Yura?"
"Ah, sorry, I shouldn't get too comfortable just yet I guess." Victor scratched the back of his head in embarrassment. "Would you prefer I call you Yuuri instead?"

"That's what you've always called me..." Yuuri said, confused. "Why would that change?"

"In Russian, we have diminutives," Victor explained with a slight blush. Yuuri knew about diminutives, but not about why Victor would change his name so suddenly. "They're like nicknames, kind of, when you're closer to someone. I called you Yura, you called me Vitya."

"What are you... I don't...?"

"We lived together, in St. Petersburg. After the Final you moved there with me."

Yuuri took a few silent moments to process this information. Victor Nikiforov was dead. But he was right here? Victor called him Yura, even though he'd called Yurio that several times? Victor Nikiforov lived with him in St. Petersburg after the Grand Prix Final, but Yuuri remembers going back to Detroit, graduating by the skin of his teeth, getting fat and then moving back to Japan before Victor came in April?

The only time Yuuri had ever been to Russia was Sochi. For four days.

"I've never been to Russia for more than a week." Yuuri said.

"No, not yet I suppose." Victor fiddled with the hem of his shirt, refusing to look Yuuri in the eyes. "I was hit by a car."

Yuuri choked on air. "Wh-what? When?!" Surely he would have heard—

"October."

Yuuri froze. It was currently the tail end of October. "Last October? Before you had Skate Canada?"


Yuuri's stomach dropped. "Oh. Um. Okay."

So this was it. This was the culmination of everything Yuuri had been wondering about for the past seven months now. Victor Nikiforov thinks he time traveled and is probably only coaching Yuuri because he'd completely lost it. Of course. Of course this is how it would be. This was always how it was going to be. Yuuri would get too caught up in it because it's Victor! And he believed him! After all those talks and assurances, he had just accepted the sweet words and sugary promises with nary a grain of salt, and this is what he got for it.

"You think I'm crazy, don't you." Victor chuckled.

"N-no!" Yes. "I would never!" He absolutely would.

"It's alright," He said, seeing right through Yuuri's terrible lies. "Yurio didn't believe me either, at least not at first. Minako took it pretty easily though."

Yuuri choked on spit. "Minako-sensei?!"

You need to trust him, she'd said back in April.

"How long... when did you tell her?" There was no way someone as strict and jaded as Minako-
sensei would take this kind of thing seriously, right?

"I told her the night I arrived," Victor said casually.

Oh god. "And she just... believed you? Just like that?"

"God, no," he scoffed. "It took hours of convincing, it's just... comparatively, it was a lot easier than telling Yurio. Or you. This is actually really scary. I hope you know." Yuuri glanced at Victor's hands, which were gripping the carpet and shaking as if it were 10 degrees in the hotel room. "This is so much worse than Barcelona." He mumbled.

"Barcelona?" Where the Final is being held this year? It had never been held in Spain before this year. The closest it had ever gotten to Spain was when it was held in France, in 1999, before either of them had begun skating competitively, and in 1995, which was the first Grand Prix Final. Ever. Worlds had also never been held in Spain. Yuuri wasn't exactly an expert but if he'd had to guess he'd say even Europeans was never held in Spain. This seemed to be the first major figure skating competition ever to be held in Spain. Wow.

Go Spain.

"I had to tell Minako something about herself from—God, this is stupid every time I say it—something about her future self. Something she hasn't told anyone yet."

Yuuri cocked his head, allowing him to dodge the subject of Barcelona. "What did you tell her?"

"I can't tell you that, Yuuri, it was pretty private," Victor shifted his body, changing his position against the wall. His back had to be hurting by now. Yuuri's was too. "It kind of had to be, for her to believe I was being serious."

Yuuri took his hand, the first time he'd done so since they got to China, and helped him up. They could sit at the table, but it was still covered in food from their almost-finished dinner. They could sit on the bed, but that seemed a little too intimate-in-a-positive-way for the heaviness of the current conversation. Victor didn't seem to think so, and flopped down on the duvet and pillows dramatically, spreading his limbs like a starfish and stretching his stiff muscles.

Victor heaved a sigh, his fringe blocking Yuuri's view of his eyes. "Do you want me to convince you, Yuuri? Tell you something about the future?"

Did he want to know? Even if he did believe Victor about... time travel... did that mean he wanted spoilers? Would it even matter? How can Yuuri be certain that the path he's on right now would lead to the future Victor predicted? Or lived? It wouldn't make sense. Victor could tell him that the two of them ran away and got married and adopted more dogs and Yuuri wouldn't be able to tell if it were the truth because the future wasn't even concrete.

"Wouldn't it make more sense to tell me something about my past?" Yuuri said aloud. "Tell me something I know you wouldn't know about because my family doesn't know it either. Something only I know." Yuuri crawled to the enter of the bed, sitting cross-legged. "Tell me something only I would know."

Victor sat up and smiled, and in his eyes was something like an apology. Something that told Yuuri he did not want to hear this. "When you were sixteen, your mother bought you a magazine that had my 2008 free skate costume on a pull-out poster. The one from the previous year, with the flowy white pirate shirt and the tight black pants, the one you begged her to replace after Vicchan tore it up,"
Yuuri was very well acquainted with that poster. The one hanging in his room in Hasetsu wasn't the original one he'd got. The original had been accidentally... defiled. Blaming it on the dog was unfair but a necessary sacrifice to protect himself. "I-I'm familiar." Mama must have told him about it, maybe while talking about dogs, Oh Vicchan has Makka ever done something terrible? Well let's talk about the time Dog Vicchan tore up Yuuri's poster and he was sulking and moody all week long and begging for a new one haha how funny right?

"It's in your room, above your desk now. But you used to keep it on a closer wall, yes?"

Yuuri's face warmed, that had been so long ago. "Y-yeah,"

"Just over your bed?"

"I kept a lot of p-posters on the wall by my bed..." Yuuri murmured defensively.

"Yuuri, we both know that your dog didn't do anything to that poster."

Dangers territory dangerous territory. "H-he scratched it up with his claws!"

"That's what you told your mother, in reality you scratched it with the side of a nail file that you stole from Mari's room, and then hid it in Vicchan's puppy bed." No way. "You acted so betrayed when you told your mother that she didn't give Vicchan treats for a month," No way. "But you felt bad for framing him so you snuck him bits of dinner," No no no nonononono. "And that's how you discovered that soybeans gave him horrible gas."

Ohhhh god oh god oh no fuck fuck shit no god. "I never... how did you... who told...?" Yuuri was gripping his head with force now, his face cherry red and breathing labored in mortification. "Oh my god this is so embarrassing," he whined. "Who told you this?!"

"You did." Victor continued smiling in that apologetic way that was starting to make Yuuri think he wasn't apologizing at all.

"Why on earth would I ever tell you that?!" he squeaked. He stood up from the bed and began pacing around the room. "That's—I can't... How can you hear something like that and not be creeped out?!!"

"Yuuri, you've said much more vulgar—Ah, actually, I'm going to stop right here. It's almost midnight, you really need to—"

Yuuri dropped his hands from his face, glaring at Victor. "Are you joking? That's a joke right?"

There's no way in hell he'd be able to sleep after these bombshells had been dropped. Hey Yuuri It's me! Victor fucking Nikiforov from the future! Also I know that you jerked it onto a poster of me! And I knew this and still wanted to coach you and be with you! No way, no fucking way. This was ridiculous. This was absolutely—

"Insane. This is insane. There's no way I would ever tell you that, there's no possible prompt that would ever allow me to divulge the one thing I'd ever done that was to be taken to my grave. There isn't a chance in hell that you would hear something like... like that and not be grossed out. This is insane."

"Maybe that wasn't the best example..." Victor mumbled.

"You think?!" Yuuri snapped. Victor flinched a bit at the sudden volume. "Shit, I—I'm sorry, I didn't mean to yell again I just—"
"Yuuri, let me try again," he said, desperation touching his voice. "Please, I promise I'll get this right."

Yuuri took a few stabilizing breaths, sitting back down on the bed. "Fine, fine! Okay. I'll humor you. Tell me something from the future then, something concrete."

Victor's eyes were determined, and a little angry. "You're planning on retiring after the Final, but you won't," he said, nailing it. "You think that I want to be back on the ice, and I do, but I don't want to compete anymore. I know I said that but I was covering up my own big mouth and I made mistakes. I'm honestly finished. I'm done with competition and I don't want to go back because I might be twenty-seven right now but my knees may as well be forty—"

"But you said you missed it—!"

"When did I say that Yuuri, when we listened to your free skate music for the first time? When we got your costume for it? Pretty much every time we did anything regarding your free skate? I don't miss competition, Yuuri, I miss you."

What.

"Wh—"

"I miss the Yuuri I had, the one who was already comfortable with me, the one who put jam in his tea because that's how Russians do it and helped me through Makkachin's passing and hand-knit a little puppy sweater for our new dog and knew how to calm me down because he'd done it a thousand times already!" Victor was rambling, Yuuri was frozen. "And I know it's selfish it's incredibly selfish and inconsiderate because you're right here! You're still Yuuri! But you're a different Yuuri who doesn't understand how I feel about you and probably wouldn't believe me if I'd told you because you're different in new ways but you still don't believe in yourself and if I told you anyway it might be too soon and I would freak you out and you'd pull away and it might affect your performance—oh god that's what I'm doing right now, isn't it, I'm affecting your performance already! See, Yuuri?!"

Victor grabbed Yuuri's shoulders and shook. "I'm already screwing up again! It's already too different and I don't know what's going to happen all because of my screwups! You think—you think that your mistakes reflect on me because I'm coaching you, but my mistakes reflect back on you tenfold because you're the one who is having to live with the consequences of my actions, Yuuri. You're wondering if I want to quit, but I'd never want to let you go, I'd never want to leave your side not as long as I live, but how can I say the same for you? How can I be certain that I haven't already driven you too far away?"

Victor wasn't crying, not this time. He looked so frustrated and angry, his face was contorted in several ugly ways, his fingers were digging into Yuuri's shoulders kind of painfully, he looked miserable. Hanging his head, his voice cracked. "Don't think about retiring anymore, Yuuri," he begged. "Please."

There's a certain feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when the tide is coming in. A kind of sloshing that mimics the waves on the shore, but less comforting. There's that feeling of fixation on the movement of the water, how it comes closer and closer to your feet and someone is telling you to get away but you aren't listening to them because the sound of waves crashing against the seawall is the only thing you can really hear. When the water reaches your ankles it's high enough to rattle some trash around the rocks, maybe a plastic water bottle.

The hollow sound takes over your thoughts, ignoring completely the shouts of your friends or
parents saying It's Dangerous Get Over Here Right Now or the growing pressure of the water on your shins making you wobble but the only thing you can hear is the bottle. The only thing you can process is the unique tone that empty plastic bottles make and how it makes a different sound when it hits a different rock, how the sounds almost form a pattern with the waves that could be a song one day. And when it finally reaches your knees and knocks you over and the undertow pulls you down and out, far far out to sea where no one will ever find you or see you again, it's only then that you realize Wait A Second, Did Someone Seriously Leave Trash On The Beach?

Yuuri's heart was pounding, not beating particularly fast but definitely hard enough to wind him. Something gripped his lungs and gently placed a lump in his throat, making his words strained and quiet.

"How you... feel about me...?"

Chapter End Notes

sorry for the double cliffhanger lol (i'm not) i figure since i took so long w ch 19 then instead of holding this one for another week i should just post this today as a thank u for putting up w my shit. i didn't mean to write 5k words last time and now i'm feeling like it makes this one shorter (my face rn)
Yuuri held his fork in his mouth, savoring the artificial flavor of the frosting. One would think that for such a ritzy international hotel, they might be a little more fancy with the desserts, but Yuuri wasn't one to complain about sweets.

You're a different Yuuri who doesn't understand how I feel about you.

That's what Victor said.

Those were the words Victor used.

Victor 'I'm Here For You Only You' Nikiforov, Victor 'Saved Several Photos Of The Pole Dancing' Nikiforov, Victor 'Please Skate To This Song About Sexual Love' Nikiforov, Victor 'I Love The Taste Of Katsudon(Code Word For Yuuri)' Nikiforov, thinks Yuuri doesn't understand his feelings?

Yuuri's throat tightened further in frustration. "Victor you... do you really—"

Victor 'Seduce Me With Your Skating' Nikiforov clenched his fists, gathering the front of Yuuri's shirt in wrinkled bunches. His face was desperate and pleading. "Yes, Yuuri—yes I do, I know you probably don't believe me but I've never been more sure of anything in my entire life—lives? Any existence with you, I mean it, I've always—"

"Do you think I'm stupid?"

"...I beg your pardon?"

Yuuri wrenched Victor 'Stay In My Bed With Me' Nikiforov's hands, now slack from shock, away from his stretched out shirt. "I said: Do you think I'm stupid?"

"Why would I think that?" Victor 'My Home Is Wherever You Are' Nikiforov's brows furrowed and his head tilted in genuine concern. Yuuri can't even ask incredulously whether he's serious, because he obviously is.

"Victor you... you said 'I'll be your lover' like... five months ago," Victor blinked. "Maybe before that I was more likely to deny it but... You've called me into your bed just to hold you more times than I can count now, you choreographed two programs about love for me, one of which ends with me pointing it all at you—! I don't... I can't really wrap my head around why you think I don't
understand your feelings. You couldn't be more obvious if you were shouting it in my face twenty-four-seven."

"I... I just thought with your anxiety..."

"Anxiety doesn't make me blind and deaf, Victor, it makes me incredibly paranoid and uncharistically defeatist and sometimes physically ill but not... not that oblivious! Didn't you say you have friends with anxiety? I thought you understood things like this!"

Victor smiled sheepishly, his hands unsure where to move. His face? His hair? Small gestures? It was a mystery. "Well I mean... That is—when I said friend—so to speak—"

"Oh my god it was future me wasn't it. You were talking about future me." Yuuri deadpanned.

The lack of response and averted gaze answered his non-question. Yuuri threw his hands in the air with a shout and let them slap back down to the bed, exhausted both physically and mentally.

"Wait, isn't that technically... cheating? Knowing the outcome of competitions you'd already been in and adjusting your program accordingly?"

"No! No absolutely not," Victor said quickly. "When I woke up I was already on the plane, about to land in Fukuoka."

So that meant Victor was already intending to coach Yuuri before... gaining future knowledge? Becoming possessed by Future Victor? Ugh. Placing his hands on his temples, Yuuri rubbed small circles to alleviate the oncoming headache.

"Say I do believe you, say that I've completely lost my mind and agree that not only is time travel possible, but also there's a reality where I moved to Russia with Victor Nikiforov, and stayed there for something like five years, and also told you the most embarrassing thing I'd ever done—" Yuuri shuddered. "—and you didn't immediately kick me out onto the street. Say I believe that you wound up five years in your past somehow and then did everything in your power to make sure your future stays the way it is,"

"Uh-huh..." Victor nodded, his normally careful face betraying his worried heart.

Yuuri locked eyes with Victor, conveying no small measure of frustration. "What makes you think I'm okay with you deciding everything to be the way you want it to be?"

Victor hiccuped a gasp, a strange sound. He leaned back from his too-close position to Yuuri, putting his weight on his hands behind him, a wounded look on his face. "No... I suppose you wouldn't be..."

"Don't you think it's a little selfish to be orchestrating whatever design makes you the most comfortable? Don't you think it's kind of messed up to manipulate things so purposefully? What if I don't want to move to Russia?" Victor made a strangled sound, but Yuuri pressed on. "What if I suddenly decide to quit skating and take up ballet again? What if I decide to join the Bolshoi instead?"

"You'd still have to move to Russia for—"

"I don't care Victor! God! Don't you—can't you see how—how irritating this is?!

Victor's voice lowered, his eyes narrowed. "I think I would know first-hand how irritating this is, Yuuri."
Of course Victor would know how irritating this was, he'd been supposedly dealing with dancing around Yuuri's ignorance of time travel for something like seven months now. He had to be exhausted. But he'd already felt at home in the onsen, he was surrounded by people he loved for years from his perspective even if from theirs, they'd only just met him. Meanwhile Yuuri was absorbing it all in one hour, the night before the free skate, in a different country, far from home and comfort and a place to hide while he sorts it all out. Yuuri figured it was fair game to be the crankier one right now.

The silence between them was tense, like a snake poised to strike at any moment. Victor was staring, his face trained back into the careful blank mask he was fond of when he didn't want to show his hand. Yuuri met his gaze, challenging, but Victor's striking blue eyes weren't backing down. They were on opposite corners of the bed, not close enough for either of their liking but both too stubborn to move. Yuuri's shoulders tensed and relaxed several times before he finally chose to speak.

"Order the cake."

Victor's mask dropped and his head cocked backwards, shaking slightly. "I... what?"

Huffing, Yuuri stood up and moved around to seat himself between the beds, closer to Victor. He sat down on the edge of the mattress nearly toppling the taller man over with the uneven weight distribution. Yuuri picked up the phone and punched in the room service extension.

"Yes, hello, I'd like two slices of strawberry cake sent to room 612 please. Yes. No, no wine, just cake. Yes. Yes, thank you." Yuuri hung up the phone.

Victor began stuttering. "What... why did... what about..."

"I'm tired, Victor," he said quietly, rubbing his forehead. "I don't want to deal with this anymore."

"You don't... what does that mean?"

Yuuri couldn't see his face but the other man's words were strained. He worried that his words may have been taken the wrong way. There wasn't really a better way to say it, though. At least, Yuuri couldn't think of one. He honestly just wanted to sleep, but Victor had insisted before that tonight was supposed to have cake, so tonight would at least have cake.

"I mean I don't care anymore. I don't care if you're actually from the future or if you've just smacked your head too hard and think you are. I don't care because I'm not the one with some alternate Victor to compare you to, you're the Victor I know.” He ran a hand down his face. “I'm tired. I want to eat my cake like you said we did, and then I want to lay down and pray I fall asleep." Yuuri turned to face Victor, meeting his bewildered gaze with his tired eyes. "Was the cake strawberry? I ordered strawberry."

Victor blinked once. Twice. Shook his head.

"Yeah, well, it's strawberry now so screw the future."

Yuuri got up and cleared the table of dinner, setting the plates back on the tray they came on. He brought it to the door, opening it carefully so as not to topple anything. As he set the tray on the floor, he heard someone calling out to him from down the hall.

"Cake's here." He called over his shoulder.

The bellhop doffed his hat in thanks as Yuuri tipped him, and Yuuri closed the door with his foot. He pulled the table against the foot of the bed, then uncovered their dessert, not waiting for Victor to
When Yuuri opened his eyes, Victor was sitting across from him, in a chair at the table instead of next to him on the bed. He was guiltily staring down at the cake as if it being here was another mistake. With a tired grimace, Yuuri shook his head and patted the spot beside him on the blanket, hopefully communicating his intentions properly.

“I feel really stupid right now,” Victor mumbled, plopping down in the bed with force enough to jostle Yuuri. “I could have waited for all of this. I was going to wait until after the Final, but the fight we had last time was…” He sighed. “It feels like China snuck up on me. I wasn't prepared. I don’t know.”

Yuuri held his fork in his mouth, savoring the artificial flavor of the frosting. One would think that for such a ritzy international hotel, they might be a little more fancy with the desserts, but Yuuri wasn't one to complain about sweets. He let his head fall to the left, against Victor’s shoulder, and the taller man stiffened at the sudden weight. “What did we fight about?” he asked around the utensil.

“I don’t know how to describe it,” Victor began. "We were in the underground car park, practicing away from reporters. You were panicking about the free and I said something ridiculous, I don't even remember the full extent of what I was thinking to have justified it,” He scoffed, causing Yuuri’s head to bounce slightly. “It really upset you.”

“What did I say?”

“I don’t think…” Victor grimaced. “I don't know if that's wise.”

Yuuri took another large bite of cake and tapped his head against Victor’s shoulder.

“I told you that if you missed the podium, I would take responsibility by resigning as your coach.”

Yuuri’s entire body winced. That sounded like such a cliché thing to say, something Victor would never mean sincerely. Could he have been testing him? Checking his reaction to see if such a line would motivate him? “That's... really corny. And mean.”

“I know.”

“I would yell at you.”

“You did.”

“What did I say?”

“What would you say?”

Yuuri hummed. “I think I’d call you out on it, because I’d know you're full of shit.”

Victor coughed a laugh, still alarmed at Yuuri’s curses. His filter was almost non-existent when he was tired. “You were crying.”

“That sounds like me,” Yuuri sighed, lifting another bite of cake to his lips. “I believe it.”

“I'm not good when people cry in front of me,” Victor admitted. He politely waited for Yuuri to finish chewing and swallowing his bite before continuing. “I offered to kiss you.”
Yuuri’s head shot up from its spot on Victor's shoulders, trying to find the answer in his eyes as to why in earth he would do something so rude, but found none. “I was panicking, and you tried to kiss me?! What were you thinking?!”

Victor his hands up in front of his chest defensively. "I wasn't thinking! I didn't try to I just—I offered,"

"That's terrible..." Yuuri whispered around another bite of cake that was mostly just frosting.

"I know," Victor whined. "You really tore me a new one."

Yuuri perked up with interest. "Eh, really? What'd I say?"

"You were crying pretty hard," Victor said with a faraway look in his eyes. "You told me to have more faith in you than you did, you said..." He placed his hand to his chest, sighing.

Yuuri was patient as Victor trailed off. He wondered how it would have gone if they'd actually had a fight tomorrow. Well, they'd had a fight just a few minutes ago, so he supposed that's what reality was now. Yuuri would never get to experience shouting at Victor in an underground car park, but at least he had strawberry cake. He took another small bite, chewing slowly, allowing Victor to finish gathering his thoughts.

"Stay close to me,"

Yuuri turned to face him again. "Hm?"

"That's what you said to me—shouted at me. Just stay close to me," Victor's eyes were sparkling, unfocused and pointing off into a distance far past the wall of their hotel room. "It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard."

Stay Close To Me was the English title of Victor's free skate, Stammi Vicino. The program that Victor poured his soul into, all the loneliness and agony in his heart expressed on the ice for the world to see. The program Yuuri imitated, bringing Victor to Japan. The program they decided together would be his exhibition skate. Yuuri thought that perhaps it was the most forceful thing he could have said at a moment like that one.

Victor turned to Yuuri with a mournful look in his eyes. "It made me so happy, hearing you say that. We didn't have much time before you were up, so you turned away from me to head to the bathroom to wash up. I wanted to hold you so badly at the time, but I didn't want you to take it the wrong way," Victor's soft blue eyes were glued to his hands as he twiddled his thumbs. "Yuuri, are you angry with me?"

"A little bit, yeah." Yuuri answered without hesitation.

Victor deflated. "That's fair," he sighed, standing up. "I'm going to get ready for bed, then."

Victor changed while Yuuri brushed his teeth, and while Victor brushed his teeth and washed his face, Yuuri took the time to change into his sleeping clothes. In a choice between two identical grey shirts, he chose the softer one.

The lights were off and Yuuri was already under the covers on the left side of the bed when he heard the bathroom fan turn off. When Victor hadn't made a move towards the bed, Yuuri looked up to find him standing nervously in the dark, staring at the other bed. The wrong bed. That wouldn't do. Yuuri flipped the duvet open on the right side of the bed, silently, and Victor hesitated before slipping in.
He was stiff as a board, laying flat on his back while Yuuri was curled up on his right side, facing him. Staring at Victor as Victor stared at the ceiling.

"Vitya," Yuuri breathed out, barely more audible than a whisper, but he may as well have shouted it for all the silence in the room. Victor turned his head so fast his neck must have snapped. His eyes were wet. "Yakov calls you Vitya. A lot of people do. Is there something... else?"

Victor sat up, pulling the covers with him, as he stared at Yuuri.

Yuuri pulled him back down. "I don't want... I mean, I'm not..."

"You want something special, you mean?" he said with a relieved smirk. Yuuri felt his face warm and refused to answer. The bed jostled slightly, and Victor was facing him. "There's plenty of diminutives for my name, Vik, Vitok, Vitunya, Vitusha, Viten'ka—"

"Ah—" That one. That last one sounded perfect.

"Heard one you like? Try it out."

"V-Vi—" Yuuri's tongue was tying itself in knots. He screwed his eyes shut in embarrassment and covered his face with his hands. "Vit..." There was no reason to trip over himself about this, it was just a nickname! "Viten...ka..."

There was a steady but loud intake of breath, and Yuuri slowly peeked through his fingers.

Victor was grinning like a madman, his eyes squinting with the force of his smile. His bright blue eyes were positively sparkling. "Yuuri!" he shouted, reaching out to smother Yuuri into his chest with a bear hug. He quickly let go, however. "Ah, wait! I'm sorry um... is it okay—can I...?"

"It's fine," Yuuri kept his face burrowed into Victor's chest, not wanting him to notice how red he'd gotten. Victor was gentler this time, holding him just as tightly but slower. Yuuri's hands were trapped between them, and it was a little difficult to breathe, but he was comfortable.

Yuuri was almost falling asleep when Victor shifted a bit. "And... you want to keep being Yuuri?" He asked.

"I... I like the way you say my name," Yuuri mumbled into the shirt. Victor tightened his hold.

They'd have to talk more tomorrow, but for now Yuuri was comfortable where he was, with the delicate balance they'd found for the night. There was much to discuss, and even more to think about, but as Yuuri drifted off to sleep, he found himself thinking it didn't matter at all.

Chapter End Notes

despite the fact that it matters VERY much yuuri get real!!!!

"anxiety doesn't make me blind and deaf victor" *points at the banquet breakdown* it literally has but alright babe

okay i'm fairly certain at this point that the free skate at least begins next chapter?? god i drew this out for too long.
sry for updating so rapidly, it's kind of an indicator that im gonna flip back to writers block soon lmao.... OTL
“Things change, Viten’ka,” he mumbled, watching with amusement as Victor warred with himself between delight and concern. With a slight nod, Yuuri signaled Victor to lean forward, and he rested their foreheads together. Yuuri breathed deeply, feeling like his nervous energy was being pushed out of his body as he made room for clearer air. “You know what Yura did. Now I’ll show you what Yuuri does.”

**Chapter Notes**

uhhhhh this is what i get for posting 3 weeks worth of content at once?? i guess????? an extra three weeks if writers block. incredible.

just... before u go further, the story changes here. after this chapter skating is no longer The Point since i'm garbage at writing it and also bc the focus has turned ENTIRELY to their tentative relationship.

pls 5giv me

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There were many heavy questions and tense discussions over breakfast. How was it possible? Why did it happen to Victor? Does anyone besides Yuuri, Yuri, and Minako know?

The answers Victor gave being Unknown, Unknown, and He tried to tell Mari but she wasn't paying attention the first time and the second time ruffled his hair and told Victor he's a good storyteller.

More small arguments were had, more grumbled than anything, and the two of them flopped back into bed to relax for the precious few minutes they had before it would be considered a faux-pas to avoid public practice and their friends. The sun was gleaming behind the thick hotel curtain, but inside the lights were off, the room was cool and dark, they were shut out from the world.

"So..." Yuuri breathed. They were curled up on opposite sides of the bed, facing each other but not particularly close.

"Yes?"

Yuuri avoided his tender gaze. "You're obviously... together... with future Yuuri…”

Victor nodded.

“So then—" he cut himself off with a blush, gripping his own warm face. He didn't know how to word the question. He barely knew what is was he even wanted to know. In a deep dark part of his brain, he knew, in a way, that he just wanted Victor to elaborate, to tell him about their alternate universe relationship.
Victor smiled. "Did you want spoilers, Yuuri?"

**Spoilers.** The implications of that word had Yuuri shivering, squirming, really. Did you want information of our guaranteed future? Do you want to know what is definitely going to happen? Want me to tell you what I'm going to d—

"Why do we live in Russia if you don't want to keep competing?" The question came out rushed.

Victor sighed. "Well, I did continue at first," he said with slight irritation. "But I could only really go through one more season before I retired. It was... embarrassing, to say the least." Victor rubbed at his nose. "After that we stayed for you, actually."

Yuuri tilted his head—well, as much as he could with his face already lying comfortably against a pillow. What could Russia have given him that Japan couldn't? If Victor wasn't competing he could devote his attention solely to Yuuri's programs and there would be no reason to stay.

Victor noticed the confusion on his face and continued. "Yakov did more for you than I ever could, I'm actually a pretty awful coach." He laughed dryly.

"You've been a pretty average coach since you showed up, though?" Yuuri defended. "You may not be amazing but you're far from awful. Actually, I'm a little annoyed that people keep making smartass remarks about your assumed coaching abilities when you're perfectly adequate."

Victor snorted. "Yeah, now. I can't even begin describe how terrible it was in the beginning. You were the only person who could understand what I was trying to convey, everyone else just looked at me funny and told me to explain properly even though I was explaining as best I could!"

Victor huffed, and it took all of Yuuri's willpower not to giggle at his pouty face and puffed cheeks.

"So what changed? You're just... better at explaining now?"

Victor's chest visibly puffed. "I took a sports management course," he said pridefully.

"Isn't that more about like... business and finance and stuff?"

"Well, yeah," Victor stuttered. "But there were plenty of former coaches of different sports in the class and I made a couple of friends who helped me understand coaching a little better."

Yuuri smiled, glad that Victor got to experience that. Glad that he got to reap the rewards of Victor's self-improvement. Glad that Victor was here.

"I'm glad you're here, Viten'ka." he whispered, allowing himself to voice his happiness.

Victor beamed.

---

Yuuri grimaced.

His reflection in the mirror was pallid and gross. His skin was off-color and the space between his eyebrows was holding a crease from his furrowed expression. A fourth splash of cold water on his
"I may have miscalculated..." Yuuri mumbled as he stepped out of the arena restroom, his hands shaking as he dried them.

He tried not to take offence when Victor's eyes widened for the smallest of moments before pulling out a tube of concealer.

"I happen to know you slept through the night, so I don't know if nodding off until the warm up is a good idea," Victor thought aloud, dabbing first a yellow powder and then a beige liquid under Yuuri's eyes. He mumbled under his breath "How on earth...?" And Yuuri failed to not take offense.

"How do you think, Victor." Even if he had slept through the night, there was no way it would be a restful sleep. Lying in Victor's arms wouldn't magically chase away worries and self-doubt. It felt good for a moment to get snippy, it felt refreshing, but Yuuri immediately regretted it when Victor stiffened in response.

"I deserve that," he said, sighing as he capped the concealer. "Did you want to rest anyway?"

"Did that work the first time?"

"Not... really?"

Yuuri sighed. "Then I'd rather not.

"Alright, public practice is starting soon, if you're tired you're probably going to flub your jumps, try not to let it get to you. Take it as it is."

An hour later, after exactly one flubbed jump, Yuuri ditched the rest of public practice and found himself in a far-off hallway with Victor rubbing his shoulders.

Two hours after that, they shared a tense, silent, light lunch of soup and tea.

Three hours after that, it was time, and Yuuri couldn't remember half the day, and he was rushing back into conscious awareness all at once, much the way air pressure from opening one door will close another.

Yuuri gulped in a lungful of air while squeezing tightly to Victor's hand over the boards.

"I promise you've got this, Yuuri. I know it."

"Things change, Viten'ka," he mumbled, watching with amusement as Victor warred with himself between delight and concern. With a slight nod, Yuuri signaled Victor to lean forward, and he rested their foreheads together. Yuuri breathed deeply, feeling like his nervous energy was being pushed out of his body as he made room for clearer air. "You know what Yura did. Now I’ll show you what Yuuri does."

Yuuri kicked off the boards, feeling embarrassed and corny. He resisted looking back at Victor for his reaction and struck his opening pose, his body open, light.

Victor isn’t perfect, Yuuri knew this.

Victor is selfish sometimes, too concerned with what he wants that he steps on toes. Victor is selfless sometimes, too preoccupied with the happiness of others that he forgets to take care of himself. Victor is big and loud, making others uncomfortable with the magnitude of his presence. Victor is
silent and agreeable, destructively keeping problems to himself.

Victor is doing his best.

His expression when Yuuri first called him by his new name was priceless, all wet eyes and flushed cheeks. Yuuri nails a quad toe-double toe combination to raucous applause, and imagines they’re cheering for Victor’s smile. He wished they’d cheer louder, this was Victor’s choreography after all, don’t they realize what they’re witnessing? Victor may have been inexperienced as a coach before, but this Victor knew what he was doing.

Coach-wise, that is. Victor admittedly did not quite know what he was doing time-wise.

He was experienced with Yuuri’s anxieties—with the occasional gaff— in a way Yuuri never got to experience. Through a spin, he wondered how different things would be if he’d gotten to see Victor stumbling over himself while Yuuri shouted at him in a parking lot.

There were lots of things Yuuri didn’t get with Future Victor running the show. The thought irritated Yuuri, and he put more force into his quad salchow, earning him more height but causing a slight wobble. It might not have been noticeable to the average viewer, but Yuuri knew he’d lost points.

And Yuuri hated losing.

Through a camel spin, he vaguely registered a few Japan flags in the audience. Would he be allowed to skate for Japan still, if he moved his home rink to Russia like a Victor said he had? He hoped so.

He landed a triple loop and flew into the second half, feeling the wind blow a stray lock of hair into his ear. It reminded him of Victor’s voice this morning rasping gently, tempting them to stay in bed, to lock out the world and just bask in each other. He raised his face to the ceiling the way Victor used to, and he found himself accidentally tilting his head, as if to make room for an imaginary partner on the ice. He tried to play it off by straightening up through the rest of the sequence, but the judges undoubtedly noticed. Would they take it as a lack of balance and symmetry? Would they glean his accidental meaning from the barely-noticeable gesture?

Yuuri touched down on his triple axel, wincing at the burn on his bare hand. It could have been worse, considering his refusal to jump at all during practice. He was confident about nailing his next jump though, and he did. The triple flip was clean and graceful.

Wait, how would Victor react if he made the next quad a flip too? Had Other Yuuri dared to make such a bold and reckless move? He thought not. This was his turn now. Speaking of reckless moves, Yuuri had been lost in thought when his triple-single-triple combination came up, and he over-rotated slightly. There went even more lost points.

Yuuri was tired. Not physically—he had stamina to spare—but emotionally. The entire weekend had been tiring for him and he was tired of that too. He knew it wasn't Victor's fault, but it was still a draining experience. The exhaustion gnawed at the frayed edges of his mind, beckoning him to give in, to let himself go, to be swept away by the undertow of frustration and confusion and simply break, like he did before Onsen on Ice. But Yuuri resisted, allowed himself to feel the pain, the fatigue, he pushed himself to the brink and let it fizzle out until there was nothing left but the feelings he wanted—needed to share with the world, and his body responded.

His legs pushed harder, his arms swooped wider, his head held taller, his heart burned brighter. Yuuri was flying across the ice powered solely by the strength he pulled from his love. Nothing could pull him down, not gravity, not the his other self, and not the future. He took off from his back inside edge and mentally ordered Victor to be watching.
A sharp pain bloomed on his right hip.

Well, maybe gravity could stop him.

Yuuri gathered the feeling in his heart, the overflowing affection and frustration and exhaustion, he welled it up in the tips of his fingers and pointed it directly at Victor, who was near the gate…

crying? He was sobbing openly, rubbing at his eyes with the sleeve of his coat as cameras pointed themselves at him brazenly, cataloguing his emotions for worldwide consumption. Did he not like it? Was he angry at Yuuri for messing up his flip? Yuuri found himself wondering not for the first time how Victor could still be so beautiful even in tears. He had foregone his bows, running straight for the gate as fast as his tired legs could manage, hopeful that his little stunt would set him apart in a good way.

Victor removed his sleeve from his face to reveal the most serene smile he'd ever shown Yuuri. There was nothing but pure love radiating from every pore in his body as he held his arms out for the skater to walk into. Slipping his arms around Victor's neck, he slumped against him and took the time to catch his breath, Victor's faint cologne soothing his tired soul.

“Did you like my flip, Viten’ka?” Yuuri mumbled into his own armpit.

“I was worried you wouldn't do it,” Victor said into Yuuri’s neck as they shared their tender embrace in front of millions of people on international television.

Yuuri’s stomach dropped and irritation spiked. “...I’m not original?”

Victor pulled back slightly to rest his forehead against Yuuri’s, made possible by the few inches skates gave the shorter man to bring them to equal height. It was sweaty and uncomfortable, but completely worth it. “Your ideas are your own, Yuuri, you don't need to compare!”

But he wanted to. He wanted to prove that he was a different Yuuri, one Victor would never expect. One the world couldn't get a handle on. A Yuuri who did the unexpected and kept them on their toes. He cupped Victor’s jaw with two shaking hands and pulled him closer, tilting their heads and pressing their lips together slowly but forcefully.

Yuuri didn't slide his tongue against Victor’s lips, didn't feel any insistent movements elsewhere on his body, didn't open his mouth wide to allow him entrance. He just kissed him. Several times. Slowly.

Their lips slid together with alternating soft and firm pressure, where Victor pressed, Yuuri softened. The cacophony of noise around them seemed to increase and silence all at once. Through screams and shouts, his ears still tuned into Victor's voice, his barely audible, pleased sigh. Yuuri felt a pressure at his back as Victor gripped his shoulder blades and pulled him closer, if it were possible to do so.

After a few moments of the crowd exploding, Yuuri pulled back to be greeted with a flustered, impatient look on Victor’s face. He catalogued the expression for later reimagining.

“No one can compare to me,” He answered.
Yuuri stood on the podium as Thailand's anthem boomed through the arena. He glanced upwards to his right, and caught his best friend smiling through heavy streams of tears.

Phichit called for a podium selfie with Yuuri and Chris, and Yuuri struck a V with his fingers as the shutter sounded several times in a row.

He looked down at the bronze medal hanging around his neck and sighed.

At least he knows he makes it to Barcelona.

Chapter End Notes

i don't know what's happening everything got away from me june kicked my ass and none of you deserve this happening to you

End Notes

hmu on tumblr @carry-on-my-wayward-butt and scream at me over messenger until i finish this i genuinely want and need that kind of motivation pls i beg

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!