Victor speaks seven languages.

(Physics isn't one of them.)

Luckily, though, he ends up rooming with his antithesis: a shy, black-haired boy who just so happens to be a physics major.
Hi guys!! I really hope you like the first chapter of this be I had to rewrite it like two times (the plot like changed completely whoops.) This was originally going to be strictly Victor's POV but it felt better w/ some Yuuri POV in it! Also, a couple of other things: the rating will most likely go up in the future, there are mentions of underage drinking in this (but I mean, like, they're in college, whatcha gonna do), and ages are changed slightly.

Anyway, I'd like to thank non-writingwriter for letting me bounce ideas off of her and also thehobbem for the name of the library on the fictional campus!!

Please let me know what you think in a comment and thanks for reading!!! ^_^
Victor speaks seven languages.

(Physics isn’t one of them.)

“Don’t take it,” Christophe urges over the phone, most likely sick of hearing about how Victor is dreading the class.

Classes haven’t even started yet—they begin in a week’s time. Christophe is still in Switzerland, Mila is still in Russia. There’s practically nobody on campus except for those who had taken summer courses or those who had arrived early.

It’s starry out, a little past nine at night. Victor had spent the entirety of the day at the Stammi Vicino Library with his brother, Yurio. They’d reenacted the experiment that they’d seen on MythBusters a few weeks ago, the one where they’d folded the pages of a book inwards and seen how resilient it could become.

(The answer is, in fact, very resilient.)

“Yakov says I need a science credit,” Victor complains.

“Well why don’t you—”

The audio cuts out.

Victor sighs and looks down at his broken earphones, a wire popping out of them. It’s a miracle that they work at all, really, but it’s still frustrating. There’s a step in front of him and he hops deftly, the skateboard sticking to his feet and landing perfectly on the elevated path. Then, he gets to work on the earphones.

He takes one wire in each hand, angling them just so. “—special treatment.”

“What did you say?” Victor asks.

“Doesn’t matter, you’ll just have to get a tutor,” Christophe says.

Victor doesn’t want a tutor. He has never needed one in the past, and he certainly won’t need one in the future. Besides, it’s not as though he’s stupid. Science just isn’t his thing. Everybody has a thing. Languages happen to be his thing.

Not science.

“Then—if—try—when—” Christophe’s words come in cut-off fragments.

“Hang on a minute,” Victor mutters.
He takes one wire in each hand again, wincing—they’re hot to the touch. He just hopes that they don’t catch on fire because that would be a very pathetic way to die. Licking his lips, he straightens the left wire with the microphone attached to it. The audio comes back, just for an instant. He’s getting closer.

Victor keeps the left wire there, then turns his attention to the right. He holds it gently in his fingers, still hot to the touch, and angles it just so. The audio cuts back in, but only for a few seconds, and he wonders which one isn’t in the perfect position. So he tries straightening the right one as well to match the left, and—

SLAM!

(A throbbing behind his eyes.)

(Won’t go away, won’t stop.)

(Gets worse and worse.)

He’d hit something.

(There’s a voice to his right. A voice? No, not a voice.)

A groan.

(No, no. Someone?)

(No. Yakov will never forgive him if he just killed a student before classes have even started.)

Still a groaning, though. A little quieter. More reserved.

Victor opens his eyes—stars. Real stars, or is he imagining them? No, they must be real. The sky is dark, beautiful. He takes a moment. There’s a building behind him, the roof just barely visible in his peripheral vision, and it clones itself. He blinks until there’s just one copy of it, until his vision has returned to normal.

Then he focuses on the groaning.

Victor scrambles to his feet. “Are you okay?!”

He stumbles, almost manages to catch himself, but manages to stand on the second attempt.

There’s a figure on the other side of the path.

Victor catches sight of his skateboard slowly rolling away from them and ignores it, heading towards the figure instead. He—or is it a she?—is face down, a bundle of clothes and a puffy, spruce-colored scarf. He sees a blue bike to their left, one wheel still spinning, and a red backpack to the right. Binders had spilled out of it, and there are papers blowing away in the wind.

He touches the figure’s shoulder, or at least what he thinks is his shoulder, but all he receives is a groan as a response. Yes, definitely a boy. “Do you want me to call someone? The hospital?”

“No,” comes a muffled response.

Without thinking, Victor sprints after the papers, reaches desperately in the air to catch them and sprinting down the path to retrieve the few had escaped. He shoves them back into the front pocket of the binders, squinting in the darkness to see if he’d missed any. There’s a packet of notecards on
the path, and he fetches those, too.

(Math equations. Lots of them.)

When he turns back around, zipping up the backpack, the boy is sitting up.

Except…

Except he’s holding a pair of broken glasses.

Victor grimaces.

“I’ll pay for them,” he hurries to say, setting the boy’s backpack down beside him. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

Charcoal-colored hair falls down across the boy’s forehead, sticks up in every direction, disheveled. Colossal, disoriented caramel eyes stare up at Victor. His cheeks are flushed, but it’s hard to tell if it’s from the cold or the fall. It’s far too dark to see much else, so Victor takes a step closer, squinting to get a better look.

He puts his glasses back on his face.

(It makes Victor feel twenty times worse.)

(Because there is no way he’s able to see anything through those.)

“I’ll pay for them,” Victor repeats lamely.

The student’s voice is small. “Do you know how much glasses cost?”

For a second, Victor is paralyzed by shock, guilt rising and coating his lungs, his stomach, his heart, taking control of his organs and setting them on pause.

(Then he realizes that it’s not passive aggressive.)

(He realizes that if anybody else were to say those words to him, they would sound passive aggressive.)

(But this is just a genuine question.)

So he gives a genuine answer.

“No.”

“It’s fine,” the boy mutters, standing up. His legs are wobbly—he almost falls. Victor catches him by his forearms but the student pulls away like he’s made of fire, blinking at him, as though surprised by his own actions.

Victor backs away. “Sorry.”

“It’s fine,” he repeats, like a mantra. The student picks up his bike and sets it upright. Swings a leg over it. Runs a hand through his hair, uselessly trying to sort out the tussled strands.

Say something, say something, say something, Victor chastise himself.

(He doesn’t.)
And then the boy is gone.
Just like that.

~

“Bike Boy. You’re going to call him Bike Boy?” Yurio asks the following day as they sit underneath a tree at the Quad, eyes focused on a tiny ant climbing up the trunk. He places his finger on the wood above the ant, watching as the insect shifts to the left to avoid it.

Victor shrugs. “It’s as good a name as any.”

“First there was Boxers Boy,” Yurio laments, “and now Bike Boy. What’s next? Basketball Boy? Baked Potato Boy?”

Yurio is his little brother. Yakov is their adoptive father and also the college dean. Thus, Yurio spends plenty of time on campus during afternoons and weekends, insisting that it’s because the surrounding college town is boring. Victor knows the truth—Yurio secretly adores him. Or at least he’d like to think that’s true.

“This one is different,” Victor promises.

“How?”

He shuts his eyes, remembers Bike Boy’s eyes, remembers the nervous tilt to his voice, remembers the sight of him wearing his broken glasses, the shards of glass reflecting the moonlight. Perhaps it hadn’t been the best first meeting, but he was attractive. And Victor wants to apologize properly. In fact, apologizing is all he has been able to think about.

Yurio kicks him in the shin. “Stop daydreaming. How is this one different?”

“I know what he looks like,” Victor insists.

(Victor hadn’t known what Boxers Boy had looked like.)

He’d been drunk at a fraternity party. The memories are blurry, painful to think about, sort of like trying to remember a word on the tip of one’s tongue. There are snippets. The stench of alcohol, the feeling of fingers splayed on his hips, a voice that had gradually become more and more muddled over the months of summer. The nickname is sensical, though—he and a few others seem to remember the guy stripping and pole dancing.

Victor just wishes he could remember.

Thinking about it hurts. Victor rubs at his temple absent-mindedly.

Yurio looks surprised. “You actually know what he looks like?”

“Well, it was dark,” he says regretfully. “But I would recognize him in a heartbeat. He had black hair—it looked soft, really soft—and brown eyes. I think there were little flecks of gold in them, but it was hard to tell. Either way, though, they sparkled, that was easy to tell. The moon was showing and the crescent was reflected in his pupils, it was like—”
“I think you’re missing an important detail here,” Yurio interrupts.

Victor blinks. “An important detail?”

(Is it his lips? His eyelashes? Maybe the scarf, the coat, the red backpack?)

“You hit him on your skateboard. Like, hard. How do you know you didn’t concuss him?”

“I… I didn’t… We…” He starts uselessly. Yurio stops paying attention to the ant, deciding to raise an eyebrow at Victor instead, as if saying *I-told-you-so*. Victor lays down on the grass beside his brother, looking up at him desperately. “You’re right. He could hate me. I didn’t even get a chance to introduce myself, and he hates me.”

His brother shifts uncomfortably. “Just find him and apologize. Pay for his broken glasses.”

“I offered to,” Victor complains. “He just kept saying it was fine and hurried away, as if he thought I’d get back on my skateboard and hit him again. Yurio, he *hates* me.”

“If he was able to bike away, he couldn’t have been that hurt,” Yurio adds. “Besides, you said he didn’t sound mad.”

Victor thinks, shutting his eyes again, remembering his voice, his words, those eyelashes. “It almost sounded like he was sorry. Which is ridiculous. You know what, though? He also sounded familiar. I don’t know why.”

“Maybe you’ve had a class with him.”

“No. But, oh Yurio, he looked so sad but he didn’t even get mad at me, just left. And when he was sad, his jaw clenched, like he was trying to hold it back. It was heartbreaking. You know those sad commercials where they show all of the puppies in kennels shivering? It made me feel like that.”

“Oh my god, please find this guy,” Yurio groans. “Either find him or stop talking now. I won’t have this be another Boxers Boy situation, alright? You know what this guy looks like, so there’s no excuse.”

There’s a pause.

“Do you think he likes dogs?” Victor whispers.

“Stop talking.”

“Or is he more of a cat person? No—I think he’s a dog person. Will he like Makkachin?”

“I said stop talking.”

~

Victor calls it plan B.

(B for Bike.)

(B for Boy.)
He takes advantage of the time before classes start, because if Bike Boy is here, then it’ll be far easier to find him now than it will be when the campus is flooded with students. Victor makes a list of all of the things he knows about him, practices his apology in his head over and over again and recites it to Yurio.

He has a red backpack, a blue bike, is some sort of math or science major. And he’s gorgeous. Stunningly gorgeous. And he wears scarves—surely that helps? Scarves aren’t for everyone, after all. Oh, and glasses. Though perhaps not anymore. So maybe he’ll be squinting? Victor plans on looking for anyone who is squinting.

So he stays outside of Stammi Vicino on Tuesday. It’s the hub of social life, a large, cylindrical building in the center of campus. Five floors tall with a bell tower on the top. The bells ring once every hour, on the hour.

They ring once.

Twice, three times.

Four times, five times.

Yurio meets up with him at some point, asking him why he’s sitting here pointlessly, and eventually convinces Victor to come get lunch with him, because he’s supposedly starving. Victor keeps staring at the library doors for as long as possible, a few students moving in and out, studiously preparing for their classes or hanging out with friends.

“He might not come here,” Yurio points out. “Not everybody does.”

Victor has considered that, yes, but he’d shoved that thought into the dark recesses of his mind. “I’ll find him.”

Yurio sighs. “God help this guy.”

“Hey! I just want to apologize to him.”

“Sure you do.”

Victor glares at him. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means that if you just feel bad and want to apologize to someone, you don’t usually talk about their scarf color for five hours on end. In fact, even if you just want to date someone, you don’t talk about their scarf color for five hours. I don’t even think you were this obsessed with Boxers Boy, and everybody knows how bad that was.”

“You didn’t see him, Yurio,” Victor insists. “This one’s worth it.”

“Let’s talk about food now. I want to talk about food.”

“I wonder what Bike Boy’s favorite food is…?”

“Obsessed.”

“I am not.”
“You definitely are.”

“Not.”

“Are to.”

Victor pauses. “Do you want food or not?”

“Okay, okay, fine. You can talk to me about this guy as long as you pay for my pizza.”

~

The moment Mila and Christophe arrive on campus, he tells them all about Plan B. He even informs Sara, Mila’s friend who he doesn’t know all that well. She seems nice enough, listening intently as he goes on and on about that momentous interaction.

“So it’s like the Boxers Boy situation?” Christophe asks, grinning.

Sara frowns. “Who’s Boxers Boy?”

“A guy Victor was obsessed with over the summer,” Mila explains to her. “He met him at a party. I wasn’t there, but he got drunk, and apparently this guy was all over him.”

“He was!” Victor insists. “And he was attractive, too, but like I told Yurio, this is different.”

“Good luck,” Christophe says, clapping him on the back. “Don’t you think you might have a rough start if you hit him on your bike?”

“I’m going to apologize. Properly.”

“Good idea.”

~

Tragically, he doesn’t see Bike Boy before classes start.

Plan B is not going well.

They’re waiting in line for their room assignments a few days later. Victor is rooming with Christophe this year, and Mila is rooming with Sara for the second year in a row. Eventually, though, the two girls step out of line, smiling at each other. They’re in the Honors College, and so are Victor and Christophe, so they get the best rooms—each a double with a private bathroom. A luxury that nobody else on campus is provided.

Yurio waits to the side while Victor and Christophe wait for their key. The woman behind the desk glances at both of them. “You two are rooming together?”

They nod.
“Last name?” She only says it to Christophe. Victor assumes she already knows his last name, given that his father is her boss.

“Giacometti,” Chris says.

The woman reaches for the keys, and Victor leans forward to take them. But then she halts. Stares at the screen, confused.

“Is something wrong?” Victor asks.

He and Christophe have lived together for two years. And, sure, they’re not perfect roommates, but Victor can’t name any two people who are other than Mila and Sara. So the fact that the woman is now typing something quickly on her computer is worrying.

He shifts his weight from one foot to the other, glancing at Chris, who just shrugs.

“There’s… It appears there’s been a mistake,” the woman says slowly. “Are you two aware of the new policy with roommates in the Honors College?”

“What new policy?” Christophe asks.

She smiles sympathetically, except there’s not a single ounce of sincerity to it. “Your father put in a new policy for this year,” she says, looking at Victor. “He sent out several emails about it but I’m assuming neither of you saw them.”

With a quick glance between them, she seems to notice their blank stares and leans back in her chair. “The new Honors College policy is that every student is to be paired with a student of a different major. You two are are the same major, I’m assuming. We had another mix-up earlier with a group of two, they had the same problem and were separated.”

Yurio whistles, the sound low and stretched out. “That’s rough.”

Victor and Christophe look at each other.

“But that’s stupid,” Victor points out. “Why not just put that other pair of two back together then let Christophe and me room together?”

She taps her fingernails against the wooden desk. “It’s to promote interdisciplinary relations and learning outside of the classroom.”

Victor sighs and turns to Christophe. “We’ll just take the separate rooms and then switch back later.”

“I can hear you,” the woman points out, a little annoyed.

He spares her a glance, then accepts his key from her. She hands a separate one to Christophe. “I’ll talk to Yakov about it,” Victor promises.

~

“Well, this is ridiculous,” Phichit announces as they stand outside Yuuri’s door. Just Yuuri’s door.

(Not their door, like it had been last year.)
Yuuri shrugs. “I mean, at least we’re still in the same building. And I’m sure we’ll be able to switch back and be roommates later on.”

He opens the door to his room and glances around inside, Phichit stepping in after him. Yuuri had moved in a few weeks ago, taken a short class to fulfill one of his credits. Therefore, all of his furniture is already set up. “This is nice,” Phichit notes. “We’re definitely moving in here instead of my place. I hope your roommate is nice, though.”

“Yeah, so do I.”

“Maybe he’ll even be attractive.”

“Phichit…”

Phichit climbs up and lays down on Yuuri’s lofted bed. “I mean, he won’t be Victor Nikiforov, but…”

“Shh, Phichit, people are moving in all across the hall right now,” Yuuri urges. “Don’t say his name out loud.”

“What, like Voldemort? You can say the name of my crushes out loud. Let’s see… Zac Efron. Mario Maurer. James Franco. Who else, let me think…”

“Those are celebrities,” Yuuri reminds him.

Phichit hums, agreeing. “That’s true. I guess they won’t hear me. Oooh, what if you got paired up with Victor?” He asks, whispering the name and poking Yuuri in the shoulder.

Yuuri rolls his eyes. “Not in a million years. He’ll room with somebody else from Psi Omega Iota, obviously.”

Victor Nikiforov is well-known on campus.

Which is impressive, because it's a large college.

He’s a third year, has been in a fraternity called Psi Omega Iota since he came here. His father is the dean, and his little brother is often hanging around him. Along with Mila, who Yuuri knows from figure skating club. And sometimes Christophe Giacommeti, who’s another linguistics major. Victor rides a skateboard around campus, throws the best parties, and practically everyone adores him. Whenever Yuuri sees him, he’s waving to people, talking to people, smiling at people.

And he’s attractive.

Model-level attractive.

(Ridiculously attractive.)

(But a playboy.)

(Which is a trait that normally repulses Yuuri, but on Victor it seems to work.)

“I know, but I can dream,” Phichit sighs. “That would be so romantic. Oh god, what if I got paired up with Victor? That’d be funny.”

Yuuri takes a pillow and presses it against his friend’s face. Phichit laughs and dodges it. “Don’t say his name,” Yuuri insists.
“Okay, okay, I’ll stop. You’ve always been fun to tease, Katsuki.”

“Let’s go check out your room,” Yuuri suggests.

“Sure.”

~

Victor and Chris head to the building together, separate keys in hand, laughing off the situation. Interdisciplinary learning. Who does Yakov think he’s kidding?

Victor does, however, check his email. And the woman hadn’t been lying when she’d said that plenty of emails had been sent about the topic. Whoops.

They arrive at the building, but it turns out their rooms are on separate floors. Victor had piled most of his items into his car, which is parked outside. However, he’s not sure where he’s taking them yet, so he’d left his stuff behind and gone in empty-handed.

He heads to the room number the woman had gave him on a small slip of paper and heads down the hallway, key in hand.

The door is shut.

Perhaps his roommate isn’t here yet.

So he cracks the door open.

There are two lofted beds.

One on the right, one on the left. A small bathroom door on the right wall. A desk underneath each bed. It’s clean—perfectly clean, but the desk on the left is covered in knick knacks and a small plant. There are a few photo albums turned towards the desk chair, just barely out of Victor’s line of sight.

The only light in the room is blue, emitted from a laptop screen up on the bed. There’s a shadowy figure behind it, and Victor jumps, startled. “Oh, hi.”

“Sorry, you can turn on the light,” the figure says.

But the voice is familiar. 

Too familiar.

Victor swallows.

Flips the light switch.

Stares.

Because…

Because…

No, no, this can’t be happening.
(Because he’s gorgeous.)

(Because the broken glasses are sitting on the desk.)

(Because the guilt is back in an instant, swallowing him whole, eating him alive.)

“Oh,” the boy says from the bed.

He looks surprised.

(Obviously he looks surprised.)

Victor can’t stop staring. “Hi.” Then he remembers that Bike Boy probably hates him. No, he remembers that there’s almost a zero chance that Bike Boy doesn’t hate him. “Sorry about this. I heard you were separated from the guy who was supposed to be your roommate, and so was I. So we can switch rooms, get it the way it’s supposed to be. They’re just a floor down from us.”

The student licks his lips, just keeps looking at him. Then his eyes drift back to his laptop screen. “Okay.”

For some reason, that stings.

Because the boy isn’t being aggressive, per se, but he’s also not being warm.

But then he looks up again. “You’re Mr. Feltman’s son, right?” It sounds less like a question and more like a statement.

Victor nods. “We don’t share a last name, though. I’m Victor. Victor Nikiforov.”

There’s a smile, then.

(It’s weak, doesn’t reach his eyes, but it’s there.)

“Katsuki Yuuri.”

“Nice to meet you,” Victor offers, leaning against the doorway. “Anyway, I’m guessing this is sort of an inconvenience for both of us, so I’ll just call Yakov—I mean Mr. Feltsman—and get this sorted out.”

The smile fades. “Right. Okay.”

Victor feels awkward, so he exits the room, letting the door shut naturally behind him. He presses his forehead against the wall beside it and sighs. He has Bike Boy right in front of him and doesn’t even have the decency to apologize for almost killing him. Can’t remember any of the words he had planned out, can’t remember the endless practice sessions he’d had with Yurio.

He opens the door again. “I wanted to add, sorry for hitting you the other day. I was being stupid, I should’ve been looking. And I’ll pay for your glasses, if you want.”

Yuuri looks surprised, shutting his laptop. “Um, thank you, but I actually already ordered a new pair.”

Victor swallows.

*Say something else, say something else, say something else.*
“What color?”

He hates himself.

(Why, why had he said that?)

Yuuri blinks. “Um, the same frames, actually.”

“Oh.”

A pause.

Victor scrambles to find something else to say, desperate to appease the palpable tension in the air. “That’s good. That they’re the same frames, I mean. Because if they work, then why change them, right?”

Another pause.

He wants to sink into the floor.

(Because this isn’t right. Victor isn’t awkward. No, normally he’s the epitome of confidence, the poster-boy for calm, cool, and collected. So why are there goosebumps on his arms? Why is he sweating? He doesn’t even sweat.)

But then.

Yuuri laughs.

Laughs.

(Laughs at him.)

Victor laughs, too, a bit off-put but also a bit relieved.

“I guess you’re right,” Yuuri decides.

Victor grins. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Anyway, I’ll see you.”

He darts out of the room again, thinking that Katsuki Yuuri probably thinks he’s insane. Absolutely insane. Because he’d just swept into his room, then left, then entered again, then apologized for almost killing him and complimented his choice in glasses, which he’d never even properly seen him wear before, then left again.

A great first day of his third year at college.

He steps into the common area at the end of the hall and presses the phone to his ear. “Yakov, we need to talk about your interdisciplinary rule. Chris and I can’t room together because of it.”

Yakov doesn’t sound impressed. “Did you listen to my last two voicemails?”

“…No.”

“They said something along the lines of ‘Victor, you and Chris won’t be able to room together, you
should probably change your plans.”"

Victor leans the heel of one foot against the wall, tilting his head back. “But Yakov. This is ridiculous. You know it’s ridiculous.”

“There has been a big push for interdisciplinary studies over the last year,” Yakov tells him.

“But the two guys that both of us are stuck with were supposed to room together, too,” Victor insists. “Plus, if we switch back, nobody would even know.”

“Give it a week.”

“But, Yakov—”

“You don’t get special treatment, Victor, you know that. And everybody in the Honors College is following the same rule. So you can, too. You might even learn something.”

“But—”

“Goodbye, Vitya.”

Yakov hangs up on him.

He heads down a flight of stairs to talk to Chris, explains the situation to him. His new roommate is there—Phichit Chulanont, physics major—and they seem to be getting along well, already exchanging social media account names. Victor wishes things were going along half as well for him and Yuuri, but instead all he’d done is made a fool of himself.

Chris offers to get gelato with him.

He recalls his tale of woe.

Chris, however, has no pity for him.

“I can’t believe you asked him what color glasses he’s getting,” he laughs, digging his spoon into the chocolate.

Victor buries his face in his hands. “It was humiliating. He laughed at me.”

“He must be really attractive,” Chris notes. “I’ve never seen you swept off your feet before, Nikiforov. Normally you’re the one doing the sweeping.”

He frowns. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Chris claps him on the back. It hurts. “You’re a flirt, Vitya. Not the bad kind, though. The fun kind. I’ve seen you seduce guys in five different languages before.”

Victor doesn’t respond, just sighs.

“How cute is he?”

“Very.”

“Very?”

“I… I can’t… Very.”
Yuuri doesn’t expect Victor Nikiforov to enter his room.

(And it’s like the universe is playing a cruel joke on him.)

Part of him even suspects that Phichit had hired Victor to come into his room as a prank.

A really, really unfunny prank.

Because Yuuri had harbored a crush on him all of last year. A subtle crush, yes, but a crush all the same.

Turns out it’s not a prank.

However, it is a cruel joke from the universe, because practically all Victor talks about is getting their rooms switched back. Which is understandable, because of course Yuuri wants to room with Phichit, and it makes sense that Victor wants to room with his friend, but…

(It does hurt.)

(More than it should.)

A while after Victor leaves, he texts Phichit and tells him to come up to his room.

“Victor Nikiforov?!” Phichit shouts after hearing the news.

This time, Yuuri doesn’t miss with the pillow.

Phichit repeats it, but it’s incomprehensible as his mouth is pressed against the white cushion. “Shut up,” Yuuri says. “Shhhh.”

“Oh my god, I was kidding about you rooming with him earlier.” Phichit is delighted. “Am I magical? Can I predict the future? Like That’s So Raven? Yuuri, am I Raven?”

“He’s trying to switch our rooms back,” Yuuri points out. “It’s not as though it’s going to last. He’s supposed to be with your roommate, and I’m supposed to be with you, so it makes sense.”

Phichit is just staring at him, amazed. “Yuuri, you need to take advantage of this. His dad is Mr. Feltsman. He could give us both automatic 4.0s, I bet. And he owes you one, because he hit you on your bike! Not to mention I’ve heard that he speaks, like, fifty languages.”

“Fifty languages?” Yuuri questions, folding his arms across his chest.

“Okay, the real rumor was ten, but I bet he actually speaks fifty. He’s supposed to be, like a prodigy, you know. I heard that the government uses him for secret projects. Like that movie with Amy Adams—Arrival? Did you see that one?”

Yuuri shakes his head.

“Well, Victor is like Amy Adams in that movie. I’ll show you sometime.”
“I’m not going to blackmail him into forcing his dad to raise our grades.”

“Hmm. What about giving us better meal plans? Where do you draw the line?” Phichit grins.

He laughs and nudges Phichit’s shoulder with his own. “Are you going to be this extra-annoying all year?”

“Probably. I know you love me, though.”

Yuuri whacks him with the pillow again, and Phichit darts across the room to grab one from Victor’s bed, whacking him back. They continue like that for a few minutes, until Yuuri collapses on the bed, defeated.

And then there’s the sound of a key turning.

“Be cool,” Yuuri whispers to Phichit, putting as much ice in his voice as he can manage.

The door swings open, and Victor glances between them, surprised. “Hello.”

Phichit jumps down from the bed and smiles at him. “Hi, Phichit Chulanont.”

“Victor Nikiforov.”

“Oh, I know who you are.”

Yuuri keeps his groan silent, opens his laptop and practically buries his face in it until he’s certain the radiation is frying his brain.

Victor smiles back. “You do?”

“You’re Mr. Feltsman’s son, everybody knows who you are,” Phichit explains.

Yuuri exhales with relief.

Victor laughs. “Is that so? I wasn’t aware.”

Phichit sits down on Yuuri’s desk, places his feet on the rolling chair. “You’re a linguistics major, right?”

“Right. And you’re a…?”

He nods. “Physics major, so is Yuuri. I prefer the term subtly undecided, though. Anyway, I’d better be going. See you, Yuuri. See you around, Victor.”

“Bye,” they both say at the same time.

And then Phichit is gone.

“He’s nice,” Victor says, and there’s a flicker of amusement in his tone that makes it seem like he's staring straight into Yuuri’s soul.

“Yeah.”

“You two roomed together last year?”

He nods. “Took an interests survey and were assigned to live together. It worked out.”
“Mm. You’re not dating, though?”

Yuuri blinks.

What does he…?

(What?)

“What?” The syllable comes out squeaky, so he clears his throat and tries again. “What?”

“You and Phichit,” Victor clarifies. “You’re not dating?”

“We’re… We’re just friends.”

Victor nods slowly, as if letting the information sink in. “Got it.”

“Are you and Christophe dating?” he asks, unsure of where the courage is coming from but sticking with it, keeping his hands folded in his lap.

Victor blinks, as though he’s also unsure of where that had come from. “No, we’re not.”

He doesn’t respond, just nods and pulls out his phone, yawning and checking Instagram.

~

An hour passes.

Yuuri is staring at him.

His gaze feels like the type of lead blanket that one wears when getting an x-ray. Not exactly uncomfortable, but heavy all the same. Victor sits at his desk with his laptop in front of him, checking out the locations of his different classes.

He turns around and Yuuri’s eyes dart away, as though he’d been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Victor remembers the silent exchanges he’d had with Phichit earlier, the knowing smile on Phichit’s lips, the way that Yuuri’s eyes had been downcast, cheeks flushed. Definitely interesting.

“Are you looking at me?” he asks, making sure to keep his tone light, because the last thing he wants to do is scare Yuuri off.

“Oh. Sorry,” Yuuri says quickly.

Victor shrugs. “I don’t mind, I’m just curious as to why.”

“It’s… I was… Nothing, it’s stupid.”

“Doesn’t sound like nothing.” He smiles at him and turns, legs hooking around the back of the desk chair and crossing at the ankles. He runs a hand through his hair, noticing with amusement the way Yuuri’s focus is drawn to the movement.

“It’s nothing, really.”

Victor raises an eyebrow, can practically feel Yuuri’s resolve crumbling in front of him.
“Your hair,” Yuuri blurts suddenly, as though his lips are forcing the words out before his mind can stop them.

“What’s wrong with it?” Victor asks, running his hand through it again, tugging on the ends of his bangs.

Yuuri is a sight up there on the bed. Covered in shadows, the blinds drawn and his laptop lighting up his features with a blue reflection. He’s wearing jeans and a black hoodie, and he’s still squinting, which only brings back the guilt Victor had felt earlier.

“No,” he assures him. “I’ve just never met somebody with silver hair.” Yuuri winces. “Sorry, I know that’s dumb of me to say.”

Oh.

(Well that’s…)

(Unexpected.)

“It’s just a unique shade of blond,” he explains. “It’s natural.”

“It’s weird,” Yuuri mutters in awe.

A pause.

“Not weird!” he backtracks. “Not weird, that’s not what I meant. I meant… I meant… It’s not weird, it’s… Unique, like you said.”

Victor sighs and turns back around, laying his head down on his keyboard. “Yuuri, you wounded me.”

“No, no, I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean it. I really, really didn’t mean that.” Yuuri sounds horrified, and Victor’s guilt is back.

“I’m only kidding,” he promises, getting back up.

The boy on the bed blinks. “Oh.”

“I guess we need to get to know each other better before you can tell if I’m joking or not,” Victor teases.

Yuuri ducks his head. “I thought that I’d just condemned myself to life with a roommate who hates me.”

“No, no. It’s too bad that you think my hair makes me look old and grey, though.”

Another pause.

“That was a joke,” Yuuri guesses quietly.

Victor grins. “Ding ding ding.”

I bet you wouldn’t even get carded if you went out to buy alcohol. Maybe you should dye it to look younger,” he suggests.

He frowns. “Really?”
“Joke.”

“Ohhh, Yuuri, you’re learning,” Victor praises. “Now I’m going to be self-conscious regarding my hair when I’m around you, though.”

“No, don’t be,” he insists, offering a kind smile. “Back in Hasetsu—my home town—I volunteered at a retirement home once a week.”

Victor’s eyes widen. “Okay, you’re a little too good at this.”

Yuuri just laughs.

(If his smile is disarming, his laugh may as well be a nuclear warhead, because Victor laughs back, can’t really help himself, can’t take his eyes off of Katsuki Yuuri.)

“What did your father say about the room situation?” he asks, a bit quieter, now.

“He said he doesn’t mind if we switch back in a week.”

Yuuri hums, dejected. “I guess I can put up with you for a week.”

Ouch.

Victor turns back around to his desk, tries to hide his offense.

“Joke,” Yuuri says.

He covers his face with a hand. “Oh, you got me with that one.”

“I got you good,” he agrees happily.

~

Later that afternoon, Victor meets up with Mila, Sara, Yurio, and Christophe at the Stammi Vicino Library. They claim a circular table and Mila is interrogating him, chin on palms, elbows on table. “Bike Boy is Yuuri?! I know Yuuri!”

Victor blinks. “You do?”

“We’re all in figure skating club together,” Sara adds. “He’s nice—really nice.”

Then Mila gapes. “Does this mean you hit Yuuri on your skateboard?” He nods regretfully. She leans forward and whacks Victor on the arm. Hard.

“Ow.”

“At least you found him,” Yurio sighs. “This means that instead of talking to us about him constantly, you can just talk to him constantly.”

“Or both,” Victor says, ruffling his brother’s hair. He looks at Chris. “How are you and Phichit getting along?”

“Well,” he answers. “He’s nice.”
“Phichit is head of the club,” Mila tells them. “You guys should come sometime. That’d be fun.”

“I used to skate,” Victor says. “So did Yurio. Maybe we’ll go sometime.”

Mila grins and lifts Yurio up into the air with ease. “Aw, Yurio! You’ll join our club!”

“Put me down,” he demands. “We’re in a library, Mila.”

She does, but she’s still smiling at him.

~

Turns out Yuuri is a night owl.

Because their first night in the same room, Victor starts debating whether or not he’s a robot. He has been on his laptop for hours, earphones plugged in, eyes glued to the screen, legs crossed.

Victor can’t sleep. Rolls over at two in the morning, glances at Yuuri. “You’re still awake?”

“You’re still awake?” Yuuri asks, surprised. “Is the light keeping you awake, because I can lower it.”

“What time do you normally go to bed?” He yawns, his body protesting the very idea of speaking.

Yuuri frowns, as though the question is confusing. “Um… I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?”

“Whenever I’m tired,” he answers, shrugging.

Victor tugs the blankets up to his neck. “And what are you doing on there?”

Yuuri shuts the laptop. “Nothing. Just on the internet.”

“On the internet?”

“Yeah.”

Victor raises an eyebrow, but the moment is ruined when he yawns again. “Suit yourself. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

He wonders about Yuuri.

It feels as though he knows nothing about him, even though that’s not necessarily true.

His gaze is almost always analytical, as though he’s constantly recording everything around him, taking note of everything said and done in the space around him. Victor figures that must just be his intelligence. After all, he is in the Honors College. Victor is, too, sure, but that’s only because of his language exam scores. Yuuri is quiet, too, and Victor remembers people like him in high school, the kind that kept to themselves but also knew everybody’s middle name and their mother’s place of birth.
It’s a little intimidating.

And then there’s another fact—he’s funny. A little too funny. Yuuri’s banter earlier had thrown him off balance, had come out of nowhere. But Victor likes it. Hopes he keeps doing that in the future.

He knows that Yuuri is Japanese, that he’s a physics major.

Knows that he really seems to like the color blue. Blue bedsheets, blue clothes, a blue laptop background, which he has yet to see but that he constantly sees the reflection of. Knows that he’s definitely not the outgoing, extroverted type, but that he’s not a recluse, either. After all, he’s in the figure skating club, seems to have plenty of friends.

He keeps the curtains drawn, keeps his thoughts to himself unless pushed to express them.

Victor stores all of these little thoughts in his Katsuki Yuuri fact bank.

(And there’s still something itching at the back of his mind.)

(A frustrating familiarity.)

With that thought, he finally falls asleep.
An Arrangement

Chapter Summary

Victor and Yuuri form a mutually beneficial arrangement, and Phichit and Christophe have a secret talk.

Chapter Notes

Ahh thank you so much to everybody who left a comment / kudos on the first chapter!! Let me know what you think of this one!! I'd really appreciate it ^.^

Also I'd like to dedicate, like, this entire fic to my physics teacher. I was terrible at that class but somehow escaped with an A. A true miracle.

Turns out that Yuuri isn’t a robot.

Because when Victor wakes up, his roommate is asleep. His laptop is at the foot of his bed, and it’s a precarious position—Victor figures that Yuuri could’ve accidentally kicked it off at any time during the night. He’s a jumble of blue blankets and strips of light illuminate him, seeping in between the slits of the curtains.

Victor stretches out his arms, sits up and leans forward to get a better look. He has to squint to see him from across the room, and all he can make out is a mess of black hair poking out from underneath the sheets. Part of him wishes that blankets would drift lower, possibly giving him a view of Yuuri’s face, but he scolds himself for that thought. Wanting to see one’s roommate’s expression while sleeping isn’t a normal desire, is it?

He stands up and grabs some clothes out of his gym bag. He’d only brought bare minimum supplies to this room because he hadn’t thought he’d be staying here for longer than a day. He’ll bring up more things from his car later on, he vows. His phone buzzes, and he glances down to see a text from Mila about their first Roman Literature class today.

A moment later, he turns on the shower. It gets hot almost instantly, and he’s grateful, because last year their shower would almost never get hot. This is a dream come true. He can’t wait to tell Christophe about it.

Victor dries off his hair, then wraps a towel around his waist, grabbing his toothbrush out of his bag of toiletries and swiping some toothpaste on it. The mirror is steamy, so he swings open the bathroom door without thinking.

Yuuri stares at him, wide-eyed from his bed.

Oh.

So maybe he should keep the door shut.
(But he’s wearing a towel? So what does it matter?)

He finishes brushing his teeth, then spits, washes his mouth out with water. He grabs a plastic cup and tries for a full thirty seconds to balance the toothbrush in it, but it’s too heavy and topples the cup each time. “You can put yours next to mine,” Yuuri offers, most likely seeing his conundrum.

Yuuri has a toothbrush holder with five holes in the top. Victor smiles at him. “Thanks.”

And there’s that gaze, again.

Heavy.

Victor glances over at him, leans against the bathroom doorway. “Do you shower at night or in the mornings?”

“Night.”

“Great.”

Yuuri swallows. “Um, you’re still… Aren’t you going to… Get dressed?”

“I was planning on it,” Victor replies simply.

It looks physically painful for Yuuri to tear his eyes away. But he does. And then he’s staring at that laptop again, and Victor wonders if he’s physically connected to that thing by a wire, because that would explain it sitting at the bottom of his bed while he sleeps.

Victor shuts the bathroom door, talks to Yuuri through it. “What time did you go to bed last night?”

“I don’t know.”

“Hmm. Not healthy, Yuuri,” he chastises.

“Not too late,” Yuuri promises. “Don’t worry about me.”

Victor doesn’t answer, instead just puts on a pair of jeans and green shirt with a faded band logo on it. After opening the door, he hops up onto his bed, facing Yuuri and swinging his legs, hands on his knees. “What are you doing?”

“Are you gonna ask me that every time I’m on my laptop?” Yuuri says, but there’s a bit of teasing to his voice, and Victor grins.

“Just curious. How do I know you’re not Googling the best places to bury your roommate’s body after murdering him?”

All signs of amusement fade from Yuuri’s features. “You don’t.”

Victor blinks.

(Then realizes. Joke.)

“That was creepy,” he appreciates, and Yuuri’s pokerface breaks, a smile coating his features as he ducks his head. “Very creepy. You should work in a haunted house.”

“What a compliment.”
Victor stretches out his arms behind his head. “Do you have classes today?”

“Multivariable calculus.”

He winces. “How can there be *multiple* variables? How would you solve for anything?”

Yuuri laughs at that. “Good question. I’ll let you know when I’ve found out. What classes do you have?”

“Roman Literature. Mila is in it.”

“That sounds interesting.”

“And then Latin right after that, so they go together, at least,” Victor notes.

Yuuri shifts, as though remembering something. “How many languages do you speak?”

“Seven. Four fluently.”

(If Victor were to say that he didn’t like the way Yuuri’s eyes widened at that, the way his lips parted just so, he’d be lying. Because impressing Yuuri may or may not be his new favorite pastime, his new goal if he gets a reaction like that every time.)

He watches as Yuuri plays with the end of his sleeve. “Do you speak Japanese?”

Damnit.

(Of course Japanese is the *one* language he doesn’t speak.)

“No, but maybe you could teach me,” Victor suggests.

Yuuri smiles at that, eyes flickering down to his desk. “I don’t think I’d be a very good teacher. Which ones *do* you speak?”

“I’m fluent in English and Russian—of course—plus French and Latin. Then I know Thai, Chinese, and Portuguese. Then there’s a dash of Norwegian, Dutch, German, and Arabic. Nothing to brag about with those four, really. But I suppose my favorites are the romance languages.”

Yuuri pales. “W-What?”

“The romance languages,” Victor repeats. “French, Latin, and Portuguese are the three ones I know. I’d like to learn Romanian.”

Yuuri stares at him blankly, as though Victor’s words still haven’t been processed in his mind. Victor shrugs, attempting to look humble but internally preening.

“I’m taking French this year,” Yuuri says.

“And I’m taking physics.”

“Maybe we could make an arrangement?” he suggests, and just when Victor thinks he can’t get more attractive, he goes and says something like *that*, and it’s frustrating, really.

Victor hums, pretending to consider it. “Tutoring session for tutoring session?”

“Oui.”
Victor smiles.

Yuuri smiles back. “I’m afraid that was the extent of my French. I just needed a foreign language credit.”

“And I just needed a science credit.”

“Physics is interesting,” he protests. “You’ll like it.”

Victor frowns. “Joke?”

“Not a joke,” Yuuri insists. “I’ll show you sometime. You’ll see.”

“This really is a run-on joke, Yuuri,” Victor teases.

He rolls his eyes. “Quiet or I’ll go over there and…”

He’s not sure what’s cuter—Yuuri when he’s riled up or Yuuri when he’s laughing. Victor can’t decide, but riled up Yuuri is certainly taking a strong lead.

“And what?”

Yuuri shrugs. “I don’t know, whack you with your own laptop?”

“I’d like to see you try.”

~

“You’re going to get us invited to the wildest parties,” Phichit insists. “Psi Omega Iota has the best parties. And the best trips. Maybe he’ll take you on a trip! If he does, you have to take me, though. Package deal. They go camping sometimes, you know.”

Yuuri smiles. “I’d take you with me, but don’t get your hopes up. Just because we’re getting along doesn’t mean we’re best friends or anything. I’m pretty sure he’s just trying to make it through the week.”

Phichit squeezes his arm. “Don’t think like that. I’m sure he likes you. I mean, maybe you two won’t fall in love in a day—”

“Phichit.”

“—but you’re likable, Yuuri. I can’t name a single person who doesn’t like you.”


“Which is why you’ll take me on the Psi Omega Iota trips?” he asks hopefully.

“And an annoying friend.”


Yuuri pulls away and glares at him affectionately. Then he remembers something. “By the way. Seven.”
Phichit looks confused. “Seven?”

“He speaks seven languages,” Yuuri tells him. “More, even.”

His friend gapes. “Wow, that must look impressive on a résumé.”

“But he thinks physics is boring.”

“Okay, I take back everything I’ve said. I don’t like him,” Phichit declares.

~

Yuuri hangs out with Phichit for a while, and when he comes back to the dorm, it’s ten at night, and Victor is already asleep. He tiptoes closer to the bed, wanting to make sure, and stiffens when Victor yawns. He had been laying on his back, but he rolls onto his side, clutching the blankets, bangs lifting upwards to reveal his whole face.

Yuuri follows the sharp line of his jaw with his eyes. Then he examines Victor’s hair, wiping his hands on his jeans in response to the overwhelming urge to touch it. His eyelashes are long, silver like his hair, a fact that Yuuri still isn’t quite over, if he’s being honest. Unconsciously, Victor cuddles the blankets, letting out a soft sigh. Yuuri clutches his own shirt, right over his heart, staring at him.

(He cannot be real.)

Victor shifts again.

Yuuri jumps back, then scrambles up to his own bed and pulls out his laptop, plugging in his earphones and turning on music. He casts Victor one last glance.

~

A few days later, Victor is in the science building, staring at the grade on his first physics assessment. (Fifteen.)

(And no, not fifteen out of sixteen, not even fifteen out of thirty.)

(Fifteen percent.)

“Wow, you must’ve tried to get that score. Even if you totally guessed, you should have at least gotten a twenty-five percent,” Mila tells him after she finds him on the bench.

Victor looks up at her. “Thanks.”

She pats his shoulder. “Not that… Not that you’re not… Well, science just isn’t for you. You’re good at other things. I’ll see you to study for Rom Lit later?”
He nods, then Mila walks away, leaving him on the white bench in the middle of the lobby, still staring at the red grade on the paper in front of him. Luckily, it’s just an introductory diagnostic, not a real assessment. However, the average grade had been a seventy-five, and the professor had said that she removed the highest and lowest scores as outliers.

Victor doesn’t have to wonder who had gotten the lowest score.

A class is let out upstairs, and Victor glances upwards towards the balcony as students pile out of the door. He catches sight of Yuuri, who is talking to two guys Victor hasn’t seen before as they head down the stairs together.

(It’s different, seeing him like this.)

(Because when he sees Yuuri in their dorm room, he’s shy yet friendly.)

But now, it’s as though he’s full of life, laughing at something his black-haired friend says and clutching his physics textbook to his chest. He’s saying something back—staring a story, maybe—and then catches sight of Victor from the stairs.

Victor pauses. For some reason he had forgotten that, yes, at some point, Yuuri would actually see him sitting there. And he feels sort of like the host of a nature documentary, as though he’d been observing Yuuri in his natural habitat.

He offers a wave.

Yuuri waves back.

Victor sees one of his friends lean over and ask him something, and he doesn’t need to imagine what it is. Yuuri answers, then glances at him again.

A pause.

(Victor hopes.)

He says something else to his friends, who keep walking.

(He hopes more.)

And then Yuuri is walking towards him.

Victor glances to his right, then his left, making sure that he can’t be misinterpreting this.

“Hi,” his roommate greets.

“Hello.”

Yuuri shifts his weight to the balls of his feet. “I’m guessing you’re here for your physics class?”

Victor glances down at his paper, considers hiding it. Instead, though, he takes a risk—takes his backpack and places it on the floor beside the bench, does the same with his skateboard. Then he moves to the left, and Yuuri seems to get the hint, sitting beside him. Victor shows him the paper.

Yuuri winces—physically winces. “That’s… Not good.”

“Nope.”
“What teacher do you have?”

“Baranovskaya.”

Yuuri smiles sympathetically. “She’s hard.”

Victor watches him. He’s starting to realize that, more than anything else, Yuuri is just interesting. His words, his actions—every subtle movement of his arm to the way he draws his eyebrows together when he’s concentrating on something, the way his lips part when his eyes meet Victor’s.

(He’s interesting in every sense of the word.)

“I’ll see you back at the dorm later?” Yuuri suggests. “And maybe I can help you before your next physics assessment. If you’d like.”

Ask him where he’s going, ask him where he’s going, a voice in Victor’s head begs. He doesn’t.

“That’d be great. See you later.”

(Coward.)

He watches as Yuuri walks away, and the boy casts him a final glance over his shoulder as he exits the building. Victor gives him a final wave—Yuuri waves back, and it makes Victor’s heart do a painful flutter, as though his body isn’t sure how to react when Yuuri gives him attention of any kind.

~

Later that day, when Victor enters their dorm room, Yuuri is there and offers him a shy smile. Victor smiles back, glad that they seem to be friends, or something close, at least. He sits up on his bed and takes out the failed physics diagnostic. He’s going to ask Yuuri a question. He has been thinking about it ever since he saw him in the science building.

(But the words don’t seem to want to leave his lips.)

(It’s as though breaking the silence between them would be some sort of crime.)

To his surprise, it’s Yuuri who speaks first.

“The number is not going to change no matter how hard you stare at it, you know.”

Victor glances at him, then back down at his paper, laughs a little. He must look like an idiot, sitting here holding his failed test in his hands. “I had a few questions for you.”


“Yes.”

He doesn’t look impressed.
Victor swings his legs over the edge of the bed, turns the paper around to show him the grade once again. “If you answer my questions, I promise to be open-minded about your oh-so-interesting major.”

Yuuri laughs and gets down from his bed. “Did you want to work at your desk?”

Victor shakes his head.

He pats the spot beside him on the bed. Yuuri gets the hint and climbs up to sit down next to him, just a few inches away. It occurs to Victor that this is the closest they’ve ever sat together before. But Yuuri doesn’t meet his eyes, instead just keeps his gaze glued to the paper in front of them. Which is fine. Professional, really.

“Okay, so this question is about pressure,” Yuuri starts, pointing at the first one he’d gotten wrong. Question number one. How embarrassing. “Calculate the least amount of pressure that the crate can exert on the ground.”

Victor turns his head, looks at him. Yuuri is doing that eyebrow thing again. It’s absolutely adorable. Ridiculously adorable. “You’re telling me that this interests you?”

Yuuri thinks for a second, then turns his head, too. “Did you know that the air pressing down on you right now weighs as much as a small car?”

“Yet I’m alive,” Victor points out. “But I’ll admit, you have my attention.”

“It’s not too complicated,” he promises. “Weight exerts pressure, and air has weight. Everything has weight, right?”

Victor shrugs. “Right. But it’s not like I feel it.”

“Your body is used to it, otherwise you’d be crushed.”

Yuuri begins explaining the math of the specific problem to him, and Victor listens intently at first, but then he makes the mistake of looking at Yuuri’s lips as he speaks. He seems to get more comfortable as he keeps talking, shifting slightly closer to Victor and pointing different things out on the papers in front of them. Whenever he stops and looks at Victor, Victor nods quickly, pretending to understand.

“Okay, so now you try,” Yuuri suggests.

(Oh.)

(Perhaps this will be a problem.)

Victor taps the end of his pencil against the paper. “Is the answer C?”

“Aren’t you going to write out the math?”

“Mental math,” he promises.

His roommate laughs, grabbing a folder off of Victor’s desk for him to write on. “Come on.”

Victor puts some numbers together. Writes slowly, waiting for Yuuri to stop him and tell him he’s wrong. But he doesn’t. Then, to his surprise, his answer is one of the options. “So it’s B?”

“Yes,” he says proudly. “See? Not so hard.”
“Are you full of fun physics facts?”

Yuuri laughs and picks up the pencil, turning it over with his fingers. “I think so. Are you full of fun language facts?”

“Definitely.”

He purses his lips. “Can I hear one?”

“One fact for each physics question you help me with,” Victor suggests.

“Hmm. They’ll have to be pretty interesting facts for that exchange rate.”

Victor sets down his paper on the pillow beside him and turns, knee brushing against Yuuri’s own. The boy’s eyes widen, posture stiffening just so, lips parting again as their gazes meet. “Do you know what linguistic relativity is?”

Yuuri’s breath is caught—he shakes his head.

He leans closer. “Well, you think in words, right? English?”

Once again, he doesn’t speak, just nods.

“But I’m guessing you’ve also thought in Japanese?”

Another nod.

Victor smiles softly, eyes glancing down to Yuuri’s hands, which are in his lap, fingers still clutching a pencil as though he’s not sure what to do with it. Victor reaches forward and takes it from him, then places it on the papers behind him. “Linguistic relativity says that the language that you think in changes the way you see the world.”

“Oh. That’s—that’s interesting.”

He sees Yuuri swallow, then sees his eyes dart down to the floor, jaw set. “There are two versions to it, though. Some people say that language completely determines the way one thinks, and others say that it simply influences it.”

Victor licks his lips, and Yuuri looks back up at him, eyes sparkling—with a glimmer of confusion, maybe? The boy exhales sharply, then inhales again.

He’s beautiful.

(Captivating, really.)

Victor’s knee brushes against Yuuri’s again.

And that’s when everything goes wrong.

(It takes Victor a moment to process Yuuri falling off of the bed and onto the floor below.)

(Takes another moment to process that that must’ve hurt.)

“Yuuri!” he calls, scrambling down and reaching towards him.

Yuuri pulls away. “Ow.”
“I’m sorry,” Victor blurts, though he’s not sure if he’d done anything, or what had just happened in general. “Are you okay? Do you want me to call someone? Or take you to the clinic?”

His entire face is red, and the tips of his ears are tinted, too. Yuuri scrambles to his feet. “S-Sorry, I’ve… I’ve, um, I’ve actually gotta get going. We can finish the physics problems later, okay?”

(Then he leaves.)

Victor stares at the still-open door, then down at the carpet where Yuuri had just been standing. And this is… He’d just…

Had Victor just made his roommate hate him again?

What had gone wrong?

~

Yuuri hides in the small kitchen on their floor.

It’s unoccupied, cramped, has one small, square table, a refrigerator, a stove, a sink, and not much else. He sits down at the table, buries his face in his hands and considers calling Phichit, because that’s normally his first instinct when he does something horribly embarrassing like falling off of a bed in front of Victor Nikiforov.

He pulls out his phone, but instead of calling Phichit he ends up just scrolling through social media, absent-mindedly liking photos as his thoughts race, as his heart beats. Does Victor think he’s an idiot, or just a weirdo?

(But it’s not like it matters.)

(Because at the end of the week they’ll probably never speak to each other again.)

He remembers so many days of walking around campus with Phichit, seeing Victor smiling and talking to his fellow fraternity members or his little brother. Remembers sitting underneath the trees outside Stammi Vicino, watching Victor and averting his gaze the moment he was close to turning around.

Things would go back to that.

(Or perhaps not, because before, if Victor had caught him staring, it wouldn’t have meant much. After all, practically ninety percent of the campus is attracted to him. But now it’s different.)

He worries his lower lip as he checks the time. It’s a Wednesday, and he has his figure skating club meeting in an hour. Which means he’ll have to enter the dorm room to retrieve his skates and to change his clothes, which means he has to face Victor again. He wonders, if he were to act as though nothing had happened, if Victor would bring it up at all.

So, after thirty minutes have passed, he leaves the kitchen, heads back into the hallway. Mila and Sara have their door wide open, and Sara waves at him. “Ready for skating?”

Yuuri smiles back and nods. “Yeah, I just have to get my things.”
“Hello,” Victor greets when Yuuri opens the door, looking at him with an observant expression, as though waiting to see what he’ll do.

“Hi.”

Yuuri grabs some clothes, changes in the bathroom, then tosses his skates into his duffel bag. “Figure skating?” Victor questions.

He nods.

“I used to skate,” he points out.

“Really?” Yuuri asks, surprised, because Victor Nikiforov certainly doesn’t seem like the type of person who would be seen on the ice. Although, on second thought, the image sort of suits him in a weird way.

Victor climbs down from his bed and shoves his hands into his jean pockets, keeping his distance. “When I was younger, I loved it.”

Yuuri tries to imagine it. “I always wanted to be a competitive figure skater, but it never happened.”

“You still could,” Victor says.

“You haven’t even seen me skate.”

Victor glances out the door, sees Mila and waves at her. “I’m sure you’re good, though. Maybe I’ll go to a meeting sometime.”

(Tonight?)

There’s a pause, the word heavy on his tongue, begging to be spoken. “That’d be cool. Anyway, I’ll see you later?” he says instead.

“See you.”

~

Victor spends the evening with Chris, then sits around the dorm room for a while, eyes darting straight to the door when he hears the turn of a key. He smiles brightly at Yuuri, who smiles back at him, a faint blush visible on his cheeks even in the dark. “How was practice?” he asks.

He looks tired—hair sticking to his forehead with sweat and his feet dragging behind him just slightly. “Good,” Yuuri answers, placing his room key on his desk before heading into the bathroom.

Yuuri sings in the shower.

(It’s quiet, very, very quiet, but he does.)

The words are in Japanese, but sometimes it just turns to humming, and Victor almost feels like it’s an invasion of privacy just to listen. He can’t focus on the reading assignment for Roman Lit in front of him, so instead he just shuts his eyes and listens to the sound of water and Yuuri’s voice.
When Yuuri comes out, his hair is still dripping a little, and he’s wearing black pajama pants and a blue shirt. Victor almost comments on the singing—almost—but then it dawns on him that if he does, Yuuri might never do it again. So instead he just reclines on the bed, watching in his peripheral vision as Yuuri pulls out his laptop and plugs in his earphones.

A nightly routine, Victor supposes.

He still wants to know what Yuuri does on there.

Not that he assumes it’s anything suspicious—no, the curiosity derives more from his hunger to know every last thing he can about his roommate, to obtain every morsel of knowledge he can get his greedy hands on.

And he can’t really help wanting to talk to him.

Can’t help wanting him to put that laptop away and sit beside him on the bed again, talking about physics and languages and whatever Yuuri would like, because Victor is starting to think that he could be entertained listening to him read from a phone book.

But Yuuri seems happy on his laptop, and Victor is starting to get the idea that maybe this is how he unwinds, so Victor contents himself to returning to his book. They’re reading an annotated version of the Iliad, and though it’s interesting, it’s not particularly mind-blowing. He had read most of Homer’s works in Latin classes years ago.

He lasts ten minutes.

Then he turns on his side, faces Yuuri.

“Yuuri?”

Yuuri doesn’t hear him, is subtly nodding his head to the music. It must be loud. Victor stares for a second, considers going back to his book, but then climbs down from his bed and grabs a blank sheet of paper. He gets back on the bed and tears off the corner, turning it into a small ball and flicking it at him.

It misses. He tries again, and this time it hits him in the chest, and Yuuri blinks, confused. Victor grins as the boy pulls an earphone out of his ear, slowly realizing what had just happened before tossing it back at him, laughing. “What was that for?”

“You must play your music loud,” Victor notes.

Yuuri shrugs, taps the space bar on his laptop. To pause it, probably. “Not too loud.”

He tosses the paper ball back at Yuuri, and it quickly turns into a game. That is, until Yuuri throws it again and it falls on the floor between their beds. Victor rips off another corner and starts it up again. At some point, Yuuri shuts his laptop, grabs a new sheet of paper and begins folding it on his lap.

“What are you doing?” Victor asks, still tossing paper balls at him.

Yuuri laughs when one hits him on his cheek. “You’ll see.” He grabs a pencil and scribbles something before continuing his folding.

A minute later, there’s a perfectly crafted paper airplane in his hands. He throws it towards Victor, and it soars smoothly in the air, landing on his bedsheets. Victor picks it up, admiring it. “Perks of being a physics major?”
“Perks of being friends with Phichit,” Yuuri corrects. “Last year, our room was filled with hundreds of these things. We’d write messages to each other.”

That reminds Victor that Yuuri had written something on this one, so he unfolds it, careful to keep it intact. “Bonjour,” Victor reads aloud.

Yuuri shrugs. “I only know, like, five words in French so far. My options are limited.”

“That’ll change,” he promises. “After living with me you’ll be a proper language buff.”

Except…

He’s not living with Yuuri after this week, is he?

Because he’ll be living with Chris, and Yuuri will be living Phichit.

Which is good.

(Right?)

Yuuri seems to realize this, too, giving a laugh that’s cut short, that doesn’t reach his eyes the way it normally does.

Victor folds the paper airplane, putting it back together a bit messier than it had been before. After sending it back over to Yuuri, Yuuri places it on his pillow. Victor yawns. “Tell me about how the airplane works.”

“About how it works?”

He shrugs, laying down on top of the covers. “You know—aerodynamics.”

Yuuri looks impressed. “That’s a big word.”

“Is that your subtle way of calling me stupid?”

“You could call me stupid in ten different languages, so no,” Yuuri responds, then folds his arms across his chest. “You want me to explain the physics of a paper plane to you so that you can fall asleep?”

Victor grins. “If it works, it works.”

There’s a sigh from the other side of the room, but he’s smiling, too, Victor notes with glee. “Well, there’s four main forces, I guess. The thrust, the aerodynamic lift, gravity, and then air drag.”

A pause.

“I’m not asleep yet,” Victor reminds him.

He listens as Yuuri becomes lost in his lecture, going on about a bunch of specific terms that Victor has heard of before but knows nothing about. It turns out that it doesn’t put him to sleep—in fact, it sort of does the exact opposite. He’s entranced by watching his lips move, enthralled by his hand motions, enchanted by how he’ll occasionally reach up to adjust the glasses that aren’t there.

Then Yuuri stops, peeks at him, as though he’d forgotten that he was there at some point. “You’re still awake?”
“It’s unexpectedly interesting,” Victor teases, and Yuuri blushes, ducking his head.

“I don’t know if I should be offended or flattered,” he mumbles.

Victor is tired, though. He’s not sure how Yuuri can attend classes and a figure skating practice and then manage to stay up past unknown times. Besides, Victor hasn’t even seen him drink caffeine. Yuuri pulls his laptop back onto his lap, but Victor notes that he doesn’t touch his earphones.

“Internet?” Victor guesses.

Yuuri laughs. “Yeah. It’s funny, there aren’t that many search results for ‘how to get a smarter roommate.’”

“Hmm. Try ‘what to do about a rude roommate.’”

Yuuri does a laugh—and it’s that stupid giggle again that is making Victor lose his mind—and smiles softly at him. Victor smiles back, wonders if it would be possible to do anything else, and yawns again. He rolls onto his other side. “Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

~

“Geometry is stupid,” Yurio announces at Stammi Vicino a few days later.

Mila takes his paper—he growls and tries to grab it back—and glances it over from top to bottom. “This is easy. I’ll help you.” She moves to sit next to Yurio, who grumbles but lets her begin explaining something about complementary angles.

Victor folds his arms across his chest, tilting back his chair and scanning the bookshelves. Christophe is sitting to his left, working on something, and Sara is sitting beside Yurio, earphones plugged in as she types something on her laptop.

And then he hears a familiar voice.

He glances up to see Yuuri and Phichit walking down the aisles of bookshelves, Phichit wearing a familiar scarf—they share clothes?—and Yuuri wearing a puffy coat. Victor watches them, wonders if he should go over there.

It’s Phichit who sees them first, nudging Yuuri on the shoulder and waving to them. Yuuri smiles, waving as well, and Victor’s group waves back. They whisper to one another, then they’re heading towards the table. “Can we sit?” Phichit asks.

As they sit down, Yurio looks up from his geometry, scanning both of them. “Who are you?”

“Phichit,” Phichit introduces himself.

“I’m Yuuri.”

“Yuuri?” Yurio blurts, glancing at Victor, jaw dropping.

(Oh. Right.)
He leans forward, both hands flat on the table. “My name is Yuri, too, you know.”

Yuuri swallows—Victor kicks his brother in the shin. “Um, I didn’t know that. That’s cool.”

“We call him Yurio,” Victor adds, ruffling his hair. Yurio gives him a glare that could move mountains. Mila giggles.

“And what’s your major?” Yurio interrogates.

Yuuri glances at Phichit. “We’re both physics majors.”

“He’s taking physics this year in high school,” Victor points out, eager to lessen the tension.

Yurio rolls his eyes. “I hate that class. We have to make a car that goes a certain distance when a mousetrap snaps. Like, what is the point of that? Absolutely nothing.”

“We could help you,” Yuuri offers.

Phichit agrees politely.

His eyes narrow. “Yeah, we’ll see.”

A silence settles across the table, companionable with a hint of awkwardness.

“Oh, I actually had a French question, Victor,” Yuuri says, reaching for his backpack, which he’d set on the floor beside his chair. “Um, if you don’t mind.”

(Victor isn’t sure it’s possible to mind less than he does.)

(Which doesn’t make much sense.)

(But he doesn’t care.)

(Because Yuuri has a question for him.)

(For him.)

Then he realizes he still hasn’t answered. “No, I don’t mind.”

Yuuri smiles shyly and opens his folder, producing a set of handwritten notes, handing them across the table. And even his school notes are adorable, which is ridiculous, but there are little illustrations along the side and he’d used at least four different colored pens to highlight important words. Victor takes a moment to admire them, flipping through them. He doesn’t write on the back of the lined paper—only the front.

Then, he stands and moves around the table, pushing an empty seat beside Yuuri closer to him before sitting in it. “Your question?”

Yuuri asks him something about the gender of nouns, then watches him expectantly as he explains on autopilot. He’d learned French just before high school—it comes almost as naturally as English at this point. But one question quickly turns into another, and then another, and then Victor has Yuuri’s notes sprawled across the table in front of them. Yuuri’s hand accidentally brushes against his when they both reach for the pencil, and he sees his cheeks flush pink, head automatically ducking as he pulls his hand away.

And it’s…
He’s…

“Thanks for helping me,” Yuuri tells him, and no—this is wrong, because Victor should be thanking him, obviously.

Victor just nods, wonders what he could say that would encourage Yuuri to ask him for help at any time of the day for anything whatsoever. “No problem.”

Over time, Victor has come to realize how rarely Yuuri holds eye contact, how often his eyes will dart away after just a few seconds. This time, though, they stay, and the boy licks his lips unconsciously. Victor remembers telling Yurio about the possible gold specks in Yuuri’s irises, but he hadn’t been able to tell if he was imagining them on the night he’d hit him on his skateboard. Now, though…

(He does. Just barely noticeable.)

Yuuri’s gaze is torn away when he looks at Phichit. He backs up a little, looking surprised by something. When Victor turns around, Phichit is smiling innocently, head turned down towards a book. He glances back at Yuuri, slightly confused, but he’s just putting his French notes back into his folder. Then Victor notices that Christophe is looking at him, an eyebrow raised.

Odd.

“Somebody buy me a sandwich,” Yurio suggests, breaking the moment. “Geometry makes me hungry.”

~

A day later, Yuuri is alone in the room when there’s a knock on the door.

“I wanted to talk to you,” Phichit says after glancing around. “I’m glad Victor isn’t here.”

Yuuri lets him inside and Phichit sits beside him on his bed, phone on his lap. “What did you want to talk to me about?”

Phichit purses his lips. “Christophe and I have been talking…”

There’s a pause before Phichit continues.

“…We think that we should stay roommates, and that you should stay roommates with Victor.”

Yuuri is…

Well, he’s confused, mostly.

Because the plan the entire time, the entire summer, had been that he would room with Phichit again. Because he and Phichit are good roommates, are best friends. So it stings. Aches, actually. Did Phichit not enjoy rooming with him? Does Phichit prefer Christophe? Did Yuuri make him mad in some way? Is—

“Yuuri, don’t freak out,” Phichit assures him quickly. “And don’t misinterpret. It’s just, we were both talking about how you and Victor were acting in the library yesterday.”
He frowns. “How we were acting? What do you mean?”

“Sort of like, if there hadn’t been other people there, you wouldn’t have been studying French.”

Yuuri doesn’t understand. Phichit clears his throat.

“Oh,” Yuuri realizes slowly. “No, no, no, Phichit, it’s nothing like that. He’s just, um… He’s not what I expected.”

“Not what you expected how?”

He shrugs. “I thought… I always thought that he was your typical popular guy type, but he’s different. He’s actually nice. I mean, I guess before I just had a crush on him because of his…” His voice trails off, he makes a vague hand gesture that he hopes Phichit will interpret correctly.

“That’s why you two should be roommates,” Phichit promises. “Besides, we still see each other all the time. And Christophe agrees one-hundred percent.”

Yuuri has to admit that the idea of being Victor’s roommate for the rest of the school year is tempting. He has enjoyed their talks so far, likes the way that Victor lets him talk about physics and doesn’t look bored—though he may say he’s bored, his eyes always light up and Yuuri has noticed that he’s hanging off of his every word. He likes teasing him, likes Victor teasing him back, and, if he’s being honest, it’s not bad having a live-in French tutor. And it certainly won’t be bad when exams come around.

But there’s an issue.

Because though Victor might be nice, it doesn’t change the fact that he’s part of a fraternity. Doesn’t change the fact that he’s a partier, that he probably has more girls and guys swooning over him on campus than Yuuri could count. Doesn’t change the fact that half of the posts on Yik Yak have his name in them. Doesn’t change the fact that, really, they’re not compatible. That Victor is probably just a nice guy trying to make the best of his situation, ready to move out and live with Christophe as soon as he can.

(If only Yuuri could know for sure whether or not Victor would want to live with him.)

(If only he could read Victor’s mind.)

~

“You stay with Yuuri, I stay with Phichit,” Christophe suggests.

“Deal,” Victor answers, not looking up.

~

“Did you hear that Christophe and Phichit are thinking about staying roommates?” Victor says to Yuuri later that day, trying to keep the topic light, casual. Wants to know what Yuuri thinks about it.
Because if he wants to live with Phichit, that’s perfectly understandable, and Victor will respect his wishes, but it would also break his heart and tear him to shreds and he just really, really wants to stay roommates with Yuuri. Badly. Very badly. Pathetically badly.

“I did,” Yuuri says, looking unsure. “I… I’m okay with it if you are.”

“I’m okay with it,” Victor replies breathlessly, probably a little too quickly.

How had he gotten this lucky?

He remembers the woman at the counter, the woman who had given him and Christophe their separate room keys. Thanks her mentally. Thanks Yakov for his interdisciplinary policy, which is still stupid, from an objective standpoint, but Victor loves it now.

And he smiles.

(It’s too big, too ridiculous, probably going to confuse Yuuri, but then—somehow, by some miracle—Yuuri is smiling too, and it’s just as big, and he’s laughing a little, but it’s that cute laugh that sounds more like a giggle than a real laugh and just when Victor thinks it’s possible not to adore him more he does something like this.)

(And it’s overwhelming.)

Then Yuuri’s smile fades. Just as quickly as it had grown. “Thing is, though, we’re going to need to set a few ground rules.”

Victor freezes, puzzled. “Like what?”

“Well, I just think we should stick to our boundaries. Like, this is my half of the room, and that’s your half. We can divide the bathroom, too. The counter space, at least. We could even take some chalk and draw white lines, just so that we’re on the same page.”

Victor starts—then stops. “Wait, are you…”

He covers his mouth with his hand to try and keep the act going, but fails miserably. “Joke.”

“You scared me,” Victor sighs. “If you’re not careful this will turn into a boy-who-cried-wolf situation. I won’t take you seriously ever again.”

Yuuri is still smiling—proud of himself, probably—and Victor stands, approaching Yuuri’s desk. He’d noticed the picture frames on it before. One contains a photo of Yuuri with everyone from the figure skating club, Phichit and him in the front of the shot, and he supposes the photo beside it is of his family. But then there’s a third, of him with a young woman.

“This is your family?” he asks, pointing at the second frame.

Yuuri is up on his bed, can’t see it, but nods anyway. “The one in the middle is.”

Victor glances at the woman again. “And who’s this on the end?”

“Oh, Yuuko, a childhood friend from back home.”

(A childhood friend?)

(But just a friend, right?)
He wants to ask, but some part of his mind thinks better of it, and instead he just picks up the photo of Yuuri with his family. “You have a sister?”

“Mari,” he provides.

“And a dog?”

There’s no response.

Victor backs away to look at him. “He looks like my dog,” he points out.

Yuuri is nibbling on his lip, eyes cast towards his laptop. “That’s Vicchan. He died a year ago, now. It’s an old photo.”

Now that he says that, Victor can tell. Yuuri looks slightly younger, and his mother has an arm wrapped around him, his sister giving a coy grin. He isn’t sure what to say. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Yuuri answers.

Victor puts the photo frame back down, then, spontaneously, climbs up onto Yuuri’s bed. Without a word, but with a slightly surprised expression, Yuuri shifts to the side. Victor doesn’t say anything, and neither does Yuuri, both of them just sitting in a comfortable silence. His mind is brought back to the last time they’d sat on a bed together, to Yuuri falling to the floor and then scrambling out of the room at a thousand miles per hour.

“Makkachin,” Victor says quietly, unsure if he’s allowed to broach this topic, unsure if Yuuri minds.

Yuuri glances at him. “What?”

“That’s… That’s the name of my dog. He lives in Yakov’s house.”

There’s a smile tugging on Yuuri’s lips, then, and it warms Victor’s heart. “I think I’ve seen him around campus.”

“Probably,” Victor muses. “He likes laying down on the grass in the quad. He doesn’t need a leash—he’s well trained—so he can roam around that part of the campus as much as he likes as long as somebody is with him.” Victor nudges his shoulder. “I’ll take you to meet him sometime.”

Yuuri meets his eyes. “You would?”

“Sure. He’d love you. Though, he kind of loves everyone.”

“I’d like that,” Yuuri muses, then nudges his shoulder back.

Victor chuckles. “Don’t fall off of the bed again.”

He wonders if Yuuri will be offended, but instead he just shoves Victor slightly harder. “Shut up.”

“Make me,” Victor threatens.

Yuuri stares for a second, as though considering what to do, then clamps a hand over Victor’s mouth. Victor, being the mature college student he is, licks it. “Hey!” Yuuri yells, pulling his hand away and wiping it on his jeans. “That’s gross.”

“You were asking for it,” he protests, grinning.
He pushes Victor’s shoulder. “Now move so I can get down and wash my hands.”

“What, you don’t think I’m sanitary?” Victor pouts. “Besides, you can climb over me.” He leans back against the wall, raising his eyebrows in a challenge.

“I am not climbing over you.”

Victor shrugs. “Guess you’re stuck here, then.”

“Victor,” Yuuri complains.

He sighs, defeated, and moves his legs. Yuuri shifts past him and then gets down from the bed, heading into the bathroom and washing his hands. “Don’t forget to sing the ABCs twice,” Victor calls.

“I might have to talk to Phichit and Christophe about switching roommates after all.”

“Joke?” Victor asks.

“You can decide.”

“I’m going to decide that that’s a joke.”
On Friday morning, Victor plans on taking Makkachin to the quad to meet Yurio. It’s a teacher work day at his high school, and they’d made the plans early yesterday afternoon.

Except…

Yuuri is sleeping. It’s ten in the morning, and he’s sleeping, and Yuuri doesn’t have class on Fridays, Victor is pretty sure, so that’s fine. Figure skating club meets on Fridays, but that’s not until later. Victor isn’t sure why he’s standing awkwardly in the middle of their dorm room, staring out of the window instead of leaving, until it occurs to him that he wants to invite Yuuri. Wants to introduce him to Makkachin, wants to spend time with him, wants to sit on the quad with him.

Then he hears a noise, and he glances over at Yuuri’s bed to see the boy turning over to face him, eyes gently shut and the sunlight brushing over his features and hair, making it glimmer. Then another noise.

Oh, so he talks in his sleep.

Perhaps Yuuri is *unconsciously* trying to tear him to pieces.

(Because, consciously, he seems like too kind of a person to do that, doesn’t he? He’s friendly and kind and wonderful, so he wouldn’t try to ruin Victor’s life. But then there are the little mannerisms, the way he touches his hair or moves his lips or *talks in his sleep*, for crying out loud, and that’s when Victor starts to doubt his angelic nature. But maybe it’s unconscious. That would certainly explain a lot.)

Either way, Victor shifts his weight from one foot to the other, assessing his options.

He could leave or he could wake Yuuri up and possibly regret it, because Yuuri certainly doesn’t seem like a morning person. Or he could wait, which would upset Yurio, but would be worth it.
Ultimately, he decides to wait for fifteen minutes. If Yuuri isn’t awake in fifteen minutes, he’ll leave.

Except he’s still talking in his sleep, and Victor sits down in his desk chair, looking at a page in his Thai textbook. His eyes scan the words but none actually manage to weave their way into his mind, and he’s stuck repeating the same paragraph of the text they’re reading over and over again. He had already taken a shower, and his hair is still slightly damp, so he runs his fingers through it, attempting to make it look half decent.

Then he hears a yawn and turns around, glancing over his shoulder. It appears that Yuuri isn’t quite awake, but is in the midst of waking, his body shifting as he rolls onto his back, one of his arms slowly stretching out, eyes still shut. Long, dark eyelashes contrast against his pale skin, tongue darting out to wet his lips and his other hand reaching up in an attempt to brush the sleep away from his eyes.

“Good morning,” Victor greets, content to watch him.

Yuuri shifts again, rolling back onto his side, facing away from Victor this time. There’s a muffled noise which Victor assumes was supposed to be his greeting. Not exactly enthusiastic.

Victor glances at his phone, sees the three texts from Yurio about the dangers of abandoning a fifteen-year-old on a college campus. Then he looks back up at Yuuri, smiling as he watches the boy stretch out his arms again, above his head this time. There’s another mutter, one that sounds roughly like the word ‘time.’

“It’s ten,” he answers.

Yuuri groans.

“What time did you go to bed?”

Yuuri doesn’t answer, which is both concerning and expected. But he does reach absent-mindedly for the first rung of the ladder attached to his lofted bed, where his phone is sitting. He has an extra-long extension cable that reaches all the way from the outlet near the floor to the top of the ladder, an idea that Victor has, of course, teased him about endlessly.

Should he even bother asking Yuuri to come to the quad with him?

“But you want coffee?” Victor offers, because he’s not much of a coffee drinker himself, but he’d seen Mila and Sara use the machine in the kitchen plenty of times before.

“No, thanks. I just need…” His words trail off as he shuffles again, burying his face in the pillow.

Definitely not a morning person.

Victor rocks back on his heels, then grabs his shoes that are placed by the door and sits down on his desk chair again, putting them on. “Bye, Yuuri.”

There’s no response, so Victor just smiles affectionately at him before leaving.

He heads to Yakov’s house, first. Yakov isn’t home, but Victor opens the house with his spare key and grabs Makkachin’s leash, putting it on him just until they get to the quad. Then, he finds Yurio and smiles brightly at him, to which his little brother just gives him a scowl. “Sorry I’m late.”

“Where’s Bike Boy?” Yurio questions, glancing around, as though expecting Yuuri to appear at any given moment. “And is he the reason why you’re late?”
“Sleeping and yes, I was going to invite him, but he’s tired,” Victor answers regretfully, unclipping Makkachin’s leash and watching as his dog bounds across the grass, sniffing. A few students grin at him and pet him, and he practically drowns in the attention, laying down and rolling over onto his back.

A few students call Victor’s name and he waves at them—some he recognizes from classes and others he recognizes from events. Then, he turns back to Yurio. “We’re going to stay roommates. For the semester, at least, if not the year.”

Yurio looks as though he’s not sure how to feel about that. “I don’t like that he has my name.”

“He’s missing the ‘o,’” Victor points out, confused.

“You know my real name isn’t Yurio, right?”

Victor rubs the back of his neck. “Right. Anyway, how is sophomore year going?”

Yuuri is dragged out of bed by Phichit.

(Literally.)

“Get dressed, Katsuki,” Phichit says, going through his dresser tucked away in the corner of the room and grabbing some clothes before promptly throwing them at him. Yuuri catches them, just barely, and blinks sleepily. “Come on, get a move on, I’m starved and I know you are, too.”

He yawns but obeys, heading into the bathroom and changing into a white sweatshirt and jeans. When he comes back out, Phichit has already taken his arm, leading him out of the door. “You awake yet?”

“Sort of,” Yuuri answers. He has to admit he is hungry. Last year, Phichit had consistently made sure that he never skipped a meal. Yuuri figures that just because they’re not rooming together won’t stop him from doing that this year, too—and for that he’s thankful.

They grab food and then head to the quad to eat.

The quad is a sizable field with towering brick buildings surrounding three sides of it. On the open end, in the distance, there’s a perfect view of the Stammı Vicino Library, including its golden bell tower. There’s a fountain on a small pavilion in the middle of the field with paths sprawling out from it in all cardinal directions.

There’s a common, unsubstantiated rumor on campus that states that if two people are sitting on the edge of the fountain together when the bells toll, they’re destined to marry when they graduate. It’s stupid and childish, though it’s still rare to see people sitting there unless they’re a couple or planning on moving before the next hour strikes.

Yuuri moans in response to the first bite of his sandwich. “I’m starving,” he realizes.

Phichit nods, unwrapping his own and beginning to devour it as well, when a brown poodle runs over to them, wagging his tail. Phichit smiles and pats him on the head. “You’re Makkachin, aren’t
you? Mr. Feltsman’s dog?”

Yuuri stares at the dog, initial sadness at the remembrance of Vicchan quickly turning into joy when the dog turns to him, looking up at him with shiny black eyes. A smile breaks out on Yuuri’s face and he scratches Makkachin affectionately, then glances around—and, yes, sure enough…

There’s Victor, sitting in the grass with his brother, a few girls standing and talking to him, clutching their books. He hasn’t seen Yuuri yet, and Yuuri’s smile only grows, ducking his head in hopes that Phichit won’t notice his reaction.

(Phichit does.)

“Go say hi,” Phichit encourages before taking another bite.

Yuuri shrugs. “It looks like he’s busy.” Makkachin rubs his face against Yuuri’s leg and he laughs, getting off of the chair and onto his knees, scratching him behind the ear.

“Yuuri, he sees you,” a whisper from his left says.

He looks at Phichit, then turns around towards Victor, and Victor is looking at him, getting to his feet and walking unmistakably in their direction, away from those whom he’d been talking to, and away from his little brother, who’s eyeing Yuuri suspiciously. “You met Makkachin,” Victor points out happily when he’s close enough.

Makkachin looks at his owner but continues sitting against Yuuri’s leg and tapping his foot as Yuuri gives him attention. “He’s adorable,” Yuuri points out, then shoots Victor a teasing look. “Are there rules against keeping him in our dorm room?”

“I’ve snuck him into my room for three years,” Victor says, winking, and Yuuri feels his cheeks heating, and it’s ridiculous, that Victor can do something so simple, can have so much power over him, and yet…

Phichit grins. “You should have your father put in a special policy.”

Victor shrugs. “Not a bad idea. I’ll bring that up with him.” He bends down and pets Makkachin on the head, fingers brushing against Yuuri’s, their eyes meeting. The touch is magnetic, somehow—everything in Yuuri’s mind tells him to pull away. It’s as though his body is protesting, staying as close to Victor as possible, as close as he’s allowed.

Then Yuuri’s eyes drift back to Yurio, to the people who had been standing around Victor. One girl is watching them, and he averts his gaze immediately, looking back at Makkachin and pulling his hand away. The dog whines at him, rubbing his cheek against his calf until Yuuri continues the adoration.


Yuuri laughs, imagining how spoiled Makkachin must’ve become with an entire campus-full of people to cater to his whims every day. “So was Vicchan.”

“Do you want to come eat with us?” Phichit suggests.

Victor smiles softly. “Sure. Can Yurio come?”

Phichit nods, then Victor turns around, walking back towards his brother. Makkachin follows him loyally. Yuuri stares at Phichit, wide-eyed. “I can’t believe you just asked him that.”
“I know you wanted to,” Phichit points out.

“Well, yes, but you just actually invited Victor Nikiforov to eat lunch with us.”

Phichit takes another bite of his sandwich, his mouth full. “Yuuri, uf gotta rember…”

“What?”

He swallows.

“You’ve got to remember, he’s the same guy you’re rooming with. There aren’t two different Victors.”

(But there are.)

(In their dorm room, when they’re alone, Victor is a thousand times less intimidating. He’s down to Earth—at least, sort of—and kind, charismatic. But here? Now he’s surrounded by hundreds of people who know his name, who will be wondering why he’s sitting here eating lunch with Katsuki Yuuri. It’s different. Undeniably different.)

Yuuri adjusts his posture uncomfortably. “I guess you’re right.”

A minute later, Victor and Yurio are sitting with them, Victor’s other friends seeming to have gone off. Victor sits next to Yuuri, and Yurio next to Phichit. The blond gives them both odd looks. Then Victor clears his throat, giving his brother a look. “Yurio was wondering if one of you would help him with his mousetrap car project on Sunday.”

“Of course,” Yuuri says, smiling. Phichit nods as well.

Yurio looks annoyed at Victor for asking. “I just need an A so I can get a decent grade in the class. Otherwise I wouldn’t care.”

“Noted,” Phichit adds.

Makkachin lays beside them, sprawled across the grass, head resting on a paw. When Yuuri is done eating, he gets up and pets him, smiling as the dog stands up to pounce on him, pushing him downwards with his front paws so that he’s flat on the ground. Victor stands. “Makka, be nice.”

Yuuri laughs as his face is covered in sloppy kisses, attempting to turn away. “It’s okay,” he assures Victor, fingers weaving through the dog’s hair. He really does look just like Vicchan. It warms his heart, brings back the good memories and not the sad—Vicchan curled up on his bed, Vicchan licking away his salty tears after a long day.

He strains his neck to watch as Victor approaches a tree then bends down, picking something up. Suddenly, though, Makkachin has stopped his desperate attempt to kiss Yuuri on the lips, watches Victor’s hands instead. He’s holding a stick.

Victor throws it, and the dog sprints away. Yuuri is finally able to sit up and then get to his feet, watching with adoration as Makkachin picks up the stick with his mouth, proud of himself. He drops it at Yuuri’s feet and he throws it again across the quad. “He loves this,” Victor says, hands in his pockets. “It’s his favorite thing to do.”

~

A while later, they’re sitting on the grass, Makkachin with his head on Yuuri’s lap and two paws on
his thigh. Victor isn't surprised that Makkachin likes him, though he has to admit he’s slightly jealous of his own dog for getting closer to Yuuri in an hour than Victor had managed in a little under two weeks.

Phichit and Yurio are already talking about plans for the mousetrap car, and Yuuri notes with amusement that Yurio does seem interested, even if he’s focusing half of his energy on trying to appear not to be.

“So what are your plans for the weekend, Yuuri?” Victor asks, laying down, arms bent and head resting on his palms. He turns his head towards him, silver hair reflecting the sunlight and bouncing off of his blue irises.

He shrugs. “I don’t know, nothing really.”

“Ah. The correct answer was tutoring me in physics.”

Yuuri laughs and shifts, careful to keep Makkachin where he is and not disrupt him. “Aren’t you going to try and sell me on that idea?”

Victor hums. “You’re right. How about this? If you spend your weekend teaching me, I’ll bring Makkachin to stay with us.”

“Okay. I’m sold,” Yuuri answers, running his hand down the dog’s back.

~

Victor has a fraternity meeting on Saturday at noon. Yuuri is still asleep.

He rolls out of bed and makes his way to the quad, their usual meeting spot, hand raking through his hair to try and make some sense out of it. Christophe waves at him, and he takes a seat at a table between JJ and Michele, who Victor remembers is Sara’s twin brother. They begin discussing plans for their upcoming Halloween Party, which is a yearly tradition on campus.

“We need to do something different this year,” JJ is saying, examining his fingernails. “Last year was boring.”

Somebody suggests a haunted forest theme.

There’s unanimous agreement. Last year, they’d transformed an entire building into a haunted house, but the house had appeared less haunted and more pathetic after they’d decorated it. A forest, though—that’s doable. There’s one right beside campus, down a hill with a small clearing that they reason would work perfectly.

Then they decide on the judges of the costume contest, and Christophe and Georgi are immediately selected. They grin at one another, already talking over plans for their rubric and what the prizes will be. Victor enjoys the fraternity meetings—and the events, of course—but he can’t help the fact that his thoughts stray back to Yuuri.

Would he go to the Halloween party?

It’s still over a month away, sure, but there’s no reason not to plan early. And Yuuri doesn’t seem
like the wild party-type, but then…

“What are you thinking about?” JJ asks him.

Victor blinks at him, dazed. “Nobody.”

JJ laughs, too long and too loud. “Nobody? Who’s the lucky guy, Victor? Don’t think I haven’t seen the rumors on Yik Yak.”

“On Yik Yak?” he asks, confused.

The fraternity members go silent, a few giving him sheepish smiles. He pulls out his phone, has to search for the rarely-used app, then clicks on it. Scrolls down for a while, sees the posts from the previous day.

V. Nikiforov’s thighs spotted at the quad this morning.

(1d) (2 replies)

He’s with a guy. o.o

Is Victor no longer single? I may as well drop out then tbh

makkachin is here too!!!

(1d)

who’s the guy

(1d) (2 replies)

they’re roommates

Isn’t he rooming w/ chris this year???

Victor glances over the comments, then looks up at JJ. “People have been posting about us? When did this start?”

“You know how people are,” he replies, offering a halfhearted shrug. “I’m just curious. Who is he?”

“My roommate,” Victor answers tersely.

JJ leans back in his chair. “You should take him to the party.”

“Well, I’ll invite him,” he says, because even if he doesn’t ask Yuuri to go with him specifically he’d invite him. It’d be rude not to. Plus, it’s not as though it’s some sort of exclusive event. Invitations are really just a façade.

A second later, the spotlight is off of him and instead on the specific location, timing, invitees, food.
Later that day, Victor enters the dorm room, where Yuuri is sitting at his desk, phone in his hands and earbuds in his ears, turned away from him. Apparently, he hadn’t heard the door open, so Victor ceases the opportunity, shutting it as quietly as possible and sneaking up behind him. He grabs Yuuri’s shoulders and Yuuri jumps violently, turning around and hitting him in the chest with the back of the chair.

“Got you,” Victor laughs, ignoring the pain in his torso and taking a step back.

Yuuri’s face is pale, breaths heavy, eyes wide but his posture relaxing when he realizes there’s no true threat. In one swift motion, he pulls his earbuds out of his ears. “Never, never do that again.”

“Oh, Yuuri, you’re adorable when you’re scared,” Victor drawls.

His roommate stands up, looking indecisive about what to do and ultimately deciding to push Victor—a weak shove. “And you’re… You’re…”

He cocks his head to the side. “I’m?”

“Annoying,” Yuuri decides.

Victor licks his lip, enjoying the proximity, Yuuri’s chest only a few inches away from his own, the boy’s head tilted up so that he can successfully meet Victor’s eyes. “Annoying? Just annoying?”

Yuuri swallows, unable to think of a comeback and faltering, breaking their stare and looking at the wall instead. “Other things, too, but I wouldn’t want to use profanity in front of you.”

“We’re both adults here,” Victor says, making playful banter.

His roommate sits back down on the desk chair, looking back down at his phone.

Oh.

(Perhaps this had been less playful than he’d thought.)

Victor shifts closer to him. “Yuuri, I’m sorry. I won’t scare you again.”

“It’s fine,” Yuuri mutters, lips pursed, the words terse.

_Ouch._

There’s a swirl of guilt and pain settling in his chest—he’d taken this teasing too far, obviously. Hurt Yuuri’s feelings. And now his eyes are downcast, there’s a tint to them, like he’s distraught but trying to cover it up. Victor should’ve been more careful, should’ve thought this through more, should’ve considered that—

Yuuri shouts as he grabs Victor’s sides with his hands, successfully startling him, Victor’s back hitting the wall behind him hard in his surprise. “Got you,” Yuuri says, a challenge in his tone.

“Oh, you little…” Victor starts, exhaling with relief and fear.
Yuuri smiles innocently, locking his phone and putting it into his pocket. “What? No witty comeback?”

“I’ll get you back,” he vows. “You just won’t know when.”

“Yeah?” Yuuri taunts.

Victor steps forward and cups his face with a hand, drifts his thumb down Yuuri’s cheekbone. Yuuri holds his gaze confidently, but his pupils dilate just so, and Victor chuckles. “I’ll get you back just so that I can see that adorable, flustered expression again.”

“You won’t,” he promises.

“Won’t I?”

“Nope. But I’ll see yours.”

Victor stills his fingers. “Oh, Yuuri, you think I’m adorable?”

Yuuri falters, broken syllables escaping his lips.

“Got you,” Victor points out, pulling his hand away.

“Did not,” he argues lamely.

Victor heads over to his own desk and sits down. “Do you want to do something?”

There’s a pause as Yuuri spins his chair, pressing his heels down on the floor to stop the motion once he’s facing Victor. “Like what?”

Quite literally anything, Victor thinks. He’d be content spending the rest of his Saturday afternoon in this desk chair so long as Yuuri remains where he is. “We could watch a movie.”

“We don’t have a TV.”

Victor points at his laptop. “We have that.” They could, of course, go to Mila and Sara’s room and ask to use their TV, but if Victor is being honest he’d much rather watch something with Yuuri alone. It’s selfish, maybe, but he can’t bring himself to feel guilty.

They end up sitting on Victor’s bed, propping up his pillow so that they can both lean against it, the bed far too small for both of them to sit comfortably. Yuuri keeps the laptop on his lap, pulling up Netflix. “What movie?”

After a while of browsing, they pick one that neither of them have ever heard of before but that had an interesting title. Victor can’t ignore the barely-there space between their shoulders, the way that Yuuri occasionally fidgets, trying to get comfortable. Occasionally, he finds his own gaze drifting over to the other boy’s lips, hair, eyes, only to be caught in the act. He’ll glue his eyes back to the television screen, like a celibate priest, and swallow thickly.

(Rinse and repeat.)

“Are you single?” Victor blurts.

He’s not sure where the question comes from.

But he does want to know.
Yuuri doesn’t pause the movie, doesn’t even look at him. “Um, yes.”

A hesitation.

“Are… Are you?”

Victor is slightly surprised, glances at him. “Yes.”

“Okay. That’s cool.”

“Cool?” Victor questions.

Yuuri’s eyes are shifting from the television screen to the floor, as though trying to move as far away from Victor as possible without moving his actual body. “Just… I don’t know. Not cool like cool, it’s just… You know.”

(He doesn’t know, really.)

But he nods anyway, taking pity on him and glancing back at the movie. One of the characters is in a heated debate with another about some plot device that Victor couldn’t be bothered to pay attention to. “And are you gay?”

Yuuri sputters, coughs loudly, and Victor frowns, tapping the space bar to pause the movie. “What’s wrong?” Victor asks as Yuuri shuts his eyes, cheeks flushed pink.

“Nothing,” Yuuri hurries to say. “But does it…? Why do you…?”

Victor doesn’t understand. “I just figured that, as roommates, we should get to know each other. For the record, I am. But I understand if you don’t want to tell me. No problem there.”

Yuuri doesn’t say anything to that, just stares at the frozen frame on the laptop screen, head bowed. “Um…”

How can he make this less awkward? Appease the tension?

“How many people have you dated?” he asks quietly.

Victor frowns and trails off, because Yuuri looks horrified.

“Here, I’ll tell you about my exes,” Victor says. “I first dated a guy when I was fifteen, I think. Or was it sixteen? Well, either way, it didn’t last long. He took me into his room one day to show me his stamp collection. Then I dated another guy at seventeen, he was nice, but we… Yuuri?” Victor frowns and trails off, because Yuuri looks horrified.

“How many people have you dated?” he asks quietly.

Victor thinks for a moment. “I don’t know. Define ‘dated.’”

All he knows is he has never felt the same way about any of his previous boyfriends as he has felt about Katsuki Yuuri. Except maybe Boxers Boy, but that’s sort of an odd tale. In some ways, when Victor remembers that night, he almost feels as though he’s betraying the mysterious boy by crushing on Yuuri. Which is odd, because it wasn’t as though he’d had a proper introduction to him, or even remembers him clearly, but still.

Yuuri doesn’t answer him. Instead, he just looks at the screen again, and Victor gets the hint, resuming the movie.

~
“He asked you if you’re gay?” Phichit asks, then whistles. “Wow. He’s getting straight to the point.”

Yuuri groans, burying his face in his hands. “And then he started telling me about his ex-boyfriends.”

Phichit grins. “Juicy. How many has he had?”

“I don’t know. A lot, I think.”

“And you didn’t tell him that you like guys?” Phichit asks regretfully. “You should mention it in passing. Like, the next time all three of us are together, subtly compliment a guy’s looks to me and I’ll play along. Ohh, I bet that’d make him jealous, too. That’s a win-win.”

Yuuri smiles. “I don’t think he’d get jealous of me complimenting a guy.”

“I disagree completely. He’s \textit{definitely} the jealous type. He hogs you whenever you’re both around other people—haven’t you noticed? Like at the library that one time, I was awkwardly sitting off to the side while you two could’ve cut the sexual tension with a knife. And then at the quad, he took you over to the grass where you two could be alone with Makkachin. It’s like he has taken after his attention-seeking dog. Wait,” Phichit adds, like he has just made a scientific breakthrough, “or maybe it’s the other way around, maybe Makkachin takes after him.”

“Did you really just compare Victor Nikiforov to his own dog?”

Phichit looks slightly guilty. “If it fits…”

“I think you’re overestimating his feelings for me,” Yuuri argues. “I’m pretty sure he just acts this way around everyone. Don’t forget who he is.”

“Sure, he’s a flirt, but with you, he’s a \textit{flirt}. You know what I mean?”

Yuuri doesn’t know.

“The Psi Omega Iota Halloween party is going to be coming up soon,” Phichit reminds him. “It’s almost October. I bet he’ll invite you.”

The Psi Omega Iota Halloween party is iconic on campus.

Drinks, dancing, loud music—it’s the type of party that the faculty pretend not to know is going on. Yuuri has never gone to it before, though he knows Phichit went last year and enjoyed it. No, parties aren’t Yuuri’s thing. He had gone to one Psi Omega Iota party at the end of his freshman year, but considering the fact that he can’t remember anything that had happened, he supposes it had been too wild for his liking. He doesn’t want to repeat that experience again any time soon.

Phichit doesn’t remember much from that, either. Sometimes Yuuri thinks he has flashes of memories. Music, hands, somebody’s body in close approximation to his own. He blinks, drawing himself back to reality. “Well, if he invited me, that’d be normal. I mean, we’re roommates. It wouldn’t mean anything.”

“But maybe he’ll \textit{invite} you,” Phichit urges.

“You’ve been doing this thing lately where you just repeat the same word but use a different tone like I’m supposed to know you mean,” Yuuri laments.
Phichit just grins at that.

~

On Sunday, Phichit, Yuuri, and Victor meet Yurio outside Stammi Vicino. He has his mousetrap car assignment in his hands, along with the parts that he’s allowed to use. Wood, string, the mousetrap, wheels, and a few other bits and pieces. There’s a wide stone path out of the way of the crowds that they gather on, a few benches scattered about. “Can’t you guys just make it for me?” Yurio complains.

“Where’s the integrity in that?” Phichit asks.

“There isn’t any either way,” the blond mutters, folding his arms across his chest. “Fine, let’s get this over with.”

A while later, when Yuuri is working with Yurio on screwing on the wheels, Phichit slides up next to Victor, sitting beside him. “Yuuri told me you speak Thai.”

Victor glances at him, wonders what else Yuuri has told Phichit about him. He considers asking that question, but then thinks better of it. “I do.”

Phichit grins, saying something to him in the language, and Victor speaks back. “That’s cool,” Phichit compliments. “So what’s the theme for the Psi Omega Iota Halloween party this year?”

It makes sense that Phichit had attended the parties in the past without Victor noticing. After all, there are typically so many people in attendance it may as well be the entire campus piled into one space. But he also notes the way Yuuri looks up at them, eyes focusing directly on Phichit, before he returns to the project. “Haunted forest,” Victor says. “But don’t tell anyone yet.”

“That’d be cool.”

“You and Yuuri should join our group,” Victor suggests. “We could all go together.”

Phichit grins. “Sure. What do you think, Yuuri?”

Yuuri smiles at them over his shoulder. “Thanks, but I don’t know if that sort of thing is for me.”

“It’d be fun,” Phichit insists.

He shrugs. “We’ll see. Maybe.”

And that’ll just have to be a good enough answer.

Victor continues to talk to Phichit about Thai, the party, the fraternity in general, and it feels good to have gained approval from Yuuri’s closest friend. Almost like a privilege. Then, though, the wheels of the car are completed, and Phichit moves to help them with the mousetrap part. Victor finds himself captivated by Yuuri’s explanation of the physics behind it, the snap of the rod and the force propelling the car forward.

It’s supposed to go exactly six meters, and Victor takes the tape measurer and places his foot on the spot where the car should stop. That’s about the extent of his usefulness in this scenario. Phichit instructs Yurio on how to wind up the string and then the car is in motion, stopping a few meters
short. They make some adjustments and try again, and soon enough it’s perfect.

“My teacher isn’t going to believe that I made this thing,” Yurio says as he holds it delicately, as though afraid it will collapse at any moment.

“We only helped you,” Phichit reminds him. “It’s fine.”

There’s a pause, and Victor gives his brother a pointed look.

A muffled syllable leaves Yurio’s lips.

Yuuri looks up at the noise. “What?”

“I said thanks.”

~

Victor buys a can of Silly String.

He’s planning on getting Yuuri back with it.

One morning, he wakes to find Yuuri sleeping peacefully, one arm falling off of the bed. His new glasses are still on the edge of his nose—the same frames he’d owned before. They suit him. Blue, not too wide and not too small, either. He must’ve fallen asleep while doing something last night.

Victor produces the can from his desk drawer and removes the lid. The string is blue and he guesses that it’ll be a horrible mess to clean up. Perfect. But he chickens out at the last second when he views Yuuri’s soft features, a small smile playing on his roommate’s lips. Perhaps he’s dreaming about something. Victor chastises himself for his lack of audacity as he puts the can back in his desk for later.

~

That night, though, when Yuuri is in the shower, Victor prepares himself.

He aims it at the bathroom door, sitting up on his bed so that Yuuri won’t be able to reach him, and waits. The tension is thick, his breath catching when he hears the water shutting off and the now-familiar singing coming to a halt. He grips the can tighter, then has an idea and grabs his phone, turning on a video recording and setting up the camera on his desk for a perfect angle.

Just barely quick enough, he makes his way back onto the bed as Yuuri swings the door open.

Caught him.

Victor sprays the can mercilessly, Yuuri yelping and hurrying back into the bathroom, slamming the door. “Victor! This is never going to come out of my hair,” he complains from the other side of the wood.
“You made the face,” Victor remarks, grinning.

Then the door opens again, and Victor sprays him as Yuuri practically leaps up onto his bed, tackling him and knocking the can out of his hands.

“You’ll get it on my bed!” Victor pouts, then realizes—at the same time Yuuri does—that Yuuri has one of his wrists pinned, is straddling Victor’s legs with his own, their faces only a few inches away. There’s silly string covering his hair and the upper half of his shirt, and Victor can’t help but laugh out loud at the sight. “You look ridiculous.”

Yuuri gets off of him and makes his way to the floor, and Victor realizes what’s about to happen far too late. He grabs the can and aims it at Victor, missing him and spraying most of the bed instead. Probably on purpose. Then he climbs up the first few rungs of the ladder to get a better vantage point, and Victor covers his eyes with one hand, blindingly reaching towards Yuuri with the other. “Now you’re making the face,” Yuuri teases in delight.

Soon enough, the can is out of Silly String, and the room looks like a tornado made out of the sticky threads had just flown through it.

“You’re cleaning this up,” Yuuri accuses.

“I’m not the one who got it all over the room,” Victor protests, pulling a large chunk out of his hair and putting it on Yuuri’s head instead, causing him to yelp and try to dodge it.

“But it was your idea.”

“And guess what?” Victor asks.

“What?”

“ Completely worth it.”

He pretends to be mad, pushing Victor on his shoulder, but Victor doesn’t fall for it, instead grabbing his phone off of his desk and stopping the recording. Yuuri frowns, moving behind him to look. “You videotaped me?”

Victor searches through the video, then pauses it. “There. That’s the face.”

He screenshots it, and Yuuri grabs his phone from him. “You are definitely not keeping that picture.”

“I’ll set it as my background,” Victor jokes, taking the phone back and picking a piece of string off of Yuuri’s shoulder, throwing it in the trash can beside his desk.

He looks impossibly endearing, hair ruffled and still dripping wet from his shower. He’s wearing sweatpants and a grey t-shirt that Victor supposes may be ruined, but Yuuri doesn’t appear to be mad. Yuuri takes his phone once again and then sprints into the bathroom, locking the door. “I’m deleting the video,” he informs Victor through the wood dividing them.

“No, you can’t,” he pouts. “Don’t, Yuuri.”

“Too late. It’s gone.”

Victor sighs melodramatically, leaning against the bathroom door. “Tragic. I guess we’ll just have to do this again sometime, then.”

Yuuri opens the door a minute later, remaining in front of the bathroom mirror and pulling Silly
String off of his hair. “I think I’m going to need another shower thanks to you.”

“I need one, too,” Victor says, standing behind him and wincing at the sight of his silver hair now highlighted blue. Yuuri starts giggling at his expression, leaning back and accidentally bumping his back against Victor’s shoulder. Victor takes advantage and wraps an arm around the other boy’s waist, holding him tight, and begins picking thread after thread of Silly String off of himself and putting it on Yuuri instead. Yuuri wiggles in his grasp, trying to get away.

“You got some in my mouth,” he complains, coughing.

Victor laughs at him, and a moment later he realizes just how dangerous this situation is—Yuuri’s back flush against his chest. His heart skips a beat as he pauses the teasing, glancing at their reflection in the mirror. It’s almost painful, how badly he wants him. How badly he wants to remain like this, wants it to be more than platonic. He doesn’t want to ruin this moment, doesn’t want to ruin their friendship, but…

(Victor always gets excited when he begins to learn a new language, interested in the nuances of pronunciation and formation, and he’s starting to think that maybe Katsuki Yuuri is like a new language. That maybe he’s full of intricacies, too.)

“Are you going to let me go at some point?” Yuuri asks, sounding breathless.

“Hmm, I don’t know. Do you want me to?”

He doesn’t look as though he knows how to respond to that, ducking his head. “You should know that I’ll get you back for this.”

Victor grins. “I wouldn’t expect anything less. Just don’t ruin my clothes.”

“Like you ruined mine?”

“If you want me to buy you a new shirt, then this was worth every penny.”

Yuuri turns around in his grasp, face inches away from Victor’s own. Victor searches his eyes, sees a challenge in them, a newfound confidence that he hasn’t seen before. It’s intimidating yet attractive, but he doesn’t break the eye contact, keeps one hand on the small of Yuuri’s back and the other by his side. “You just wait, Nikiforov,” he threatens.

Victor can tell he’s attempting to look serious, but they both break out into laughter at the same time, Silly String slipping off of them and onto the bathroom floor. “This is going to be a nightmare to clean up,” Victor says, removing his hand from Yuuri’s back and glancing around.

“Like I said, this is all on you,” he replies.

He sighs as he bends down, picking up the first batch of the blue, sticky string. “I suppose you’re right.”

~

A week passes, and it’s early October.

Victor has his first proper physics test tomorrow.
“You’ll do fine,” Yuuri promises, offering him a warm smile that makes his skin tingle but that does absolutely nothing to reassure him about his science abilities.

Victor shifts in his desk chair, glances down at his notes for the thousandth time. He has never been one to care about his grades, much to Yakov’s annoyance, but it would be nice to do well in this class. Firstly, it would hurt his GPA to fail. Secondly, he’d have to report back to Yuuri with the bad grade and see a look of hurt cross his face. Which would probably make Victor crumple.

(At first, he insists to himself that his drive to succeed is more due to the first reason then the latter. But every time Yuuri gives him that proud expression after he answers a question correctly, that statement becomes less and less true.)

He crawls up onto Yuuri’s bed silently, sitting at the foot of it with his notes in his lap. Yuuri presses something on his laptop, then shuts it, looking at him with concern. “You’ve improved a lot,” Yuuri reminds him quietly.

“Would you mind going over everything with me one more time?” Victor pleads.

Yuuri nods and moves to sit beside him, legs dangling off of the side of the bed. “Okay, what are the forces that act on a moving car?”

Victor knows. But he may or may not be enjoying Yuuri’s full attention too much already. He leans his head on Yuuri’s shoulder. “I don’t know. Remind me?”

The flirting has gotten worse over the past week.

In fact, Victor is essentially ready to explode.

It’s the little things. Yuuri touching his arm when he wants him to pay attention to something. Yuuri’s shoulder brushing up against his. Yuuri jokingly touching Victor’s hair once when he was trying to tease him and Victor going embarrassingly wide-eyed in response. The boundaries have weakened, and he’s not sure when it had happened, but the line between platonic and romantic has blurred to the point of nonexistence.

(At least, that’s what Victor thinks.)

(As for what Yuuri thinks, he has no idea. No idea whatsoever.)

(Which is annoying. Fairly annoying, because he’s not sure if he’s overthinking.)

(Victor normally isn’t one to overthink.)

(Then again, he normally isn’t a lot of things, but Yuuri seems to be changing everything he’d thought he’d known about himself.)

“Okay, I have an idea,” Yuuri says, moving away from Victor, to his despair.

Victor pouts at him. “What?”

“Let’s try this,” he suggests, looking slightly nervous. He adjusts himself so that he’s sitting cross-legged on the bed. Victor follows his lead, and then they’re across from each other, knees almost touching. Yuuri leans forward to put his palms on the top of Victor’s shoulders and presses downwards. “Which force is this?”

“It’s… It’s you pushing down on me,” Victor answers slowly, wondering if this is a trick question,
wondering how he’s supposed to think properly when Yuuri’s hands are on him like this.

Yuuri shakes his head. “No, pretend I’m not.”

“Oh, gravity?”

He smiles. “Gravity. Now what’s this?” He puts his hands underneath Victor’s forearms and lifts them up slightly. “You’re the car, okay?”

(He’s the car. This is absolutely ridiculous.)

(But Yuuri is touching him. So he goes along with it.)

“The reaction force from the road?” he guesses.

A proud smile—Victor’s heart does a flip in his chest. “Okay, now imagine you’re moving this way,” he points towards himself. “What force is this?” He pushes on Victor’s shoulders lightly in the opposite direction.

Victor pushes him back, and Yuuri laughs. “Friction?”

“Good. But it could also be…?”

“Air resistance,” Victor finishes. His reward is another approving nod.

Then there’s a pause.

“Aren’t you going to do the last one?” Victor asks.

Yuuri raises an eyebrow, suspicious. “So you do know these.”

Victor pushes Yuuri so that he’s flat on the bed, making the boy laugh. “The force of the engine moving the car forward,” Victor says. “That’s the one you forgot, ‘physics major.’”

“I remembered it, I just wasn’t going to pull you on top of me,” Yuuri claims.

“What, like this?” he asks, straddling Yuuri’s legs and looking down at him.

Yuuri blinks, surprised. “Um, yes—like this.”

Victor remains suspended above him by keeping one hand on the bed. He moves his free hand to Yuuri’s hair, brushing a stray strand out of his eyes. “Are you saying you weren’t going to go all-out with your lesson? I thought you cared about my grades, Yuuri. About my GPA.”

There’s a pause as Yuuri takes in a gentle breath, Victor noticing the way that he leans into his touch, noticing the way that his lips part slightly. His hair is soft to the touch and his new glasses are askew on his nose. He wonders how he hadn’t noticed Yuuri around the campus before, because now he can’t imagine not noticing him, can’t imagine ignoring his enchanting smile and laugh, the sound of his voice.

He wonders if they’d ever interacted before, perhaps bumping into each other at Stammi Vicino in a forgettable encounter. Perhaps he’d even seen Yuuri talking to Mila before and thought nothing of it. It’s a shame that their first, real meeting had to have occurred in Victor’s third year of college, had to have been on a dark night with a skateboarding accident. If only he could’ve met him earlier, under different circumstances.
(He wonders how different their relationship would be, wonders if he and Yuuri would even be friends if not for the whole roommate mix-up.)

Victor parts his own lips, an unconscious response, and he watches as Yuuri’s pupils dart down to the action, as through in a trance. Victor’s breath catches, blood pumping in his ears. To his surprise, it’s Yuuri who moves first, lifting his head off of the sheets ever-so slightly, the subtle movement an obvious invitation. He realizes that his hand is still in Yuuri’s hair, and he adjusts it slightly, brushing a few strands back behind his ear. Victor can no longer remember how to move, can no longer remember how to exhale, but he—

The door opens, two sets of eyes snap to it.

Victor had shut it, hadn’t he? Surely it had been shut?

*Cracked,* he remembers, rewinding his memory. *He’d left it cracked open.*

“Hey, Yuuri, I thought I’d stop by to see if—”

Phichit freezes in the doorway, and time slows down. There’s a book in his hand, and Victor watches as it clatters to the ground, landing with the pages sprawled. Then, Phichit’s eyes widen, and in an instant his feet are moving again, book still on the ground as he darts back out of the door and shuts it violently behind him.

He swallows. His eyes shift back to Yuuri, who is bright red, already getting up. Victor moves, getting down from his bed and heading to his own side of the room instead, watching Yuuri carefully, waiting to see what he’ll do.

Yuuri clears his throat, tugging on the collar of his shirt. “I’m going to… Going to go see what he wanted. And give him his book.”

Victor just nods, watching his roommate practically sprint out of the room.

He pinches the bridge of his nose.

Of course he’d had to leave the stupid door open.

Of course.

(Just his luck.)

~

Yuuri is a mess.

“I am so sorry,” Phichit keeps repeating, touching his arm. “I’m so, so, so sorry.”

“Don’t be,” Yuuri responds, taking in a deep breath.

What had been about to happen?

(Had Victor seriously been about to kiss him?)
No, no. That’s impossible. He should knock any possibility of that out of his mind right now, because that’s not happening. Ever. Because he’s Victor, and Yuuri is Yuuri, and that is that. It’s simple. Basic math. He’d just been helping Victor with physics, and Victor is a touchy person, which Yuuri is more than okay with, because they’re friends. Simple as that.

Phichit takes his book back from Yuuri, sinking into one of the chairs in the tiny living space on his floor. Luckily, it’s abandoned, giving the two of them privacy. “I should’ve knocked,” Phichit states. “It’s just that I saw the door was cracked open and…”

“Nothing was happening,” Yuuri says.

A blink. A shake of the head. “Nothing was… Nothing was happening? Yuuri, I feel like I just accidentally watched…” he starts, glancing around the room nervously. There’s still nobody there.

Yuuri doesn’t know what to say. “Look, he has been, we’ve been… We have a weird relationship. But it’s not like that.” He shuts his eyes, defeated, willing Phichit to understand. “It’s not like that for him.”

Because that’s what he really means.

Yes, he has been viewing their banter over the last several weeks as flirting, but it has become crystal clear in his mind that Victor views those moments as harmless jokes. Which is fine, because what’s a joke between roommates? It’s perfectly fine, and Yuuri doesn’t despise him for it, doesn’t hate him. In fact, he’s starting to consider Victor a good friend, and hopes that Victor is doing the same.

He has come to terms with their relationship, essentially.

“Oh, Yuuri,” Phichit just says, narrowing his eyebrows with concern, as though trying to figure out what to do. “Come on, let’s go grab dinner. We won’t talk about him if you don’t want to. Let’s talk about skating instead.”

Sometimes it’s creepy how Phichit knows exactly what to say.

~

“I think he’s the most beautiful person I’ve ever met,” Victor announces dreamily, laying his head down on Christophe’s pillow and folding his hands over his stomach.

Christophe laughs. “I’m happy for you. You’re overdramatic but I’m happy for you.”
The prank war continues and Victor and Yuuri's relationship reaches a pivotal, inevitable point.

Thank you sooo much to everybody who has commented / left kudos on this fic so far!!! I am overwhelmed & so glad that you all like it!!!! :D :D :D It seriously means the world to me! (I know that my saying that is probably starting to get repetitive but I just really mean it ok??)

ALSO, please check out the following art made for the Silly String scene from last chapter by some UNBELIEVABLY TALENTED INDIVIDUALS: look at this i am sLAIN by emerald-imperial (w/ a bonus) this one is so so so cute i cannot even handle it by homosheep so adorable you'll explode by forovnix

Also, side note: I got an anon on Tumblr asking about Victor and Yuuri's beds so here are some reference images for what I was imagining.

P.S.S.: thank you to exile-wrath for providing me with v mischievous and wonderful ideas for the prank war!!!

Victor taps his pencil during the test.

It starts silently, and then becomes a full-blown, obnoxious routine, and the girl sitting beside him gives him a stare that could drill a physical crater into his chest. He places it on the table and rests his chin on his palm, staring down at the tiny numbers. Right. He can do this. Physics, simple physics. Everybody passes physics. Physics is easy.

(Yuuri likes physics. Yuuri finds physics interesting.)

_Name the forces that act on the moving bicycle._ Multiple choice, but it’s one of those obnoxious ones with the roman numerals that make Victor want to tear the paper to shreds. He thinks of Yuuri’s demonstration, thinks of Yuuri underneath him, lips parted just so, the gleam in his eyes unforgettable…

“Five minutes left.” The tap of the professor's high heels as she walks across the front of the lecture hall echoes about the room.

He flips through the remainder of the test, circling whichever answers feel best. He doesn’t think he does bad. Most of the terms are recognizable, the questions themselves aren’t that challenging. But he thinks of how incredible it would be to show Yuuri a perfect grade, to have Yuuri wrap his arms
around him in delight, to…

The clicking of heels stops.

Victor glances up, sees Professor Baranovskaya staring directly at him. He focuses his attention back on the test, bubbles in a few more answers on the Scantron. A few minutes later, time is up, and he turns in his test, the Professor still giving him a suspicious look as he exits the room, other students trailing behind him.

He plops his skateboard on the pavement the moment he’s outside, makes his way back to the dorm to give his full report to Yuuri. Before he can enter the doors, though, Victor catches sight of him walking away from the building, red backpack slung over his shoulder. Victor presses a foot down on the pavement, propelling himself forward and sliding up next to him.

It takes Yuuri a moment to notice that there’s someone beside him. “Victor?” His surprise is instantly replaced with a warm expression, a smile playing on his lips that Victor imitates wholeheartedly. “How’d it go? I was just going to meet Mila and Phichit for lunch, if you want to come.”

Victor bends down and picks up his skateboard, holding it under one arm as they walk. “It was good.”

“You remembered everything?” Yuuri asks.

There’s a pause, and Victor can’t help but remember the intimate lesson he’d received the night before. Judging by the way Yuuri’s tongue darts out to wet his lips, he figures that the same memory had popped into Yuuri’s mind, too.

“Thanks to you,” Victor answers, and notices the way Yuuri ducks his head, humbled. “I’m guessing I won’t have to drop the class.”

Their shoulders brush against each other as they walk. “For the record, if you got a good grade, you owe me at least five more hours of French tutoring.”

Victor figures that’s more than a fair trade.

~

A few days later, when Victor wakes up, he smells tea.

And it’s a slow process, getting out of bed on this particular morning. He rolls onto his side, first, then his back, and the cycle continues for a few minutes until he bothers to open his eyes, squinting in response to the rising sun. Then he looks across the room and sees Yuuri, who’s surprisingly already awake and dressed in loose pants and a black t-shirt.

He yawns, stretches out his arm and shifts until he’s propped up on his elbows, the bedsheets drifting down to his abdomen. Yuuri turns around, eyes scanning him up and down before settling on Victor’s own. “Good morning.” There’s a soft smile playing on his lips, and Victor figures it may be the best possible thing to wake up to.

“Good morning,” Victor greets, voice coming out rougher than he’d intended it to.
Yuuri appears to remember something, grabbing a beige cup off of his desk and showing it to him. “I got you tea. And a bagel. If you want.”

Victor squints at the tea, trying to tell if Yuuri is joking. But then Yuuri hands him the cup and Victor takes a small sip. The taste overpowers his senses and he collapses back on his pillow, satisfied. “This is great.” It occurs to Victor that this is the first time Yuuri has woken up before him. It also occurs to him that he doesn’t know why his roommate had so kindly bothered to buy him tea and a bagel. But he doesn’t question either of these things.

“The bagel is in a bag on your desk,” Yuuri tells him before climbing up on his own bed, quickly becoming captivated by something on his phone.

After Victor has finished the tea and eaten the bagel, he grabs clothes from his dresser and heads into the bathroom to shower. He’s still exhausted, keeps his eyes shut and faces the shower head, hoping that the pounding of the water will wake him up. It does, to an extent. Then, he steps out and grabs his white towel off of the top bar, drying out his hair. He pulls the towel away, then—

Something’s wrong.

The towel is blue.

He stares at it for a second. Then glances down at his hands. They’re normal, his skin is normal, so how…

Victor moves to the mirror, swipes at the mist until the reflection is clear.

(His lungs stop working.)

(He takes an instinctive step back.)

(Stares.)

“Yuuri.”

There’s no answer. He repeats it. “Yuuri.”

Victor hastily wraps a towel around his hips, swings open the door and glances around the room. Yuuri is gone. He’s gone. Victor isn’t surprised—Yuuri had probably sprinted out of the room the moment he’d heard the shower turn on. And then it hits him. The tea, the bagel.

Victor looks in the mirror again, rakes his fingers through his poor, blue hair. It looks terrible. Horrible. Every unfortunate hair style he’d ever had turned into one. It’s blotchy and still dripping. He takes water and splashes it, but only the excess dye comes out. The color itself doesn’t leave. He steps back into the shower and turns the water back on, desperately tugging on the strands, but it’s to no avail.

He puts on underwear then steps out into the bedroom, grabbing his phone off of his pillow and dialing a familiar number. It only rings once before it’s picked up.

“Yuuri.” Victor layers his tone with as much ice as he can manage.

There’s barely-concealed snickering on the other end of the line—but it’s two people, not one. Phichit must be with him. “Yes?” comes Yuuri’s innocent reply.

Yuuri’s laugh is annoyingly contagious, so Victor struggles to conceal his own, to keep his voice
serious. “Did you put hair dye in my shampoo bottle?”

“What?” Yuuri asks, sounding shocked. Then Phichit breaks out into full-blown laughter and Yuuri joins him a second later, uselessly trying to shush Phichit at the same time. “You… You don’t like it?”

Victor hangs up. He groans at his reflection, unsure of what to do.

He’s Googling how to remove hair dye when he finally hears the jingle of a key in the lock. Victor hurries back into the bathroom and slams the door shut, leaning against it. “I cannot believe you did this,” he complains when he’s sure Yuuri can hear him.

Yuuri just starts laughing again. “Let me see it.”

“No.”

“I want to see it. Come on, Victor,” he begs, trying the doorknob.

Victor locks the door and leans his weight against it, accidentally catching another glimpse of his reflection and wincing. “How do I fix it?”

“The lady at the store gave me something she said would work,” Yuuri assures him. “But the bottle is out here, so…”

He pauses, defeated. Then opens the door.

There are tears in Yuuri’s eyes as he doubles over in laughter, clutching at his stomach. Victor raises an eyebrow, folding his arms across his chest. He’s having trouble maintaining his pokerface. “This is funny, is it?”

“Hilarious,” Yuuri promises, grinning up at him. “Got you.” Then he approaches his bed and pulls out a bottle out from under his pillow. “Try this. She said to use warm water.”

“You’re the worst roommate I’ve ever had,” Victor promises as he moves back into the bathroom.

Yuuri doesn’t believe him for a second. When Victor glances over his shoulder, he sees Yuuri’s eyes wandering, and remembers that he’s not exactly clothed. He’d been too busy worrying about his distasteful hair to think about the fact that he’s standing in front of Yuuri in just his underwear.

Yuuri seemed to have forgotten about that too, until this point.

“Need help washing it out?” Yuuri asks.

(Is he serious? Or is this another cruel prank?)

There’s a pause, and then Yuuri blushes, shaking his head. “That’s… That’s not what I meant. I meant in the sink.”

“Oh, sure,” Victor responds, sitting on the toilet lid and leaning his head over the sink, turning on the tap and unscrewing the top of the bottle that Yuuri had given him. “This is only fair. I did all of the clean up last time. At least there’s no recording of this.”

“Right, good thing.”

At Yuuri’s unconvinced tone of voice, Victor looks up. “Did you…?”
Yuuri bites his lip.

“Did you record me?”

But he’d had his phone on him, so how could he have—

Victor glances out of the bathroom door, sees Yuuri’s laptop on his bed, the top suspiciously tilted so that the camera is aimed at the bathroom door. “You’re deleting that. Actually, I’m deleting that.”

“There’s a password,” Yuuri reminds him. He squirts some of the bottle’s contents onto his hands and then gestures for Victor to put his head down. As the blue liquid drips down onto the white porcelain, Victor shuts his eyes, the feeling of Yuuri’s hands on him embarrassingly nice.

“I still can’t believe you did that. I’m going to get you back good. Better than this.”

Yuuri works his way from back to front. “Better than this?”

Victor isn’t much of a position to argue, but he holds his ground anyway. “Five times better than this. This was child’s play. It’s on now, Yuuri.”

“I hope you realize you can’t come across as threatening with your head in a sink,” Yuuri jokes, tugging on a strand of his hair and making Victor turn his head to glare at him, despite the blue dye now running down his face.

Eventually, almost all of the dye is gone, and Yuuri grabs a hanging towel and drops it on his head. Victor picks it up and ruffles out his hair, standing up. Yuuri is still smiling—a devil, Victor thinks—and he leans against the counter. “Have you thought about the Halloween party?” Victor asks.

Yuuri frowns, confused, then seems to remember what he’s talking about, offering a half-hearted shrug. “I don’t… I, um, don’t really drink alcohol.”

He looks slightly embarrassed, and Victor cringes internally at his own assumption. Yuuri definitely doesn’t seem like the type to get drunk—he should’ve guessed. “Well, not everybody there will be drinking.”

Yuuri doesn’t look like he believes him, and Victor doesn’t quite believe himself. He opens his mouth to say something, then purses his lips, as though considering. “I’ll pass this time. Maybe I’ll go to the Christmas one.”

As disappointed as he is, he’s not about to push him. So Victor just tries to look nonchalant. He nods. “Okay, sure.”

There’s a pause as Yuuri glances down at the bathroom floor, then back up. “You know, I was going to have you to go class with your hair like that.”

“Joke’s on you, I would’ve rather missed class.”

“That’s what I figured out eventually.”

Victor gets his physics assessment back on Monday.
He holds his breath as the grade is presented to him—the class is small, only about fifteen students, though there’s a lecture on Wednesdays that houses about sixty. The Professor gives him a look as she hands him the paper, one that he can’t quite decipher. Professor Baranovskaya only has one expression, and her different emotions are expressed through subtle nuances in it that no student can crack the code of.

A large ‘B-’ printed in red.

He’ll take a B.

He’ll be proud of a B.

The moment the bell rings, he’s on his skateboard, weaving in between walking students and heading towards the Honors College dorms. Then, he hops off, puts it underneath his arm and heads inside, taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Once he has reached the door to their room, which is cracked open, he swings it open and grins.

Yuuri is at his desk. Papers covered with various formulas and numbers are sprawled in front of him. For a second, he’s confused, but then he seems to realize what’s going on, and his eyes widen. “What’d you get?”

Instead of answering, Victor picks him up out of his chair, wrapping his arms around his torso and spinning him. Yuuri laughs, but quickly pulls away, hands remaining on his shoulders and face only a few inches from Victor’s own. “Come on, tell me.”

Victor tells him the grade.

Yuuri’s expression isn’t exactly what he’d pictured. “A B-? What’d you get wrong?”

That wasn’t the reaction he’d been hoping for.

His roommate clears his throat. “I mean, that’s great.” He hugs him back, and Victor grins, ducking his head into Yuuri’s shoulder. “Good job,” Yuuri praises.

Neither of them let go for a while, the hug unnecessarily long for a B- on a physics assessment. Victor figures he could stay like this for the rest of his life, but he pulls away anyway, hands still gently gripping Yuuri’s sides. “We should celebrate. Dinner?”

“Dinner sounds good,” Yuuri agrees.

“Then it’s a date.”

There’s a pause. It takes Victor a moment to comprehend the look on Yuuri’s face.

“Not a date,” Victor corrects, realizing what he’d just said. “A date as in… A date as in a date, but not a date.”

Yuuri looks disappointed. “Not a date? What am I supposed to do with the bouquet I bought for you?”

Victor’s mind is fried, his shoulders slump slightly as he tries to process what he’d just heard. “What you… You… What?”

(Yuuri had bought him a bouquet? But when, and why would he—)

“Joke, Victor,” Yuuri says, looking less amused and more concerned. “Sorry, I didn’t think…”
Victor swallows, relieved, and tugs on the collar of his shirt. “Right, no. I didn’t either, of course.”

“Of course,” Yuuri repeats slowly.

“Of course,” Victor assures him.

~

It’s not a date.

(Of course.)

Those two words ring in Yuuri’s mind as Victor walks to the dining hall with him, one hand shoved in his pocket and the other readily available to wave at anyone and everyone who walks by and recognizes him. Yuuri remembers the look on Victor’s face when he’d made a joke about buying him a bouquet, the horror that had been radiating from him, the disbelief.

Which is why it had been a joke.

(He doesn’t want to admit that it hurts, doesn’t want to admit that those two words that had once lacked emotional connotations are now stinging, biting at the corners of his mind.)

It’s even worse when Victor wants to point at a sign, so he touches Yuuri’s arm to get his attention, lets his hand linger there for far too long. Instead of the happiness that Yuuri would normally feel, there’s just nausea swirling in his stomach, the remembrance that this will never be anything more than platonic despite the signs that point to otherwise.

Victor Nikiforov, flirt.

Those two things fit together, make sense together.

(But for a second, just for a second, Yuuri had dared to hope…)

“I’m getting pasta,” Victor tells him, heading off towards the pasta station.

Yuuri gets pasta, too. Then they’re sitting across from each other, except Yuuri has already begun digging into his food, and Victor hasn’t, is just watching him.

Which makes the pain worse, somehow.

“Aren’t you going to eat?” Yuuri asks.

“I want to say thank you,” Victor says, the words so rushed that Yuuri’s attention is piqued. He sets down his fork to listen. “For helping me with physics, I mean. You didn’t have to, and I was afraid I’d have to drop the class, so I’m glad that you helped me.”

It really isn’t a big deal, Yuuri thinks, but he’s flattered all the same. “No problem. I’m glad you don’t have to drop.” And he doesn’t like this subtle tension between them, because he knows it’s his fault, knows that Victor is still Victor. Victor doesn’t have wild internal monologues about their relationship like Yuuri does, doesn’t overthink everything like Yuuri does. He simply… Is.

“Do you still think physics is boring?” Yuuri adds, hoping to lighten the mood.
“Oh, absolutely,” Victor answers, but he adds a wink, and Yuuri grabs for his fork, hurrying to take another bite in hopes that Victor won’t see his obvious reaction. “But maybe not as boring.”

“Not as boring, I’ll take that as a compliment,” Yuuri responds a second later.

There’s another pause, but it’s more companionable this time, and for that Yuuri is thankful. Victor looks up. “You have figure skating club tonight, right?”

He nods.

And there’s that look again, that one that means he has words waiting on the tip of his tongue, ready to tumble off at any moment. “Can I come?”

(Can he come?)

(To figure skating practice?)

Yuuri tries to think of why he would want to, tries to think of any possible reason. Obviously, the club is open to all, from beginners to experienced, and he does remember Victor saying that he’d skated when he was younger. That must be why. He must want to join.

“To skate?” Yuuri asks, to confirm.

Victor takes another bite, casual. “Maybe eventually. I could just observe today, if that’d be alright. And Yurio, too. He would want to come.”


~

Later that day, Yuuri gets dressed in his typical skating outfit and packs his gear into his duffel bag. They meet up with Phichit, Mila, Yurio, and Sara outside of the dorm building, then head towards the bus that will take them out to the rink in Detroit. Victor talks easily with Mila and Sara, whom Yuuri knows that he is friends with, and Yuuri sticks to Phichit’s side.

Phichit can tell that something is up with him.

Phichit can always tell.

“What’s wrong?” he asks the moment they’re sharing a bus seat and the others are out of ear range. “Did something happen?”

“It’s fine,” Yuuri dismisses, because really, it is.

“What’d he do?”

He sighs. Neither of them need to say Victor’s name for it to be obvious that they’re talking about him. “How do you know that he did anything?”

Phichit gives him a look that is worth a thousand words.

Yuuri bites his lip and looks out the window of the bus. “Could we talk about it later?”

“Sure.”

~
They start with stretching, and Yuuri finds himself constantly glancing back towards the edge of the rink, where Victor is sitting with his little brother by his side. “Distracted, Yuuri?” Leo asks him, smiling knowingly.

He doesn’t answer, just focuses his attention back on the task at hand.

A while later, he has claimed one part of the rink to practice some movements for his free skate, a few jumps that he hasn’t been nailing consistently. Celestino, a local coach who volunteers to help out the club, watches him, giving him tips every time he misses a landing. Normally, Yuuri focuses on his advice, tries to adjust his skating accordingly, but this time, he’s distracted. It makes it worse when he catches Victor watching him unabashedly, eyebrows drawn together with intrigue.

He flubs another jump.

Celestino looks unimpressed, and Yuuri tries again, getting it right the second time.

When he takes a break, Victor waves him over and Yuuri sits beside him, sipping water. “You’re incredible,” Victor says.

Yuuri chokes on the water, coughing into his elbow. Victor blinks at him in concern, and he thinks he sees Yurio face-palm in his peripheral vision. To cover up, he clears his throat, avoiding Victor’s eyes. “Thanks, but I’m not that good.”

“No, you’re great,” Victor assures him. “All of those jumps…” He whistles.

“Really, it’s nothing,” Yuuri says, but he can’t ignore the way his heart does a flip in his chest in response to the compliment. “Are you two going to try and skate? There are some skates available for rent.”

Yurio stands up. “I’ll rent some.”

Soon enough, they’re both tying their skates. Yurio steps out onto the ice first, easily gliding along it. “Easy. I remember.”

Victor steps out and grips the wall, giving Yuuri a flustered look. It’s unusual to see Victor out of his element like this, even if he had skated in the past and most likely would pick it up again in a few minutes. It still gives Yuuri an odd air of confidence, makes Victor seem less like the impossible-to-reach person that he is.

“Got it?” Yuuri asks, smiling because he can’t help it.

Victor nods and releases the wall, balancing. “Just need a second to get the hang of it again.”

Yuuri watches as he moves forward slowly, Yurio already skating way ahead of them and doing a twist. “Here, we can go around the rink,” he suggests. “Do you want my arm?”

Without a word, Victor takes his arm and they move around the rink. Eventually, he’s fine on his own, in complete control, but he keeps hold of Yuuri’s arm anyway, and Yuuri doesn’t mind. “Do you compete?” Victor asks as they steer away from Phichit, not wanting to interrupt his practice.

“Local competitions,” Yuuri explains. “There’s one coming up in early November, actually.”

“Can I go?” Victor asks.

“Well, I think you’ll probably want to work on your jumps first if you’re really interested in—”
“No, just to watch,” he elaborates.

“Oh, of course.”

Victor grins and squeezes his arm. But he gets overconfident when he tries to lift his leg and stumbles a little, Yuuri reaches out and grabs his hands, trying to steady him so that he doesn’t lose his balance completely. Victor gives him a warm expression that Yuuri figures could melt the ice underneath him. “Thanks.”

Victor’s hands are still in his.

(Yuuri stills. He stills because he wonders if he has fallen too hard for Victor, wonders why he’s just idly waiting for the rude awakening to yank him out of his stupid fantasies, wonders why Victor hasn’t let go of his hands yet, wonders why Victor had come here in the first place.)

(Because they’re friends, Yuuri reminds himself.)

(Friends.)

Yuuri takes his hands away.

Victor looks hurt—and Yuuri can’t win, can he?—but the expression is gone after a second, replaced with a generic smile, one that doesn’t reach his eyes. Then they skate on.

~

Their dorm room is silent.

Except the quiet is a physical entity, bothering Victor to no end. Normally Yuuri fills their room with life, talks to him animatedly, uses far too many hand motions when he gets excited while talking about physics, gives him smiles that are so bright they’re threatening to impair Victor’s 20/20 vision.

“Need any help?” he asks, loud, because Yuuri has his earbuds in.

Even Yuuri seems relieved, stopping his music and clicking his pen as he glances at Victor over his shoulder. He looks conflicted, glancing back at his notes and then back at Victor. “If you’re not busy?”

Victor is by his side in an instant.

He pulls over his own desk chair and Yuuri shifts over, the space not quite big enough for both of them, but they make do. Yuuri points at one practice worksheet. “The gender of nouns,” Victor reads out loud. “Re-write the noun with the correct definite article in front of it.”

After helping him through the first few, Yuuri stares hard at the third blank. “Is it… la?”

Victor shakes his head.

“Le?”

He smiles and Yuuri writes it down. “And this one is… It’s… Hang on. Don’t tell me.”
It’s adorable, watching his eyebrows draw together and his lips purse as he stares at the paper as though it holds the secrets to the universe. Victor shifts closer to him until their shoulders are touching, and Yuuri doesn’t react, still deep in thought.

“Is it la poubelle?” Yuuri tries, eyes darting back and forth between Victor’s, obviously anticipating that his answer is incorrect.

The urge to kiss him is overwhelming.

As in, unbelievable.

But he just smiles enthusiastically, watching as Yuuri leans over the desk to write down the correct answer. “So,” Yuuri starts, “I could say, tu es la poubelle?”

“Technically you’d say tu es une poubelle. But can I ask why you’re trying to call me a trash can?”

“I’m sort of limited on insults.”

Victor bumps Yuuri’s shoulder affectionately. “Let’s stop doing this worksheet and learn insults instead, then. I want to hear you curse in French. Here, repeat after me: la—”

Yuuri interrupts him by bumping his shoulder back. “I’m not repeating after you. How do I know what you’re going to make me say?”

He extends his lower lip. “By trusting me?”

“I don’t trust you at all,” Yuuri points out, but he’s laughing, and Victor frowns and bumps Yuuri’s chair with his own, shoving it out of the way. Yuuri pushes his chair back, and it’s an instantaneous war, French notes forgotten on the desk in front of them.

Victor gets out of his chair and grabs the back of Yuuri’s, trying to spin it around, but Yuuri gets up too quickly and grabs his arm. “I bet I’m stronger than you,” Victor challenges.

And then he’s on the ground.

His wrists are pinned on either side of his head, and there are knees straddling his thighs, Yuuri looking down on him. “You were saying?”

Victor wriggles his wrists free then grabs Yuuri’s arms, flipping them over in one swift move. “You were saying?”

Yuuri struggles underneath him but Victor doesn’t give up as easily as he did, putting all of his weight on his hands in order to keep him pinned. Then, though, Yuuri uses his legs for momentum and manages to flip them back over, his wrists still being held. Victor has to admit he’s impressed. “I guess I shouldn’t have let you help me with French. We got sidetracked after four problems.”

Victor stops struggling. “Here, try saying j’ai perdu.”

“What does that mean?” Yuuri asks.

“It means ‘Yuuri is the best,’” Victor promises.

“Nice try.”

Victor tries to take advantage of the moment and get out of his grasp but Yuuri holds his ground, shifting on top of him, his knees moving against Victor’s thighs in the most distracting way possible.
Victor chuckles, relaxing underneath him, letting Yuuri have the power. “What will you do with me now, Yuuri Katsuki?”

There’s a pause as Yuuri seems to take in their current situation, eyes flickering down to Victor’s chest before he meets his gaze again, as though chastising himself. “What do you want me to do with you?”

It occurs to him that this is a challenge.

(What type of challenge, he’s not sure. Nor is he sure of what Yuuri wants from him, what thoughts are running through his mind. But it’s a challenge. That much is certain, that much Victor is sure of.)

There’s a spark in Yuuri’s eyes, one that Victor has seen a few times before. That time on their bed, right before he’d fallen off—and then another time, when Phichit had walked in. And then, a third time, on the rink, their fingers intertwined. He glances down to his lips, pink and parted, and then Victor slips his wrists out of Yuuri’s grasp with ease, the boy on top of him not resisting this time.

“I wonder what Phichit would think if he saw us on the floor this time,” Victor says quietly.

Yuuri laughs and rolls off of him, sitting beside him cross-legged. “Interesting things.”

Victor props himself up on his elbows and looks at him. “What’d he think when he saw us before? I’m guessing you talked to him about it.”

He looks surprised by the question, but not uncomfortable. He reaches up a hand to fix his ruffled hair, fingers carding through the strands. “He thought what you would think he thought.”

“And what would I think he thought?” Victor questions.

“You know, that we…” He lets his voice trail off and looks at Victor for mercy, not wanting to elaborate.

“And what’d you tell him?”

Yuuri shrugs. “Just the truth. That we’re not like that.”

Victor nods, taking in the information. He’s not surprised, per se, but the disappointment is undeniable. Then again, he can’t quite imagine Yuuri saying anything different. There’s a silence settling between them, and Victor moves to sit closer to him, their knees touching. “Yuuri?”

Yuuri glances at him, waiting.

Instead of saying something, Victor seizes Yuuri’s sides, grabbing him and pushing him back until he’s flat on the ground, then tickling him mercilessly. Yuuri starts laughing uncontrollably, blinking back tears. “Victor, Victor stop!” he pleads in between fits, trying desperately to escape his grip. Eventually, he manages to do so, and he crosses the room until he’s safe with his back against his desk. “You tricked me.”

“Tricked you?” Victor asks innocently. “No, tricking you would be putting hair dye in your shampoo bottle.” He pauses, gives Yuuri a knowing look. “Oh, wait.”

Yuuri doesn’t appear to be impressed.

“But now I know you’re ticklish,” Victor adds.

The black-haired boy grabs a pencil off of his desk and points it at him threateningly. “If you come
over here I’ll use this.”

“I feel like that’s an empty threat.”

Yuuri tosses the pencil at him and it hits him in the chest successfully.

Victor pretends to collapse, groaning in mock pain, and Yuuri laughs. “You should’ve majored in drama. Seems you’re better at that than linguistics.”

“Hmm. Maybe you’re right. I think I could be anything but a physics major.”

That always succeeds in getting Yuuri riled up, and this time is no exception. There’s still a smile playing on his lips, though, and Victor can tell that he’s trying to hide it. “Really? What about a chemistry major?”

“Still more interesting than physics,” Victor teases.

Yuuri closes the space between them and Victor takes his arm, gently pulling him down so that they’re laying across from each other on the beige, carpeted floor of their dorm room. “Has anybody ever told you that you’re annoying?” Yuuri asks.

Victor reaches out and cups the back of his neck—Yuuri doesn’t react other than a subtle intake of a breath. “You’d be the first.”

“I know you don’t really think it’s that boring,” Yuuri protests. “You just say that to annoy me.”

He’s surprised that Yuuri saw through that veil so easily. “Ah, you caught me. I’m secretly fascinated by magnets. And don’t get me started on kinematics, I could give you a ten hour rant on my love for kinematics—”

Yuuri shoves his shoulder, but doesn’t move his hand afterward, letting it linger. Victor’s hand is still on the back of his neck, fingers drifting across the short hairs there. “How come you try to annoy me?” Yuuri sighs.

“You’re cute when you’re annoyed,” Victor responds matter-of-factly.

The words have their desired reaction, a pink spreading across his cheeks. He stammers, “I… You don’t… I…”

Victor lowers his hand, lacing his fingers with Yuuri’s own, which had previously been on his shoulder. He keeps his grip loose, giving Yuuri a chance to move away if he wants, but he doesn’t, just glances down at them, as though perplexed. “And that makes you fun to annoy,” Victor elaborates. “It’s a tragic trait.”

“I think that being annoying in the first place is a tragic trait.”

He can’t find an argument for that, so instead he just absent-mindedly plays with Yuuri’s fingers, wants to suggest that they lay on a bed instead of their hard floor. But the desire to not ruin the moment overrules that.

To his surprise, it’s Yuuri who speaks again. “Do you remember when you hit me on your skateboard?”

Victor winces. “I’m sorry,” he says automatically, the guilt from that incident easily drawn to the surface.
“No, no, I was just thinking about…” he starts, then pauses. “It’s kind of funny, isn’t it?”

“Funny?”

Yuuri is still looking at their joint hands, shifting his fingers slightly, Victor’s moving with them. “That’s how we met, officially.” Then he glances up, frowns at Victor’s expression. “What’s wrong?”

Victor sighs. “That’s less funny and more harrowing for me.”

“Harrowing for you? You weren’t the one who got hit by a frat boy riding his skateboard without looking.”

“My earphones were broken,” Victor defends. “And is that what I am to you? Just a frat boy?”

Yuuri smiles—a small one. “Is this how I annoy you, then?”

“What?”

“You seem to like annoying me. Now maybe I know how to annoy you, frat boy,” he says, squeezing his hand.

Except Yuuri’s plan backfires.

Because his expression, his hand squeezing Victor’s—those things don’t annoy him. No, they make him giddier than they should, make him automatically shift closer, no longer caring that they’re laying awkwardly on the floor beside each other. “Well, aren’t you going to tell me, then?”

He blinks, meets his eyes. “Tell you what?”

“If I’m cute when I’m annoyed?”

Yuuri doesn’t blush again, like he’d expected. He doesn’t do that adorable giggle, his smile doesn’t grow to the point where it’s threatening to outdo the stars. He doesn’t duck his head, doesn’t avert his gaze or move away from Victor as quickly as possible. Instead, his fingers squeeze Victor’s again, and somehow the touch feels like an experiment. A test.

(A test.)

Victor watches as the cogs in Yuuri’s mind click away, as though he’s trying to come to a conclusion on a topic that Victor isn’t privy to. As though he can’t settle on something, as though he’s trying to read his thoughts. Victor is content to wait, content to let him work out whatever it is he needs to work out.

There’s a lamp on Yuuri’s desk, still turned on, and the warm light is casting across his features, accentuating the colors in his eyes. Victor had never thought much about brown eyes before, had never found them particularly outstanding, but he thinks that it’s starting to become his favorite color.

(Except, perhaps, for the pink of his lips, the red of his backpack, the blue of his clothes and bed sheets—and that’s when Victor realizes that he’s not starting to have a greater appreciation for any color in particular, he’s starting to appreciate everything more. Starting to see the world in a different light, colored completely and wholeheartedly by Yuuri Katsuki.)

(He’s stuck on the topic of iridescent colors in his mind when Yuuri exhales—it’s slow, soft. Victor realizes that he’s holding his breath, but he doesn’t want to risk letting go, doesn’t want to risk
moving in the slightest.)

Half a second.

There’s half a second.

Half a second between Yuuri watching him, fingers intertwined with his own, and Yuuri kissing him, lips pressing gently against Victor’s.

And then another half a second.

And he’s gone, pulled back, eyes wide, that familiar blush returning.

As if he can’t quite believe what he’d just done.

(Victor can’t, either. In fact, he still hasn’t reacted, just lays there stupidly, his grip on Yuuri’s hand loose and his jaw slack. Because it’s not possible that Yuuri Katsuki just kissed him. Not possible in the slightest. In fact, if one were to tell him that his overactive imagination had made that up, he wouldn’t doubt it at all.)

(Except, he would doubt it, because that had been better than anything he could’ve thought up on his own. Better than any fantasy.)

“I’m sorry,” Yuuri blurts.

The words are loud, harsh on Victor’s ears. Victor searches for something to say, searches for a reaction, but the events are still catching up to him. He lets go of Yuuri’s fingers, reaches up to touch his own bottom lip, trying to recollect the feeling. It had felt lighter than a feather, lighter than anything he’d ever felt before.

Yuuri, on the other hand, isn’t nearly as confused. Or, at least, it’s not the same type of confusion. He fumbles to get away, sitting up and leaning against the bed frame. “I’m sorry,” he repeats. “I’m so sorry, Victor. I’m so sorry.”

Victor sits up, too, watches him carefully. Yuuri must’ve misinterpreted his reaction. He can explain, and then they can talk it through, and then everything—

“I didn’t mean that.”

Oh.

(Oh.)

He waits for Yuuri to follow up.

But he doesn’t.

(And Yuuri hadn’t meant that. Hadn’t meant anything by that kiss.)

Victor still has his thumb on his lip.

He lets his hand fall away.

Wonders what it is that he’s feeling, wonders what it is that is threatening to split him into pieces, threatening to tear him apart from the inside out. And then it occurs to him that Yuuri had just stepped on him. Whether it was on purpose or not, Yuuri had just stepped on him. Left a footprint on
his chest, an irreparable scar.

(The scar takes its form in a physical ache, in his quickening breaths.)

(And it’s invulnerability, he figures out. An unfamiliar sensation, but he feels it as he sits cross-legged on the floor, still watching Yuuri with unadulterated desperation, confusion. Every fiber of his being begs for pity, like a homeless animal begging for shelter.)

Yuuri is waiting.


“I’m sorry,” Yuuri repeats.

He sucks in a sharp breath. “Don’t say that.”

Yuuri shakes his head, confused. “Sorry.” He physically cringes. “No, I mean, I’m just… I’m s… I don’t know what else to…”

Victor releases the breath.

The kiss hadn’t meant anything. Perhaps Yuuri had been caught up in the moment, or perhaps, like Victor had initially thought, it had been an experiment of some kind. And though an experiment on his feelings feels like a knife digging into his side, he can’t bring himself to be mad. There’s no anger.

(It’s despondency and disarray and distress and they’re swirled together, providing him with a concoction that’s taking over, flooding his thoughts, making him dizzy, blood rushing to his head. He doesn’t want Yuuri to see—can’t let him see. He values their friendship above anything, and if revealing his emotions means losing that…)

He won’t do it.

“I need to go,” Yuuri blurts, suddenly, and then he’s slipping on his shoes and is out the door in an instant, leaving Victor sitting on the floor, staring at the spot where his roommate had been standing.

He’s gone.

And if he had thought the loss of Yuuri’s touch had been bad, the loss of his friendship feels much worse. It feels like an internal void, starting somewhere deep in his chest and spiraling outwards. He stands, after a while, but his legs are numb underneath him, and the void only gets worse when he catches sight of Yuuri’s French notes still on his desk, of his neat, printed handwriting on the pages.

He had left his lamp on.

Victor turns it off.
Yuuri doesn’t speak about it. So Victor doesn’t, either.

Four days pass.

Yuuri doesn’t sing in the shower anymore.

(It’s weird, how that little detail seems to bother Victor more than anything else.)

(It makes him realize that the incident, as he had coined it in his mind, had hurt Yuuri just as much as it had hurt Victor. And it’s ridiculous, isn’t it, that Victor worries about him more than he worries about himself? That Victor would sell his soul for the guarantee of Yuuri’s wellbeing? That he’d give anything for an assurance of his happiness—whether it be seeing him smile or hearing him sing in the shower one more time?)

A few things don’t change.

He still struggles in French. He asks Victor a few quiet questions, and Victor answers them politely. But that’s all.

One morning in particular, Victor rolls over onto his side and feels the sun beating on his face. He opens his eyes, slowly waking up, and catches Yuuri looking at him, the boy immediately glueing his eyes back to his laptop, horrified.

But then, on Saturday, Yuuri speaks. And the words are quiet, unsure. If Victor had been any more distracted, he could have easily missed them.

“Can we be friends again?”

Victor isn’t sure how to answer that, tries to get a better look at him in order to uncover his meaning. But before he can say anything, Yuuri is speaking again.

“I’m sorry,” he says for the thousandth time. “I know that I messed up and I’m sorry. I don’t know what I was thinking and I really, really just want things to go back to the way they were. I get it if you can’t forgive me or don’t want to talk to me anymore but I—”

“I want that, too,” Victor promises, interrupting him. Because even if he can’t have Yuuri romantically, being with him platonically is a blessing in it of itself. And he wouldn’t trade it for the world.

Yuuri lets out a heavy breath, relieved. “Thank you.”

There’s another pause, and Victor can tell he’s still unsure, so he gets down off of his bed and sits on his desk. “Can we start by talking about momentum? I have another test rapidly approaching, you know.”

An enthusiastic nod. “Absolutely.”

(There are several more inches of space between them than usual.)

(Victor tries to convince himself that he’s okay with it. Tries to remember that he’s being immature by wanting more, needing more. He’s okay with this. Of course he is.)

Of course he is.

But the worst part are the reminders. Yuuri will lick his lips unconsciously when looking at him. Or their hands will touch. Or teasing will go too far and they’ll end up touching each other in one way
or another, and Victor gets caught up in it, gets caught up in the memory of having hope that one day they’d be more than friends. Then he remembers that Yuuri doesn’t want that and pulls away—Victor is always the first one to pull away, now.

He doesn’t grow used to it.

With each passing day, he convinces himself that he will.

That maybe this will become normal, that maybe he’ll stop being captivated by his eyes, by the little mannerisms he has, by the proud smile he gives Victor whenever he gets a question right. That eventually, he’ll be able to look at him without his chest aching, without the urge to kiss him growing gradually stronger with every second that they spend together.

Eventually.

(Eventually, he says as Yuuri falls asleep beside him one night. They’d been working on French together and had abandoned Yuuri’s desk in hopes of a comfier, longer-lasting positioning. There are notes spread across the bedsheets, but it’s late, later than Victor usually stays up, and he figures that Yuuri’s sleep deprivation over the past several weeks must finally be catching up to him.)

(Eventually, he says as he takes Yuuri’s glasses off for him, folds them and carefully places them on the top rung of the ladder. He sees Yuuri’s phone underneath his arm and slowly slips it out from underneath, plugging it in to charge. When the cord is inserted, the phone lights up automatically, and there’s a text.)

From Phichit.

you should really talk to him, tell him how u feel so he doesn’t get the wrong idea about what happened w/ the kiss

Victor locks the phone, glances back at Yuuri, ignoring the newfound ache in his heart. He makes a neat pile out of the French notes and places them on his desk. Yuuri rolls onto his side and nestles into the sheets more, lips parting. It doesn’t surprise Victor that he’d talked to Phichit about what had happened, nor does it offend him. It hurts, yes, but he’s numb by now, has gotten as close to acceptance as possible without actually having come to terms with the fact that Yuuri doesn’t like him as anything more than a friend.

Victor doesn’t, despite Phichit’s beliefs, have the wrong idea about the kiss. He understands completely. And he certainly hopes that Yuuri doesn’t try to talk to him about it, because he’s not sure he’d be able to handle that.

There’s a noise, and Victor jumps, startled, before remembering that Yuuri talks in his sleep. He smiles affectionately, watching as his lips move and incomprehensible syllables come out. “Goodnight, Yuuri,” Victor tells him.

He places a foot on the ladder to his own bed, then stops. Turns around, walks back over to Yuuri, feet moving of their own accord.

Victor places a kiss on his hair, thinks that Yuuri wouldn’t mind.

(He may not be able to have him, but he can love him.)

(So he will.)
“Should the cobwebs go here or here?” Christophe asks, holding them up and shutting one eye, as though picturing the decorations hanging from the branches. “Or maybe on the other side? I think we’ll need to buy more, actually.”

Victor glances briefly at the trees. “Anywhere would look fine.”

Christophe shoots him a concerned look before setting down the cobwebs and grabbing the short step ladder they’d brought to the forest, placing it by the trunk of the tree. “What are you going to dress as?”

“Dress as?” he asks. “I haven’t thought about it.”

There’s a silence as Christophe hangs up the cobwebs, arranging them perfectly. Victor leans against a nearby tree, glancing around the forest. All of the other fraternity members are either planning or helping out, but he’s not sure what he could do to assist them. When he turns back to Christophe, he has gotten down from the ladder, eyebrows raised.

“What?” Victor defends automatically, the intensity in his friend’s eyes blatant.

“This needs to stop.”

Victor runs back the past few minutes in his mind, tries to think of what he must’ve said to upset Christophe. Nothing obvious occurs to him. “The decorations?”
“No, your moping. I know that it’s about Yuuri—”

“Yuuri and I are fine,” Victor attempts.

“—but I’ve already told you how to fix it.”

Christophe has told him countless times to talk to Yuuri. The issue is, though, that there’s nothing to talk about. That things are fine. Perfectly fine. Ideal. Well, ideal granted the conditions. If he were to talk to him, there would be nothing worth saying. They’re both on the same page—Victor is sure of it.

Victor reaches down and picks up a giant, plastic spider. “I’ll hang this up somewhere.”

He walks away.

~

The moment Yuuri enters the room after his first major French test, Victor grins and hurries down from his bed. “Well? How’d you do?”

In lieu of an answer, Yuuri hugs him. Victor smiles and hugs him back, knowing that it’s okay because Yuuri initiated it, but wishing he’d never have to let go. He settles his chin on top of Yuuri’s head and shuts his eyes, wanting to drown in the moment. Wanting to drown in the feel of his arms, in the aura of his excitement.

“I got an A,” Yuuri says happily.

Victor responds by lifting him off of his feet, spinning him in a circle. “This calls for a celebration. Do you know how to say celebration in French?”

Yuuri pulls away just enough to meet his eyes, cheeks flushed and eyes bright. “I have no idea.”

“La célébration!” Victor tells him.

(Except his hands are still on Yuuri’s sides.)

(And Yuuri’s arms are still on his shoulders, his fingers laced together behind Victor’s neck.)

Victor pulls away like he’s made of fire.

(And if there’s a flicker of hurt that flashes in Yuuri’s eyes, only just for half of a second, Victor convinces himself that it wasn’t real. And for another half of a second, he manages, by some miracle, to make himself believe it.

“I’ll buy you dinner,” he offers, quickly trying to fix the mood.

Yuuri shakes his head, eyes averted to the floor. “No, you don’t have to do that.”

“Oui, je dois Yes, I do,” Victor insists. “We’ll go right now. Are you busy?”

Yuuri bites his lip, apologetic. “Sorry, I am busy, actually.”
Victor pauses, squints at him.

Yuuri shifts self-consciously under his gaze.

“You’re joking, aren’t you?” Victor accuses slowly, unsurely.

A grin blossoms across Yuuri’s features. “I can’t believe you caught me.”

With a heavy sigh, Victor starts putting on his sneakers. “I’m getting better at reading you, Yuuri. I could write a handbook.”

“A handbook?” he asks as he begins putting on his own shoes, sitting down at his desk chair. “A handbook for reading me?”


Yuuri laughs and stands up, heading into the bathroom and fixing his hair in the mirror. “I don’t think anybody would buy that book.”

Victor hums. “Everybody on campus would. Though it’ll also be the longest book ever written, so it’ll probably be expensive.”

“I’m that complicated?” Yuuri inquires, sounding genuine, as he flips the bathroom light off and stands by their door.

“Intricate,” Victor agrees. “Like how you’re so interesting, yet you’re also so fascinated with such a boring subject.”

Yuuri sighs and holds the door open for Victor. “Do you want to know when that joke about physics being boring got old?”

“When?”

“When you said it the first time. Maybe I’ll write a book to compete with your book. Victor Nikiforov for Dummies. Except it’ll be the shortest book ever written.”

Victor raises an eyebrow as they reach the stairs, Yuuri grazing the metal railing lightly with one hand. “Are you calling me simple?” Victor asks, mocking offense.

“Possibly,” Yuuri answers.

“What would it say?”

Yuuri thinks for a second. “I’ll have to think about that. I’ll get back to you with a rough draft.”

“This is good,” Victor states firmly, digging into his pasta.

“It’s… Um…” Yuuri frowns and shuts his eyes.

Victor pauses, confused.
“C’est délicieux?” Yuuri pronounces slowly, unsurely.

He wonders how biology would explain the physical pain he feels in his chest, then. Because there’s no medical reasoning, there’s no science. There’s just an ache, the kind that clogs his throat and makes his eyes burn, the kind of regret that he can’t swallow down nor define, the kind of despair that’s like a swirling void.

Then it occurs to him that he hadn’t smiled at Yuuri’s adorable comment, hadn’t laughed. Instead he just offers a nod. “You said it right.”

Yuuri looks slightly confused by his reaction, but doesn’t question it, picking at his food with a fork.

Victor had thought it would be easier than this.

Had thought he’d have more self control.

In fact—it’s animalistic, isn’t it? That he can’t even just be friends with Yuuri? That the craving, the desire for more is so overwhelming that it’s all he can think about? It’s pathetic, disgusting, objectifying…

He notices that Yuuri is still watching him, confused. “Sorry, lost in thought,” Victor dismisses, trying to listen the mood.

Yuuri doesn’t believe him.

(It’s hard to make him believe it when Victor doesn’t believe it himself.)

~

“Are you cold?”

When they had walked to the dining hall, they hadn’t anticipated how cold it would be when they’d go home. Yuuri has his arms folded across his chest, curling in on himself as much as possible as he shuffles his feet. “No, I’m fine.”

Victor licks his lips. “You don’t have a jacket.”

Yuuri doesn’t say anything to that.

He takes off his coat and wraps it around Yuuri’s shoulders. “Here.”

“No, I can’t take this,” Yuuri protests, slipping it back off. “Then you’d be cold.”

“Take it,” Victor insists.

After a moment of uncertainty, he snuggles into the slightly too-big beige trench coat, wrapping it around his shoulders. “Thank you.”

When they make it back to the dorm room, Yuuri makes them both hot chocolate. Victor warms his hands on the cup, sitting on his desk chair and scrolling through social media. “I need to get a costume for the party.”
“What were you last year?” Yuuri asks, wheeling his own desk chair unnecessarily close to Victor’s, their knees almost hitting.

“A police officer,” he answers.

Yuuri looks like he’s holding back a smile. “A police officer?”

Victor shrugs. “What’s wrong with that?”

“I don’t know, just…” He laughs, rubbing the back of his neck with one hand. “I’m trying to imagine it.”

“Here, I’ll show you a photo.” He pulls out his phone and taps on one from his album. Yuuri doesn’t respond verbally, just stares wide-eyed. Victor sees him swallow thickly, lips parting, and then avert his eyes quickly. “What?” Victor queries. “You don’t like it?”

Yuuri gives a nervous shrug. “I… No, it’s just… Yeah.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

Victor squints at him, trying to figure out what he’s thinking, but then shoves his phone back into his pocket. “So, what should I do this year? The same costume?”

“No,” Yuuri blurts.

“What? Don’t wear that again?”

Another swallow. “Don’t… Don’t wear that again. Um, maybe you should try something else. Like a character or something.”

“A character?” Victor asks curiously, leaning his elbow on the arm of the chair and resting his chin on his palm. “What sort of character?”

Yuuri thinks for a moment. “Well, Quicksilver has silver hair.”

“Quicksilver?” he questions.

“Quicksilver?” he questions.

Victor sways back and forth in the chair, confused. “Marvel? Like the comics?”

“We’ll watch the movies some time,” Yuuri offers. “Um, I’m trying to think of who else has silver hair.” He cracks a smile. “Daenerys Targaryen? I guess you’d need longer hair for that.”

“Daenerys Targaryen?” he asks again.

Yuuri freezes, looking unsettled. “You… You haven’t watched Game of Thrones?”

“Er, no.”

The horror in his roommate’s eyes is unprecedented.

Victor chuckles at that, an idea blooming in his mind. “Maybe we could watch it together some time?”
“Not that show,” Yuuri says firmly.

“Why not?”

“Just… Not that show. I can’t really think of anything else. You could just be a zombie or something else generic.” Then he leans back, pretending to scrutinize Victor. “Or Danny Phantom. He has silver hair.”

“Who?”

He just laughs at that. “Never mind.”

Victor licks his lips, looking up at the ceiling. “I suppose you’re right about something generic. A zombie works.”

“Phichit is good at special effects makeup,” Yuuri adds. “He could help you.”

“Good idea. Now let’s watch those Marvel movies you were talking about.”

Yuuri smiles, obviously pleased, and stands up. “Okay, so there are two versions of him. There’s the one in X-Men, and then the one in the Avengers. Two different actors.”

“Why?” Victor asks curiously, watching as Yuuri fetches his laptop off of his bed and begins to type something, sitting back down at his desk.

He waves a hand, dismissing the subject. “Because of a dispute over the characters or something. Um, okay, so which one do you want to watch?”

“Which do you prefer?”

Yuuri hums, still looking at his laptop. “Well, the one in X-Men is played by Evan Peters, so we can watch that.”

Victor shifts his chair beside Yuuri’s so that he can see the screen. “That’s Evan Peters?”

He nods.

“Do you think he’s attractive?” Victor wonders.

“Well, Phichit has a crush on him.”

Victor wants to point out that he doesn’t really care who Phichit has a crush on, and that Yuuri hadn’t answered his question, but he ultimately chooses to drop the subject. Yuuri pulls up one of the movies on an illegal website and then climbs up onto his bed, shifting to the side so that Victor can sit beside him. They end up in their usual position, two pillows propped up vertically against the wall and both of their backs against it, the laptop balanced between their laps.

The movie starts, and Victor shuffles on the bed, trying to get comfortable. One of his arms is trapped between himself and Yuuri, and it’s already starting to get cramped. “Would you mind if I, er…?”

Yuuri glances at him briefly, then seems to realize what he’s saying. “Oh, I don’t mind.”

Victor has an arm wrapped loosely around Yuuri’s shoulders, then, and Yuuri’s arm has more room, too. Best of both worlds, he figures. He’d like to think of their positioning as utilitarianism. Pure utilitarianism. Nothing more, nothing less.
Except Yuuri leans against him slightly, and is this cuddling? How close do they have to be for it to be considered cuddling? Is it cuddling purely because Victor has his arm around his shoulders, or because Yuuri’s head is almost resting on Victor’s shoulder? And what could he say to get Yuuri’s head fully resting on his shoulder? Except he shouldn’t say anything, shouldn’t do anything, shouldn’t even be doing this, because he’s only unconsciously getting his own hopes up, only waiting for an inevitable fall...

“They’re in the future during this part,” Yuuri whispers.

Oh. Right. The movie.

“The future?”

Yuuri turns up the brightness on the screen. “Yeah, the plot is a little confusing. I’ll explain it as we go along. But for now all you have to know is they’re in the future, and they’re fighting off those things.” He points.

“She has silver hair,” Victor says when a silver-haired woman appears on the screen.

“That’s Storm.” He glances at Victor, smiling. “I guess you could be Storm.”

Victor bumps his shoulder with his own. “She controls the weather? Maybe I could get all of our classes cancelled.”

“I like the way you think.”

The movie progresses, and they stay silent.

At some point, Yuuri yawns, covering it with his hand. Victor glances at him, sees his head leaned awkwardly against the wall due to their positioning. “You can lean on me, if you want.”

Yuuri meets his eyes. “Are you sure?”

In response, Victor pulls him closer with the arm around his shoulders. Yuuri sighs as he leans his head on Victor, obviously far more comfortable. Then he points at the screen. “Look, this is the part where Quicksilver is introduced.”

Victor watches as a silver-haired man is shown on the screen playing ping pong with himself. “Super speed?”

“Mmm,” Yuuri answers.

He leans his head so that his cheek is nuzzling Yuuri’s hair. Platonic, platonic, platonic, he chants in his mind as his hand around Yuuri’s shoulder tightens its grip, holding him closer. Platonic. Platonic. A platonic relationship is what Yuuri wants, so that’s what Victor wants. But this is fine. He can let himself have this, can’t he? He can let himself enjoy this without guilt?

More time passes, Victor paying more attention to the feeling of Yuuri pressed up against him than the movie itself. He wonders if this is what Hell is like, condemned to a life of touching Yuuri but never being able to touch him the way he truly wants. Never being able to have him the way that he truly wants. Or perhaps it’s heaven, since he’s allowed to touch him at all.

“Can we finish this later?” Yuuri asks quietly. “I think I’m going to take a nap.”

Victor nods. “Sure. I have assignments to work on, anyway.” He releases Yuuri from his grip,
getting down from the bed and watching as Yuuri readjusts the pillow before collapsing on it, another yawn escaping his lips. His laptop is still by his side. “You really can’t not sleep without that thing next to you, can you?”

There’s an incoherent mumble.

“What?”

“That was a double negative,” Yuuri tells him.

Victor smiles affectionately. “I’m serious.”

“What’s wrong with sleeping with my laptop next to me?”

“I don’t know… Radiation?”

Yuuri hums and pulls the blankets over him. “No radiation. I’m fine. But move it if you want.”

He’s about to disagree, but then he remembers that Yuuri is a physics major and probably knows far more about this than he does. Nevertheless, Victor picks up the laptop from next to him and places it on Yuuri’s desk. “Want me to turn off the lights?”

“You don’t have to,” he answers.

“Sweet dreams.”

Yuuri opens his eyes long enough to shoot him a steely look.

~

“This is your costume?” Christophe asks, examining Victor’s Superman t-shirt and jeans. “Victor, I don’t know how to put this lightly…”

Victor shrugs. “I didn’t have any better ideas.”

Christophe groans, defeated. “I can work with this, I suppose.” He swings open his armoire. “Here, see if this fits you.”

He manages to catch the light blue button-up shirt that Christophe throws at him. Then a black tie.

“What are these for?”

“You can dramatically rip open the shirt when somebody asks you what your costume is,” Christophe explains. “Also, those jeans aren’t tight enough. This isn’t just a Halloween party, this is a sexy Halloween party. Vitya, it’s like you don’t even remember who you are anymore.”

“Not tight enough?” Victor repeats, heading into Chris and Phichit’s bathroom and examining himself in the mirror. “Hmm.”

“Just because Yuuri isn’t going to the party doesn’t mean you can slack off,” he scolds. “We have a reputation to uphold, you know. Try these on.”

He gets changed, then emerges from the bathroom in his Superman t-shirt, a button-up, a tie, and
tightly jeans. His feet are bare and he looks himself up and down in the mirror once again. “Better?”

“Much better,” Christophe agrees. “Now you’re ready.”

“I’m going to say goodbye to Yuuri,” Victor says. “I’ll give him one more chance to come.”

“I’ll go find Phichit.”

Victor finds Yuuri on his bed, the lights turned off and his laptop screen illuminating his features. It reminds him of the first time he’d entered the room. “Yuuri? We’re all about to leave.”

“Oh,” Yuuri says, looking slightly confused, probably as to why Victor is here. “Well, have fun.”

“You’re sure you don’t want to come?”

Yuuri smiles softly. “I’m sure. You’ll have more fun without me, anyway.”

He’s floored by that comment.

(Surely he’s kidding.)

(Surely, surely he’s kidding.)

Victor opens his mouth to say something. No words come out. He tries again. “What do you mean?”

“Oh, nothing,” Yuuri says dismissively, offering a reassuring look that provides Victor with the exact opposite of reassurance. “Take care of Phichit for me? Sometimes he can get a little overexcited at parties.”

“I will.”

Christophe goes as a lumberjack. He quickly abandons his plastic axe at the beginning of the night, though, because it’s too much of a pain to carry around. Then, the only evidence of his identity is his popped open, red plaid shirt. Victor sees a few people pointing at him and whispering.

Phichit goes as the main character from his favorite movie, “The King and the Skater.” Whenever somebody doesn’t understand the reference, he’s outraged and proceeds to give them a ten minute explanation of the plot of the movie. JJ dresses as a king, golden crown on his head as he kisses his girlfriend, Isabella.

The music is obnoxious, so loud it can hardly be considered music. Victor feels himself dancing with Chris, though it’s so dark that he’s not even certain it is Chris. Dancing shadows from the trees loom over the crowds, the moonlight the only source of clarity. At some point, Phichit comes up to him and takes his hands, and he’s twirling Phichit around, laughing uncontrollably. The alcohol starts to buzz in his mind, and at some point he has lost his button-up, so now he’s only wearing a black tie and his Superman t-shirt.

“Chug, chug, chug,” the crowd chants as an individual dressed as a pirate chugs something from a
large glass. Victor figures he’ll regret it in the morning, but for now he appears to be having the time of his life.

There’s a guy trailing his fingers down Christophe’s chest in the darkness, and Christophe is grinning madly at him. Somebody hands Victor a bottle of champagne and cheers as he pops it open, the golden liquid running down his fingers. He licks around the edges of the bottle, trying to get as much as possible but missing and letting most of it spill onto the ground by accident. Then, Victor sees Phichit talking animatedly to someone with black hair, whose face he can’t see. But it looks like…

(Yuuri?)

He hurries through the crowd to get a better view.

Not Yuuri.

“Victor! Have you met Seung-gil?”

Victor offers Seung-gil a smile and then loses his balance on something on the ground, landing against a tree with an “oomph.” Phichit stumbles over to help him but is laughing, grabbing his arm to lift him back up before falling down beside him. Victor laughs, too.

“Yuuri should’ve come,” Phichit says to him, barely audible above the roar of the crowd and the music.

That’s when Victor has an idea.

A genius idea.

“I’ll get him and bring him.”

Phichit nods enthusiastically. “That’s a really good idea. Tell him I want him to come, too. That’ll help convince him.”

“Mm,” Victor agrees, trying to get to his feet. He lands against the trunk of the tree again. “This is so great. You’re so great.”

“You’re great,” Phichit agrees. “Go find Yuuri. Tell him to come.”

Victor nods, dedicated, and heads across the clearing, seeing the lights of the college buildings in the distance. He laughs when he bumps into someone who spills their drink on him by accident.

“Victor! Join us for karaoke!” Chris calls.

He sings three songs, then remembers his mission and heads towards the dorm buildings once again.

It takes him a while to make it there, but when he does, he can’t get his key in the lock. Luckily, another student sees him and helps him get inside. Then, Victor stumbles up the stairs to find his room. Because Yuuri would love this party. Love it so much. He’d have the time of his life, probably. He’d let loose and forget about physics for once, maybe he’d even dance with Victor, hands trailing underneath his shirt and lips pressing against his skin…

“Yuuri,” he breathes when he opens the door to their room.

Where is he?

He’s not here.
Why wouldn't he be here?

Victor shuts the door behind him and lands in his desk chair, facing backwards and leaning his arms over it. “Yuuri, are you hiding?” he drawls, breaking out into giggles at the thought of it.

The bathroom door opens, and Yuuri steps out, rubbing a towel on his hair. “Victor? You’ve only been gone for a few hours. Is the party over already?”

“Yuuri,” Victor mutters, spinning his chair to face him. “You need to come.”

Yuuri pauses, setting the towel down on the silver rod in the bathroom and then heading closer to Victor. “Are you drunk?”

Victor giggles again, shaking his head. “No, no.”

There’s a small smile on Yuuri’s lips, but he can’t figure out why. “Stand up, then.”

He stands up.

Falls on top of Yuuri.

They both crash to the floor.

“Victor! Are you okay?” Yuuri asks quickly.

Victor loves laying on top of him, buries his face in Yuuri’s neck and kisses it. “You’re so nice, Yuuri. Nice to me. Have you noticed that? Whenever I do something, you’re so nice.”

“Er… Thank you.”

“Mmm,” Victor agrees, shutting his eyes. One of his hands moves to Yuuri’s hair and his fingers weave through the soft strands. Magically soft. Magic. The only explanation. “Do you use magic shampoo?”

Yuuri chuckles. “How much did you drink?”

“None,” Victor insists. Had he? There is some sort of aftertaste in his mouth, now that Yuuri mentions it. But there’s also a pleasant buzzing in his mind, a weightlessness to his entire body. “I came to get you.”

“Oh you… You shouldn’t have.”

There’s a pause.

“Victor, do you think you could get off of me? I sort of can’t breathe.”

Victor gets off of him, helping him up but then stumbling back into a wall. “Ow.”

“Are you okay?” Yuuri asks, concerned. “Here, come sit down in your chair. Don’t go up on your bed, you’ll fall.”

“See? Nice,” Victor insists, letting Yuuri guide him to his desk chair. He spins around in it but instantly feels nauseous, pressing his feet hard into the ground to make the movement stop. “Come to the party, Yuuri.”

“Do you want me to take you back there?” Yuuri offers. “I’m not going, but I’ll help you get back
there, if you want.”

He squints. “You’ll take me, but you won’t go? What’s the point of that?”

“Um…”

Victor laughs again—Yuuri is adorable. He should kiss him, really. “Yuuri, guess what?”

Yuuri smiles and sits down on his own chair, scooting closer. “What?”

“I’m Superman.”

He spins his chair around again, instantly regretting it, and Yuuri winces, helping him out of it. “Okay, never mind about sitting in your chair. Um… Here, sit on the floor.”

Victor sits cross-legged on the floor, but Yuuri doesn’t sit in front of him. He tugs on his sleeve, persistent. “Yuuri, sit with me.”

Yuuri does, then, and his cheeks are red. He’s blushing. Victor loves it. Loves him. Everything about him, from his blush to his lips to his magical hair. Then Yuuri is laughing, and Victor is confused until he realizes that he had just said all of that out loud.

“You like when I blush?” Yuuri asks shyly.

Victor nods seriously.

If only he could tell somebody about how he feels. Somebody, anybody. “Can I tell you a secret?” Victor whispers. He wants to tell Yuuri, but he doesn’t want Yuuri to know. Something about that concept feels off, but then, either way Yuuri will sit closer to him. Which is good, because a minute ago they’d been pressed against each other, and now there are several inches between them. This will fix that issue.

Yuuri doesn’t move closer to him, though. “Sure.”

“Come here,” Victor urges.

He moves closer. Victor tugs on him until he’s sitting right next to him, their thighs pressed together. He wraps both arms around him and rests his chin on Yuuri’s shoulder, lips against his neck, right beneath his ear. “So what’s the secret?”

Victor thinks really hard, tries to remember what the secret was. When he remembers, though, he realizes that this is Yuuri, right in front of him. “I can’t tell you.”

“Oh,” Yuuri laughs. “It’s a big secret, then?”

“The biggest,” Victor promises. “It has to do with you.”

“With me?”

Victor’s head hurts. “Can we lay down on the bed?”

Yuuri bites his lip. “Okay, but let me help you up onto it, and don’t move too much when you’re up there. I don’t want you to fall off.”

Victor stumbles on the ladder and Yuuri looks like a ghost, face pale with fear. He helps Victor up and then he’s laying down, hand attached to Yuuri’s sleeve. “Lay with me.”
Yuuri doesn’t refuse, lays down next to him. “Better?”

“Better,” Victor agrees.

“So what’s your secret?”

He frowns. “My secret?”

“You said that you have a secret that has to do with me.”

Victor wraps his arms around Yuuri’s torso and cuddles against him, burying his face in his shoulder. He’s warm, and Yuuri smiles affectionately, holding him close. “Okay, I’ll tell you on one condition.”

“What’s the condition?” Yuuri asks, and he looks happy. A weird sort of happy. Like there’s an indefinable emotion in his eyes, something that’s normally covered up but is now barren, vulnerable.

“Don’t tell anybody.”

Yuuri laughs. “Okay, I won’t tell anybody.”

Victor moves upwards to meet his eyes, forehead pressing against Yuuri’s own. His gaze is serious, not matching the smile that is still playing on his lips. “I’m going to tell you. Are you ready?”

He swallows, nodding.

“You talk in your sleep,” he whispers.

There’s a pause.

Yuuri looks surprised, for some reason.

Victor buries his face back in his neck, breathing him in, exhaling against his skin. “And it’s really nice. I like hearing it. It makes me happy.” He thinks, hard, and comes to a conclusion. “A lot of things that you do make me happy in ways that I’ve never been happy before.”

Yuuri doesn’t say anything.

So Victor decides to continue. “Like when you sing in the shower. That’s nice, too. The sound of your voice in general is nice. And I like when you touch your hair, that’s nice. And I like when I touch your hair,” he adds, stroking his hair again and humming.

There’s still no response.

“But…” Victor starts slowly, trying to focus on his words. “But sometimes it hurts.”

“It hurts?” Yuuri whispers, and he’s holding Victor back, now—gently, as though he’s made of glass. One of his hands touches Victor’s hair and Victor cuddles farther against him, squeezing his eyes shut tight. For some reason, the feeling reminds him of home, of St. Petersburg. He could live in Yuuri’s arms, live under his touch. “What do you mean it hurts?”


Yuuri brushes his fingers through Victor’s hair comfortingly. “I don’t understand.”

Victor pulls away, needs to meet his eyes. He takes one of Yuuri’s hands in his own, laces their
fingers and puts their joint hands on his own chest, urging Yuuri to understand. Not knowing how to find the right words. “Hurts here.”

The look in Yuuri’s eyes is heartbreaking, desolate.

“Oh, Victor—”

“Even now it hurts.”

It does.

Yuuri looks pained. There’s a glimmer in his eyes, as though he’s trying to decide what to do. His eyebrows draw together in concentration, and Victor reaches up his free hand to poke him between the eyes. “When you focus, a little wrinkle forms there. That’s nice, too.”

He laughs at that, but there’s no humor to it. Only more of the weird sadness. Yuuri cups his cheek with one hand and leans in closer, kissing him on the cheek. “You should sleep.”

“Will you stay?”

Yuuri smiles softly and nods. “If you want me to.”


“Goodnight, then.”

He shuts his eyes, breathes in the scent of Yuuri mixed with the scent of alcohol and lets it lure him to sleep. When the dreams begin, he thinks he feels lips on his hair. A ghost of a feeling, but a feeling all the same.

~

“Hey Clark Kent! Are you awake?”

Victor moans.

There’s the jingle of a doorknob, and then light is pouring into the room, attacking his eyelids. He rolls onto his side, but hits something.

Something.

Someone.

(Yuuri?)

“Oh,” Christophe says, leaning against the doorway. “Bad time? The door was unlocked.”

Victor is frozen, watches the sleeping boy’s face. His features are relaxed, he’s facing Victor, an arm laying across Victor’s waist, his other hand pillowed under his head. He shifts, then, mumbling something incoherent and cuddling closer to him, a gentle sigh escaping his lips.

Victor strains his neck to look at Chris. “Why are you still here?” he whispers.
“I’m glad you two made up,” Chris comments, matching his volume.

Victor shuts his eyes. “Please go.”

Christophe does.

And then it’s quiet again, Yuuri asleep and blissfully oblivious beside him.


Victor tries to remember what had happened last night. He shuts his eyes, focusing hard. He’d been at the party. He’d dressed as Superman, which is why he’s still wearing the shirt, probably. Christophe was there, and Phichit was there, and everybody was there… There was drinking. Lots of it. So much that the stench of alcohol was inescapable, that feet were being stepped on and people were tripping over trees in the darkest parts of the forest.

But then what?

How had he gotten home?

Most importantly, how had he ended up here?

Yuuri… He and Yuuri had…

They’d spoken—Victor has a vague memory of the sound of his voice.

That’s when the realization hits.

Oh no.

Oh no, no, no, no.

Victor must’ve told him, must’ve confessed. Must’ve admitted his every dark thought, his every desire. Yuuri must know, now. Must hate him. Probably had cuddled with him out of pity—or worse, Victor had ended up beside him somehow and Yuuri had felt too bad for him to move. No, no, no. Had Victor just ruined a friendship with some simple drinking?

Either way, he shouldn’t be doing this. Maybe, just maybe, he’ll be able to mend their friendship, assure Yuuri that this hadn’t meant anything, that whatever he’d said doesn’t have to matter. Surely it’s not too late. He’ll need to be stricter with himself, have a firm talking to with his subconscious. Need to avoid the drinking. He’ll need to…

Yuuri yawns.

It’s a drawn-out one, and he pillows his head on Victor’s chest instead of his own hand, getting as close to him as humanly possible. One of his legs snakes in between both of Victor’s.

This couldn’t be worse, Victor thinks.

Because Yuuri doesn’t know what he’s doing, and the moment that he wakes to find Victor had allowed this to happen, had taken advantage of him like this, it’s over. So Victor lightly moves away from him, lets Yuuri’s head hit the pillow. The boy yawns again, and this time rolls onto his back, fingers grazing and then leaving Victor’s hip. His eyes blink open.

Victor freezes.
(Perhaps if he’s still enough, Yuuri won’t see him.)

(Perhaps, one way or another, he’ll match the color of the walls behind him, or of the bedsheets underneath him. Perhaps he’ll be camouflaged.)

Yuuri wakes slowly, and the moment his eyes are open, he glances around.

Sees Victor right away.

Props himself up on his elbows.

“Your head must hurt,” he mumbles, voice laced with sleep, speech slurred. Then he’s out of the bed and fumbling through their bathroom drawers. “Aspirin. Here, take one.”

Victor watches in shocked silence as Yuuri hands him an aspirin, then grabs an unopened water bottle off of his desk and gives it to him. “Do you need food, too?” he asks. “I can go get you food.”

He takes the aspirin.

“Victor?”

“Food would be… Food would be nice.”

Yuuri puts on his shoes and leaves without his glasses.

Victor’s mind is a whirlwind.

(Of thoughts, of emotions, of theories.)

Because Yuuri hadn’t seemed mad, no—just concerned. Genuinely concerned for his wellbeing. So Victor sits on Yuuri’s bed, mind begging for his body to move him to his own to appease the awkwardness of the situation. But he doesn’t, he just stays, tries to mentally dull the throbbing behind his eyes.

Yuuri is back in a heartbeat. “I didn’t want to take the time to go to the dining hall, so I just bought you a muffin from downstairs, I hope that’s alright.”

He takes a suspicious bite. It’s blueberry.

Neither of them speak. Yuuri sits on the bed beside him, as much space between them as possible, as though he’s wondering something. When he speaks, it startles Victor. “Do you remember anything? From last night, I mean.”

He frowns, taking another bite. “I remember… I remember dancing. I think a Fitz and The Tantrums song was playing. And then… Then I remember seeing you. It’s sort of blurry from that point onwards.”

“Oh.”

“Did I… Did I say anything, or…?”

There’s a pause.

It’s a second, but it feels longer, greater, powerful, like there’s something stuck in the air, inhaled through lungs and exhaled through lips. Victor’s heart thuds in his chest as he abandons the blueberry muffin wrapper, tactfully crumpling it and tossing it into the waste bin beside Yuuri’s desk.
Then he glances at him, hands on his thighs, wondering.

Yuuri is watching him, almost analytically. And for a second, he looks like a visage, hair ruffled from sleep and his eyes glazed over with an emotion that Victor can’t pinpoint. The sunlight reflects off of his features, makes him glow—like a star, Victor thinks. Or something else ephemeral, something that shouldn’t be real but is.

“Okay,” Yuuri breathes.

Victor doesn’t understand what that means. Then it occurs to him that, perhaps, Yuuri is talking to himself. So he doesn’t say anything, just focuses on him, focuses on trying to read his thoughts, on trying to understand what could possibly be going through his mind. Victor remembers his joke about writing a Yuuri Katsuki handbook, but the truth is, he wouldn’t know where to start. Because if there’s one thing trait he posses above everything else, one trait that defines him, it’s unpredictability.

“Let’s settle this,” he says, the words slow, confident. “I want to settle this.”

“Settle…” Victor starts, confused. Either he’s more hungover than he had previously thought, or Yuuri is making no sense whatsoever. “Settle this?”

Yuuri takes in a sharp breath, but maintains eye contact. “Two options. Are you listening?”

He nods, stays silent.

Then Yuuri is shifting closer to him, legs still hanging over the side of the bed, now a few inches away from Victor’s. “Two options. Either you want to kiss me, and you do, or you don’t, so you don’t. Does that make sense?”

“I…” Victor starts stupidly.

“No, I’m sick of this. Either you do or you don’t. Because when I kissed you, a while ago, you didn’t kiss me back, so I assumed that you didn’t want to, which I was fine with, by the way. But you were still acting so affectionate, you still do act so affectionate, so touchy, and I started to think that, okay, that’s just his personality, but then you went and got wasted last night and now, now I don’t know what to think because you’re just so—”

Victor kisses him.

(And it’s requited.)

He shifts closer, one of his legs overlapping Yuuri’s, a hand weaving through his hair, a familiar sensation. His lips are soft, warmer than he’d thought possible, gentler. One of his hands grips Victor’s back, bunching up the fabric of his stupid Superman t-shirt, and his other hand touches Victor’s forearm, so light that Victor isn’t sure if it’s really there or not.

He shuts his eyes, focusing on the sensation, losing himself in it. Yuuri moves his lips underneath his, but mostly lets Victor take the lead, so he focuses on his bottom lip, then works his way up to the top one, all heat and light, magnetism and electricity, soft sighs and tender caresses. A month’s worth of tension finds its escape through catharsis.

“Oh my god,” Yuuri breathes when he pulls away, a hand flying up to cover his mouth. His eyes are wide, cheeks bright red. There’s a barely-concealed smile playing on his lips.

“What?” Victor asks quickly, flustered. He keeps a hand in Yuuri’s hair, stroking it absent-mindedly,
enjoying the way it feels.

Yuuri starts laughing nervously, then bumps Victor’s shoulder with his own, playful. “I didn’t think you’d actually do it.”

Victor laughs, too, because Yuuri’s laugh is contagious and because his mind is fuzzy from the hangover and the kissing, and because he can’t quite believe what had just happened, either. “You mean you didn’t think I’d kiss you?”

He shakes his head.

“What did I say last night?” Victor asks.

“A lot,” Yuuri answers. “It was pretty sappy.”

“Sappy?”

“Nicholas Sparks sort of sappy.”

Victor grins. “Romantic, then?”

Yuuri smiles back twofold. “Sort of.”

And he wants something, but he doesn’t want to push his luck. “Can I kiss you again?”

There’s still a tie around his neck, and Yuuri grabs it, pulling him closer. This time it’s teeth and tongue, eyelashes fluttering, heat and passion. Victor is more than content to let him take control, melting against him, hand tugging on the ends of Yuuri’s hair. Yuuri hums underneath him, and Victor presses a hand against his back to lower him onto the bed, framing his hips with his knees.

“Victor,” Yuuri whispers gently, a hand pressing on his chest.

It takes a moment for Victor to stop kissing him, to realize that he’s being pushed away. When he does, he pulls off of him and blinks, dazed. “Are you… Do you…?”

“No, no, I want to,” Yuuri promises. “I just… Don’t you think you should…” His voice trails off, awkward.

Victor glances down at himself.

(He’s not exactly in the optimal shape to be kissing Yuuri Katsuki.)

“I’ll be right back,” he promises, crawling off of the bed and hurrying into the bathroom. “Don’t move.”

Yuuri leans on his side, watching him. “Am I allowed to move a little?”

“A little,” Victor agrees.

~

It’s the quickest shower he has ever taken in his life.

Then he exits the bathroom, clad in a white t-shirt and jeans, and moves back up the ladder to
Yuuri’s bed, smiling at him. “Can we continue now?”

It’s akin to—no, greater than—heaven. Victor wonders how he’d lasted this long without it, wonders how he’d ever go without it again in the future. He considers cancelling his classes, locking the door to their room and kissing him for the rest of his life. Considers the way that Yuuri’s hands loosely grip his sides, the way that his hair splay out against his pillow, considers the soft smile on his lips that Victor figures parallels his own.

They slow down, Victor focusing on enjoying the moment, on mapping his mouth, keeping his balance with his arms on the bedsheets, Yuuri occasionally making little noises beneath him, mirroring his own. When they pull away for breath, there’s a sparkle in the black-haired boy’s eyes. “Does this mean I’m safe now?”

“What does mean?” Victor asks, abandoning his lips to kiss his jaw instead, working his way up until his lips are near his temple, then moving down to his neck.

“From the prank war.”

“Definitely not. Why would this make a difference?”

Yuuri shrugs, eyes shut and head tilted back. “I guess I’ll just have to keep my guard up then.”

“I guess so,” Victor muses. “I already have something planned, you know.”

He doesn’t, really, but he gets the effect that he wants, Yuuri’s eyes flying open. “What is it?”

“Can’t tell you, obviously.”

“Hmm.”

Victor pauses on his pulse point, sucks lightly, but not hard enough to leave a mark. Yuuri gasps underneath him, hands on his sides tightening. “I found your weak spot,” Victor teases, lavishing it with his tongue and smiling unabashedly.

“I think that y—Victor,” he exhales, body stilling, silently begging for Victor to continue.

“I might have a new favorite Yuuri expression now.”

“You’re ridiculous.”

“Why didn’t we do this ages ago?” Victor asks against his skin, breath hot.

“Because I’m not gay.”

Victor freezes at that, pulls off of him, concerned. “You’re… You’re not…?”

Yuuri is biting the inside of his cheek as he shakes his head. “No, I’m straight, actually. Sorry, I should’ve told you sooner.”

“Oh,” Victor breathes.

It feels like an impact, something hard hitting him in his chest and knocking the breath out of him. He’s still buzzing from the kissing, there’s still a painful throbbing from the hangover. He figures he looks like a mess, hair wet from the shower and lips bruised from kissing. Yuuri is watching him sympathetically, shifting uncomfortably beneath him. “Sorry.”
“That’s… That’s okay,” Victor says slowly, puzzled.

So Yuuri doesn’t want to kiss him?

Or he does?

Or is it something else entirely, maybe he’s just exploring, or maybe—

“Victor?” Yuuri says. “I was joking.”

Victor lets out a heavy breath and rolls off of Yuuri, laying beside him on the too-small bed. “Do you understand the heart attack you just gave me?”

“I’m sorry,” he mumbles, turning on his side to face him. “Bad joke.”

“Actual heart palpitations,” Victor says firmly. “I could’ve fainted due to your cruel sense of humor. Now you owe me.”

“Owe you?” Yuuri repeats.

Victor nods. “However you’d like to repay me.”

Yuuri leans forward and kisses him again sensually, one hand coming up to cup his cheek. “Does this work?”

He pretends to think about it. “I guess. We’ll see.”

~

Victor takes Makkachin to the quad an hour later, head starting to feel better from the aspirin and the food. Yuuri comes with him, hands shoved deep in his coat pockets. Students who had attended the party the night before come up to Victor and clap him on the back, congratulating him for a successful event, and each time, before they walk away, they shoot Yuuri an odd look.

It’s starting to get weird.

He opens Yik Yak once, sees Victor’s name plastered all over it, and then closes it out again. Phichit sends him screenshots of the funniest, most innocuous posts. As they’re walking to Yakov’s house to fetch Makkachin, Victor is unnecessarily close to him, his shoulder constantly brushing against Yuuri’s. It’s nice, but it only dramatically increases the curious looks that they’re receiving.

“Makkachin!” Victor calls when he opens up the main doors of the house.

Makkachin leaps on him, paws on his chest knocking him down onto the patio. Yuuri winces with concern, but Victor is laughing, scratching his pet behind his ears. “Hi, Makkachin,” Yuuri greets, the dog turning to pay attention to him, luckily not knocking him over as well.

Victor fetches his leash, then they’re off, the dog tugging them forward with excitement. “Sometimes I take my skateboard and let him pull me,” Victor tells Yuuri as he’s yanked to the side so that Makkachin can sniff a tree.

“I can picture that,” Yuuri replies, smiling at the thought.
At the quad, Victor unclips Makkachin’s leash, watching as the poodle hurries over to a group of students who look thrilled to see him. “He’s the most popular person on campus.”

It occurs to Yuuri that he’s not a person, but he doesn’t point that out. Instead, he just sits beside Victor at a table, umbrella cast over both of their heads. He has a hand resting on the table and Victor takes it, playing with his fingers absent-mindedly. Yuuri glances around self-consciously.

“Do you not want people to know?” Victor asks, releasing him.

“No, it’s not that, I just…” He licks his lips and shrugs. “People might be confused, is all.”

Victor raises an eyebrow at that. “Confused? Confused how?”

“Nothing, never mind,” Yuuri dismisses.

It feels as though Victor doesn’t notice the looks that they receive. Of course, he has always received attention, but when they’re together it feels as though it has doubled. While he basks in it, Yuuri shrivels under the spotlight. “Are you okay?” Victor asks, visibly concerned.

He shakes off his anxious thoughts and smiles. “Yeah, I’m fine. Just thinking.”

“About?”

Victor has his head on his arms, which are folded on the table. He’s leaning forward, eyes looking up at him expectantly. There’s a strand of hair falling in his eyes and Yuuri pushes it back for him. “I don’t know. You.”

“Me? I’m featured in Yuuri Katsuki’s thoughts? Along with oh-so-interesting physics concepts and katsudon?”

Yuuri shoves him. Victor shoves him back before moving to sit closer to him. “Remind me why I talk to you?”

Victor shuts one eye, pretending to think hard. “Well, I’m attractive. Talented, definitely—I’ll have you know my teachers used to call me a child prodigy.”

“Used to.”

“Hey!” Victor protests. “I’m very intelligent, Yuuri.”

“Egotistical, too.”

Victor pouts at him, takes his hand again. “You’re breaking me. You’re always breaking me. Chapter three of *Yuuri Katsuki for Dummies* is about how rude you are.”

“I thought chapter two is already about sarcasm,” Yuuri reminds him.

“Ah, there’s a difference between sarcasm and breaking my heart.”

Yuuri laughs and squeezes his fingers. “Okay, I’ll try and be nicer to you.”

“Good. If you need help getting started with that mission, I have a physics paper due on Monday.”

“On Monday? Let me guess, you haven’t started it.” When Victor pouts, he purses his lips, considering something. “What’s the topic?”
“Free choice,” Victor answers. “We have a list of twenty options that we can choose from.”

Yuuri grins brightly at that. “Really? We can pick a fun one, then.”

“A fun one,” he repeats slowly. “I don’t understand you.”

“Can I see?”

When he pulls up the list on his phone and shows it to him, he rests his chin on his palm and watches as Yuuri’s face lights up more and more with each and every line that he reads. Yuuri can’t quite understand how Victor doesn’t find these things as interesting as he does, but he has given up on questioning it. “There’s Nikola Tesla, Schrödinger’s cat, photovoltaic electricity, anti-matter… How are we going to pick one of these?”

Victor looks amused. “Oh, you’re right, how will we ever? Such a tragedy. Wait, what was the one you said about a cat? I like cats.”

Yuuri lights up at that, moving even closer to him and pointing at the list. “Schrödinger’s cat. You’ll like that one. It’s less like physics and more like philosophy. So, imagine there’s a cat in a box. And nobody looks in the box. How do you know if the cat is alive or dead?”

Victor frowns. “Well, it’d die eventually.”

“Right, but if you don’t look in the box, you can’t prove that it’s dead.”

“So it’s sort of like, ‘if a tree falls in the forest and nobody’s around to hear it…’”? Yuuri nods excitedly. “Yeah, but there are different interpretations to it. So, okay, now in your box you have a cat, a radioactive source, like a particle, and a flask of poison.”

He pales. “This sounds horrible.”

“It’s imaginary,” Yuuri assures him.

“But I don’t want to think about cats dying, that’s—”

“Shh, just listen,” he urges. “Okay, so there’s a cat, a radioactive source, and a flask of poison. So, when a trigger within the box detects the radiation, the flask breaks and the poison eventually kills the cat. But you don’t know when the trigger detects it, or when the flask breaks, or when the cat dies, right? It has to happen eventually, but you don’t know when.”

He has to admit he’s already slightly lost, but Yuuri looks so passionate and adorable that he nods anyway.

“So it’s called the Copenhagen interpretation. The fact that the cat could be either alive or dead at any given moment is called a quantum superposition, because it’s linked to a random subatomic event, you know, the particles that may or may not have decayed and caused the release of the poison. It’s quantum mechanics, but as soon as somebody looks inside the box, obviously they can only see a dead or alive cat, not both, and the radioactive source will either have decayed or not decayed. Therefore, as soon as an observation occurs it’s no longer a quantum superposition and it brings forth the question of when reality turns into one possibility or the other, since there’s no proof before observation.”

He looks at Victor as though he’d just drooled on his own shirt.
“Isn’t that interesting?” Yuuri pleads, looking slightly embarrassed now.

Victor opens his mouth, then closes it, then opens it again. “Don’t you… Why did they have to use a cat?”

He blinks. “That’s… That’s not really the point. I told you, it’s about quantum mechanics.”

There’s a pause.

“You’re pretty, Yuuri, did you know that?”

Yuuri nudges his shoulder again, blushing. “It’s not that complicated, seriously.”

“You lost me at quantum something-something-something. But you’ll help me with my paper, right? We can write about the cat, even though it sounds pretty depressing.”

“Like I said, it’s not depressing because it’s not a real…” He stops. “Okay, sure, we’ll write about the cat.”

Victor sighs, “Poor cat.”

“I said it’s not a real… I give up. At least you’re pretty, too.”

He glares at him, then leans his head on Yuuri’s shoulder. “Are you objectifying me?”

“Probably.”

“Rude, I’m telling you. You’re very rude.”
Chapter Summary

Yuuri helps Victor finish his paper for physics, and the fraternity goes on a hiking and camping trip.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys!! Sorry about the delay on this chapter, life desperately wanted to keep it and I apart. But it's here now and I really hope you enjoy it!

CHECK OUT MORE CRAZY GOOD ARTWORK THAT HAD ME SOBBING: victor and christophe's halloween costumes from last year (i died of laughter u have no idea) by the awesome bourgeoislante The kiss and Victor's internal meltdown by the super talented mistart Victor post-shower and being very excited to kiss Yuuri by the incredible feiya1910 (thank u all so much!!!)
I'd also like to thank exile-wrath for giving me some awesome ideas for the prank war!

Thanks so much for reading and be sure to let me know what you think!!

also, small warning: some stuff takes place near Detroit in this chapter and I do not live in Michigan / around there so if there are any (or a lot of) inaccuracies I apologize in advance!!!

“I can’t help but feel like you’re getting distracted,” Yuuri notices.

Victor nuzzles Yuuri’s warm sweatshirt with his cheek, arms wrapped around the younger boy’s torso and his entire weight leaning on him. Yuuri sighs and puts a hand on Victor’s back, rubbing it. Victor hums, delighting in the feeling. “Maybe.”

“Focus,” Yuuri scolds, suddenly pushing him away.

It dazes Victor, who sits up straighter and looks back at the laptop in front of them. “I can’t even pronounce half of the words in this essay. Professor Baranovskaya won’t believe that I wrote this myself for a second.”

Yuuri appears to be confused by that, shaking his head and tapping the down arrow on the keyboard to scroll through the five page essay in question. They’re sitting at Victor’s desk, both of their chairs pulled in front of it. “What do you mean? You did write it.”

“Well, you sort of dictated it to me.”

He appears offset by that, but he doesn’t have a good response, either. “Why didn’t you tell me that you weren’t understanding anything I was saying?”
Victor smiles. “I like listening to you talk about things that you’re passionate about.”

And it’s perfect, making Yuuri flustered like that. He has perfected it like a fine art, knows exactly when and how to make him tick. The only issue, though, is that Yuuri has learned the same about him. Their cohabitation has led to the sharing of pet peeves, the accidental sharing (and consequential thievery) of school supplies, and, most importantly, the learning of each other’s personalities.

(So, yes, he knows how to make Yuuri blush.)

(And he revels in that fact.)

It’s pink, spreading from his cheeks to the tip of his ears, and it’s Yuuri Katsuki Blush Number Three, Victor notices with delight, the one where he ducks his head so that his chin is touching his shoulder. He’s admiring it when Yuuri starts murmuring, “I sort of just rant. It’s really not that… I’m sorry if I went on too long and bored you.”

He thinks he could listen to Yuuri talk about anything.

“Well, no,” he promises. “The topic might be boring, yes, but you do manage to make it…” He almost slips, *almost* says ‘interesting,’ and Yuuri can tell, is grinning from ear to ear, now. Cheeky. Victor shakes his head, adamant.

“You were going to say it,” Yuuri says. “You were going to say that physics is interesting.”

“Was not,” Victor assures him, then leans forward and wraps an arm around him, kissing him on his hairline. Yuuri is blushing again, more violently this time, but moves closer to him in response to the touch, and though things are still weird and their relationship is undefined, he loves that this is a thing that they do now, loves that he can kiss him and it feels right.

The problem with kissing Yuuri, though, is looking at him.

(It’s not so much a problem as it is a dilemma—and though those words may be synonymous, they definitely possess different connotations for Victor.)

Because when he looks at him, he sees his soft features, his pink lips, his brown eyes with the flecks of gold that he’d noticed on their very first meeting when he’d hit Yuuri on his bike. Victor notices his laugh, his voice, everything about him, wonders how every minuscule feature and quality that he possesses can be just as enchanting—if not more—than the last. Wonders how it’s possible to want to be with someone at all times, wonders how it’s possible to miss someone the moment they’re apart.

(Wonders if Yuuri feels the same way.)

“Penny for your thoughts?” Yuuri asks, as he takes hold of Victor’s laptop and highlights something, deleting a whole paragraph. “There, I dumbed it down.”

Victor rolls his eyes, too busy admiring him to feel patronized, and takes the laptop back. “Okay, tell me more about the quantum stuff.”

And then Yuuri is going, and this is perhaps Victor’s favorite thing—watching him lose himself. He sees it in other moments, yes, but it’s most blatant when he’s speaking about physics. His hands move wildly in front of his face, making gestures that don’t make sense to anybody but himself, and his eyes light up, as though he’s silently begging Victor to feel the same way about this oh-so-important topic as he does.
The thing is, it works. Victor couldn’t really care less about Schrödinger’s cat, dog, or pet iguana, but when Yuuri talks about it, he feels like he’d be willing to read entire novels on the topic. So he types away at the keyboard as Yuuri speaks, occasionally pausing to ask questions that probably don’t make too much sense. Yuuri is patient, though, always willing to try and explain things from a different angle.

(Throughout the rest of the afternoon, Victor admits something to himself.)

(Physics is interesting.)

(At least, parts of it. Or, at least, when Yuuri explains it.)

(He doesn’t say any of that out loud, though.)

An hour later, he’s yawning every other sentence. Yuuri smiles sympathetically, glancing at the screen again. “This is due tomorrow, right?”

Victor nods. “You can sleep, if you want. I’ll finish it up.”

Yuuri laughs at that. “I’m not the one who’s tired. I’m in this for the long haul, now.”

“Sort of like the cat.”

“Do you still think that there’s a real—never mind. My back is starting to ache, though.”

Their desk chairs aren’t particularly comfortable. They’re both black, and the left arm on Yuuri’s is broken, having snapped before they’d met, Victor figures. His own is good, though the height adjustor is broken, so he’s constantly shorter than Yuuri. He figures that they could both use new ones, but granted that they’re both broke college students, that’s a problem for their future selves.

He picks up the laptop. “Want to move onto my bed?”

Yuuri agrees.

It’s sort of like a silent invitation for cuddling, he thinks. Not that he’s trying to take advantage of Yuuri’s kindness. It’s more… It’s more practicality. If they’re going to be working together, and they’re going to be comfortable, why not make the most out of it? Surely it’s the right decision.

Yuuri yawns, then, and Victor realizes that he is tired, whether he’ll admit it or not. He points at something on the screen and says something. Victor half-heartedly hears the words, adjusting what Yuuri tells him to adjust. He can already feel himself dozing off, both arms in his lap and his eyelids growing heavier and heavier with each second.

His roommate touches his arm. “Almost done. Stay with me.”

He nods, thankful, and they finish the essay.

When Yuuri is about to get down from the bed, Victor suggests that while they’re sitting like this, they start a movie. So they do. And it’s not a surprise to either of them when Yuuri leans his head on Victor’s shoulder and Victor wraps an arm around his side, back uncomfortably pushed up against the wall but his mind blissfully ignoring that fact.

A minute later, he shuts the laptop, and without a word they shift downwards, comfortably laying their heads on the pillow. Yuuri sighs and shifts closer, face in his shoulder, and Victor smiles—can’t stop smiling—as he holds him in his arms. It occurs to him that he might not be able to sleep in this
position, since he’s far too overjoyed, but a few minutes later, his breathing begins to even out.

Yuuri is beautiful when he sleeps, Victor realizes. Sure, he’s always beautiful, but this is a different kind. His guards are down, his emotions unprotected, left barren to the world, and it’s as though he’s his purest self, in a way. Not to mention his gentle breathing, his back pushed up against Victor’s chest, the occasional mumbles that leave his lips.

Victor thinks of all of the events that had led him to this moment.

He thinks of how lucky he is to have Yuuri Katsuki in his arms, in his life.

~

Victor’s hands are zip tied.

Tight, but not so tight that it hurts.

Shock and sleep mingle together, but they don’t get along, so Victor blinks lazily, glancing around the room. It would occur to him to be distressed if it weren’t for the silence, weren’t for the gentle sunlight beaming down on him through the window. He shifts one hand, then the other. Neither will move farther than the bonds allow.

He tries to wake himself up, tries to figure out what’s going on, what he’s attached to. There’s a short railing around the edge of his loft bed, and the zip ties are looped around those and then latched around his wrists, trapping him expertly. He tugs with his left arm. He tries to reach one hand to the other to release it, but his efforts are to no avail.

The panic starts to set in, his heart starts to beat faster. He forces himself to look around, adrenaline fueling his mind and body. And then his eyes land on…

“Good morning.”

“Yuuri?” he asks, voice groggy. He clears his throat, shakes his head. “Yuuri, what…? What are you…?”

Yuuri breaks out into laughter, and that’s when Victor’s sleep-fuddled mind realizes that he’s holding a phone up, pointing the camera at him. “You should’ve seen your face when you woke up. That was priceless.”

Victor shifts to the edge of the bed, tries to get a better look at the ties. “You… You tied me up in my sleep?”

“I don’t know how you didn’t wake up,” he teases. “I kept thinking that you would, but you didn’t. At one point you even smiled in your sleep, I think.”

He’s not sure what to say to that. He fumbles with the ties again, tries to undo them. “Ha ha, very funny. Now let me go.”

Yuuri picks up a pair of scissors from his desk and twirls them around expertly with one hand. “Let you go?”

“Yuuri…”
“What if I want something from you first?”

Victor swallows thickly, shifts on the bed. “What do you… What would you…”

Yuuri pauses, a sly smile still playing on his lips. He taps the blades of the scissors against his cheek. “I don’t know. Convince me. Maybe I just want to see you beg.”

He pales, isn’t sure he’s seen Yuuri like this before. Sure, he has seen his confident side, but this? This is…

“They don’t hurt, do they?” Yuuri adds, concerned.

It takes Victor a second to transition in the same way Yuuri had—to go from his mischievousness to his shy worry. “No, no, they don’t hurt.” He pulls on them again. “You… You actually tied me to my bed? I didn’t even get you back for the hair dye yet.”

“I know, but I had these stored for when you did, and I just thought it’d be funny.” Then he laughs again, still playing with the scissors. “And it was.”

Victor can’t help but smile at him, but he quickly remembers his pokerface. “Okay, Yuuri. Can I please get out of these zip ties?”

“You’ll have to do better than that.”

“You’re evil.”

“Hmm, not helping your case.”

Victor raises an eyebrow at him, struggles against the bindings once again. It’s partially for show, partially to test the integrity, because he figures it’d be rather impressive if he were to get out of these on his own. But, evidently, there’s no chance of that. He gives Yuuri his best pout. Well-practiced. “Please?”

Yuuri hums at that, leaning farther back in his chair. He props both legs over the right arm of the chair, crossing them at his thighs, and hums. “This is a tough decision.”

Victor’s phone buzzes on his desk. He squints down at it, but can’t even get close to being able to read the text. “Can you read that for me?”

After a moment, his phone is in Yuuri’s hand. “Um, it’s from Christophe. He just asked what you’re up to.”

“Tell him that my sadistic roommate has me tied up on my own bed.”

“I’ll let you text him back later,” Yuuri muses, setting it back down.

Victor groans. “Okay, Yuuri, what do you want me to say? You’re smart, is that it? Smarter than me? And attractive? Do you want me to flatter you?”

He appears unfazed. “I think we both know what I want you to admit.”

(No, no.)

(Under no circumstances.)

With an obstinate shake of his head, he lays back down on his side, arms extended awkwardly in
front of him. “Definitely not.”

Yuuri sets the scissors down, then, but stays in his position, taking Victor’s phone back off of the desk. He glances up at him, surprised. “You don’t have a passcode?”

“No passcode,” he confirms. “What are you going to do on there?”

He snaps a photo, then sets it back down.

“I bet I look very funny, don’t I?” Victor laces his tone with sarcasm.

“Mmm,” Yuuri agrees absent-mindedly. “I’d like to help you but you haven’t told me what I want to hear yet.”

Victor smiles, impressed, if he’s being honest. “I still can’t believe you zip tied me to my own bed. What kind of demonic mind do you have, Yuuri Katsuki?”

There’s no response to that, just another look.

It doesn’t take long for Victor to break.

“Physics is interesting,” Victor sighs.

“What was that?”

He knows Yuuri heard him the first time.

“I said, physics is interesting,” he repeats. “Are you happy now?”

Yuuri grins and picks up the scissors, climbing up onto Victor’s bed and sitting beside him. “Very happy.”

“I have to get you back twice, now,” Victor complains, leaning his head against Yuuri’s thigh as soon as he’s in close enough proximity.

“Stay still,” he warns, trying to cut off the zip ties. Eventually, one snaps, then the other.

Victor doesn’t hesitate before tackling Yuuri.

Yuuri yelps, still clutching the scissors, and he’s muttering something about this being dangerous when Victor takes both of his wrists and pins them above his head. The scissors fall uselessly to the floor below, quickly forgotten. He thinks about what he wants to say, then cocks his head to the side, puts on a roguish smirk. Two can play at this game. “I didn’t know you were so interested in tying me up, Yuuri.”

He gets the reaction that he wants.

Flustered, darting eyes, face turning red. “I… No, no—I just—I thought it’d be… No… Not… I mean… No.” He seems to settle on that last word, swallowing thickly. “No.”

“So you’re not interested in tying me up?”

Yuuri gapes. “I… Are you interested in that?”

It’s less of a genuine question and more of a desperate attempt to have any sort of comeback whatsoever. Victor offers a shrug, keeping himself difficult to interpret. “I’m interested in whatever
you’re interested in. Or, at least, I thought I was until I learned that you like to lure in innocent males and get them comfortable enough to sleep next to you just so that you can tie them up before morning.”

“Last time I checked, I didn’t really have to lure you in.”

(He has to admit, it’s a good comeback.)

But it only throws him off for a single beat. “I beg to differ. You absolutely lured me in.”

Yuuri tries to move his wrists, and Victor lets go, letting his roommate wrap his arms around him and lace his fingers behind Victor’s upper back. “Did not.”

“You looked… You were yawning,” he protests lamely, because he’s at a loss for words of how to describe how Yuuri had looked, how he always looks. What he does to Victor.

“Oh, I see. Yawning. Very luring.”

Victor gets off of him, choosing to lay down beside him instead. “Very luring,” he agrees solemnly, ignoring Yuuri’s sarcasm. Then he kisses him.

~

“I think I’m going to switch majors.”

It takes a moment for Phichit’s words to worm their way into Yuuri’s thalamus, finally greeting understanding and causing him to put down the pencil that he’s holding. “You what?”

The thing is, a phrase like that is so completely Phichit. Yuuri, even if he somehow started to hate physics, would never dream of changing majors. The stress associated with that, the extra credits that would be required—the mere thought of it sends a shiver down his spine. Phichit, though, says his idea with nonchalance, hardly even noticing the shock written across Yuuri’s face.

“Psychology,” he explains. “I think I could be a good therapist, one day. Don’t you?”

That, also, fits Phichit. Yuuri tells him such, and his friend smiles at him, glad that he seems to approve of the decision. Then Phichit is already sending an email to his academic advisor, scheduling a meeting, and Yuuri wonders what it would be like to be so at ease regarding things like that. To just think, I want to do that, and then to do it.

Phichit taps the send button and then leans back in his chair, propping his feet up on his desk. “I could give people advice. Help them.”

“You’d be good at it,” Yuuri agrees. “Besides, you already help me with my problems.”

“Yes,” Phichit says. “Speaking of your problems…”

Yuuri shakes his head immediately, knowing where this conversation is headed. He climbs up onto Phichit’s loft bed so that he’s no longer visible, laying down on it. “No such problems to speak of.”

“Hey, you laying up there, me sitting down here? This is like how Sigmund Freud treated his patients. He thought that if they couldn’t see him, they’d open up more. Do you feel willing to talk
about your deepest, darkest secrets?”

He laughs and stares up at the ceiling. “I’m afraid it’s not working, Doc.”

Phichit lets out a mock sigh. “I guess I’ll need to work on it.”

Yuuri’s phone buzzes in his back pocket and he fishes it out, squinting at the screen.

**Busy on Saturday?**

It’s from Victor, and he spends a second just staring at it, biting his lower lip, anticipation already reeling in his stomach. Phichit wheels his chair back to get a better look at his expression. “Is it Victor?”

“How can you tell?” Yuuri asks, surprised.

“You have your trademarked Victor Nikiforov face on.”

He isn’t sure how to respond to that, so he decides to respond to the text instead.

Phichit hums in protest. “No, wait two minutes before answering. You don’t want to seem *too* available, you know? Play hard to get, but not *too* hard to get. It’s a delicate balance.”

“I hope this isn’t the same advice you’ll give your future patients,” Yuuri says, opening the text anyway. He types out an answer.

**no, why?**

The response is instant.

**Camping and hiking trip with the frat. Saturday-Sunday.**

Victor texts like he talks, Yuuri realizes. To the point and spontaneous. Anticipating the answer that he wants. There’s just an air of overall confidence, really. Yuuri bites his lip harder, glances down at Phichit, who is watching him curiously. “What is it?” Phichit asks. “You look like he just proposed to you over text.”

“He says there’s a camping and hiking trip with the frat on Saturday.”

“And you’re invited?” he asks, quickly getting out of his chair and climbing up on the bed to sit next to Yuuri. “Am I invited?”

Yuuri smiles. “I’m sure you are. But I don’t know if I’m cut out for hiking—”

Phichit’s expression cuts him off. “Yuuri, your attractive, popular boyfriend—”

“Not my boyfriend.”

“—just asked you to go hiking, and you’re going to turn him down? Plus, I’ve heard those trips are so much fun. Can you ask him if I can go?”

Yuuri acquiesces, texting again. **phichit wants to know if he’d be able to come.**

**Of course.**

Phichit grins, bumping his shoulder. “Come on, I’ll go with you. It’d be fun. Camping, we could,
um, start a fire. Marshmallows and s’mores! You love s’mores. Ghost stories, Yuuri!”

“You almost caught on fire the last time you made s’mores.”

“Right, but…” Phichit starts, but he can’t appear to come up with an opposition. “Come on, Yuuri. You’d have fun, I bet. Especially with Victor, all alone in a tiny little tent all night…”

Yuuri feels himself blushing violently. “Okay, okay, I’ll go.”

Phichit raises an eyebrow. “What, because of that?”

That’s when Yuuri pauses, realizing what he’d just done. “No, no, no, not because of… No, no, I just thought it through, is all. You’re right. It might be fun.”

His friend just winks.

Yuuri groans and buries his face in his hands.

“It’s okay, Yuuri, I’m not judging you.”

“You peer pressure me, you know.”

Phichit pokes his temple. “Just imagine the things I’ll be able to do when I’m a psych major. I’ll know the inner workings of everyone’s brains.”

Yuuri pokes him back. “You already do.”

“Ah, fair point.”

He texts a response to Victor.

I’ll go.

The little bubble indicating that Victor is typing something appears, but then he deletes it. Then he does the same thing again. Yuuri watches his phone, slightly frustrated. What had he been about to say both of those times?

Great :) :)

“He uses that smiley face?” Phichit judges out loud.

~

As soon as Victor reads Yuuri’s text, those two little words—“I’ll go”—his heart threatens to burst. Christophe is watching him, amused. “You should see your face right now.”

Victor glances at him, still smiling. He can’t stop, and he knows that Chris is making fun of him, but he couldn’t care less. Yuuri is going hiking and camping with him. Which means they’ll sit by the fire together, maybe close, and Yuuri could lean his head on Victor’s shoulder, and there could even be kissing involved…

And is it Saturday yet?
“I’m happy for you,” Christophe adds. “But you should respond.”

Victor types out something, but it’s too enthusiastic. He doesn’t want to push his luck, doesn’t want to scare Yuuri off. He tries again, but has the same problem. Normally, he’d send texts without a second thought, but with Yuuri he finds himself second-guessing his every move. Perhaps, he realizes, Yuuri’s reaction to what he does is the only reaction that he cares about. Maybe that’s the key difference.

“Should I have only used one smiley face?” he asks Christophe quietly after hitting send.

“I don’t think he’ll care either way.”

Victor sighs, realizing how ridiculous he sounds, and sets his phone down. “Okay, JJ is making arrangements for our tents to get to the camping site, right? And I’m bringing the supplies for s’mores?”

Christophe nods. “Bring extra chocolate, you know how Georgi is with his chocolate.”

“Mmm. You’re right.” He stands up to leave, but then pauses before he reaches the door. “One more thing. I need advice.”

His friend looks expectant. “About Yuuri?”

“Exactly,” Victor says, glad he understands. “We’re sort of caught in the middle of a prank war.”

Christophe frowns, as though he hadn’t heard what he’d been expecting to hear. “Oh.”

“I want to get back at him on this trip. Any ideas?”

Of course, Christophe has many ideas. Victor takes them all into account.

~

On Friday, Victor instructs Yuuri on what to bring. Yuuri packs an unnecessary amount of everything—water, food, clothes. Just in case. He brings a mobile phone charger, a sleeping bag that is far too big to fit in his backpack, and an extra pair of shoes. All of it just in case. Victor watches him—entertained, maybe?—as he struggles to stuff it all in.

Saturday morning, Victor isn’t awake when Yuuri wakes up. They have to leave in an hour to meet everyone at the trail, and he knows that Victor will be upset if he has to head out with his hair still wet from his shower. So, Yuuri rolls out of bed and approaches Victor, climbing the ladder to his bed and touching his shoulder. “Victor, it’s eight.”

Victor’s response is a half-asleep groan as he rolls onto his stomach to escape Yuuri’s touch. Then, after a few more seconds, he seems to wake, peeking open one eye. It’s sort of annoying, how perfect he looks when he sleeps, Yuuri thinks. When Yuuri sleeps, it’s a mix of drool and sleep-talking, but when Victor sleeps, he may as well be an Abercrombie model.

Annoying.

(But attractive.)
His hair is messy, but it’s a sort of purposeful unkemptness, even though Yuuri knows it’s not purposeful at all. The moment his eyes open, the sea-foam blue of his irises is entrancing, and he can’t pull his gaze away. Not to mention his voice. Victor’s voice in the mornings does things to Yuuri that he can’t possibly begin to describe.

It’s rough, his accent thicker than usual. “Eight?”

Yuuri nods, and his hand is still on Victor’s shoulder, and he should move it, shouldn’t he? There’s definitely no reason to have it there, other than that he wants to have it there. At the same time, though, Victor doesn’t seem to mind, doesn’t even seem to notice. So he keeps it.

“Good morning,” he greets lazily after a second, yawning again.

His eyes quickly start to drift shut again, and Yuuri laughs, shaking him again. “If you don’t get up now, you’ll regret it.”

“Maybe a kiss would wake me up.”

Little lines like that throw Yuuri off without fail.

“There’s that expression,” Victor mumbles against his pillow. “Love that expression. It’s in my top ten.”

Yuuri sighs and gets back down from the bed. “Get out of bed or I’ll zip tie your hands again.”

“That’d be interesting.”

A little voice in the back of Yuuri’s mind asks if they’re dating.

Because they kiss now, yes, but that’s about it. They kiss, they cuddle, but everything else is the same. Victor had always been flirtatious, and he’s still flirtatious now, so it isn’t as though that’s new. They joke, but they’d joked before, so that isn’t new. It’s really just the more blatant displays of attraction. Which, obviously, Yuuri is fine with, but…

~

Victor grabs his usual hiking clothes, hops in the shower. The fraternity goes hiking or camping—or both, as is this case—several times throughout the year. It’s a tradition that had been upheld far, far before Victor had joined the frat. But the trips are usually fun, good memories are usually made. He can’t say that he has ever been quite as excited as he is for this trip, though. Because of Yuuri. He wants to lie to himself and say that it’s due to something else, but he knows that it’s because Yuuri is coming. There’s no point in denying that.

When he shuts the water off, he throws on a pair of tight, black cargo pants and a white, cut muscle tank top, planning on wearing a warm jacket over it. Layers are good. Then, he steps out of the bathroom, drying his hair off with a towel. Yuuri is invested in whatever is on his laptop, wearing a black t-shirt and track pants. The same kind he wears when figure skating, Victor notes.

“You look ready to hike,” Victor comments, leaning against the doorway. Yuuri must’ve gotten changed when he’d been in the bathroom.

That’s when Yuuri looks at him.

Silence.
Victor rocks back on his heels, shoves his hands into his back pockets. The expression on Yuuri’s face is unreadable, a mixture of incredulity and horror. “Are you… Is everything okay?” Victor asks slowly.

“No, no, I’m fine,” he promises, then glues his eyes back to the laptop screen, except it’s obvious that he’s not really looking at anything. Instead, it looks as though he’s trying to chastise his eyes for their mere existence. As though he’s trying to convince himself of something. But then, suddenly, his head whips back around. “You’re wearing that?”

Victor steps closer, rests an arm on the rung of the ladder so that he can look up at Yuuri. “What do you mean?”

“That… That shirt.”

“What about it?” He moves away from the ladder and back into the bathroom, checking his reflection. There’s nothing on it, nothing on him. No blaring stain. “Is something wrong with it?”

Yuuri swallows. “I just mean… It’s cold out. I mean, we’re in Detroit—”

“Oh, I’ll wear a jacket.”

“Oh.”

Another pause. Victor doesn’t believe for a second that Yuuri had just been concerned about his health, and then a thought occurs to him. “What, you like the shirt?”

“Like it?” Yuuri retorts, quietly, as though he doesn’t care about whatever Victor is saying. “I mean, it’s fine.”

“Fine?”

“Just… It’s just fine.”

Victor clicks his tongue and teeth, letting Yuuri know that he doesn’t believe him, but that he’ll let him off of the hook anyway. He sits back up on his bed and texts Christophe and JJ, arranging last minute details of the trip, and then they’re off. Yuuri swings his backpack over his shoulder and Victor does the same.

They fetch Makkachin, who loves hiking. He seems to know what’s going on the second he sees their outfits, smart dog that he is, and eagerly lets Victor put on his leash. Then, they take him to Victor’s car and he hops in the back. It was sort of unspoken, the fact that Victor would drive Yuuri and Phichit. It just sort of made sense.

Phichit meets them in the parking lot and hops in the back with Makkachin, scratching him behind the ears. He’s wearing a green sweater and cargo pants, sunglasses propped on his head and his phone in his hand. “Will there be s’mores?” he asks Victor after greeting him.

Victor confirms this, glancing at him in the rearview mirror.

Phichit laughs, then glances at Yuuri. He switches to speaking in Thai, which Victor translates with little difficulty. “One time, Yuuri did the chubby bunny challenge as a dare, and I didn’t think it was humanly possible for somebody to fit so many marshmallows in their mouth.”

Yuuri frowns, not understanding the foreign language. “What did you just say?”
Victor just laughs in response, feeling like he and Phichit had just shared an inside secret. He tries to imagine Yuuri stuffing marshmallow after marshmallow into his mouth, but the image just doesn’t seem to work in his mind.

“Phichit, I know how to recognize my own name in Thai by now,” Yuuri reminds him.

Back to English. “I was just telling Victor about one of your greatest feats. I’ll show you pictures later, Victor.”

“What’d you tell him?” Yuuri insists.

“Let’s pretend that we’re sharing more secrets,” Phichit suggests in Thai.

“Good idea,” Victor answers.

Yuuri groans, glancing between them. Eventually, though, Phichit cracks and tells him what they’d said, and then Yuuri is laughing along, too. They keep laughing for the rest of the car trip, and there’s a sort of weightlessness settling in Victor’s chest that he can’t describe.

They meet everybody at the trail, and then they set off. Victor lets Makkachin off of his leash and he bounds in front of them, but not too far. He sniffs every inch of grass, extruding energy like it’s second nature to him. Victor smiles as he watches him, walking beside Yuuri with his backpack slung over his shoulder.

According to Christophe, the tents are already waiting at the campsite. Yuuri and Phichit are quickly introduced to all of the fraternity members, and Phichit is instantly chatting away with some of the strangers, whereas Yuuri stays strictly by Victor’s side, occasionally exchanging words with Christophe, whom he has met before.

As they ascend a hill slowly, they come up on a small stream. Yuuri steps on a rock and fumbles a little, Victor instantly reaching out and steadying him with his arm. It isn’t as though the fall is at all perilous, but it is rough terrain. It’s definitely not necessary to Victor to start holding his hand. But he does. And Yuuri doesn’t pull away.

They take a break after a few hours, resting at a small clearing and getting water and snacks. Makkachin happily laps up water from his bowl. Victor comes and sits down next to Yuuri on the grass. “It’s pretty, isn’t it?”

They’d picked a nice day. The sun is high above their heads, casting warmth down on them, and there’s no wind. Trees cast shimmering shadows across the landscape and are visible as far as the eye can see. They’re tall, all of the leaves scattered across the forest floor. Yuuri keeps his gaze off of Victor, for the most part, because of that shirt.

That shirt where he can practically see Victor’s entire sides due to the low-cut arm holes. Tempting, smooth skin. Definitely not weather appropriate, Yuuri thinks. As he sits next to Yuuri, he slips his coat back on. “It’s cold, but the sun is out,” Victor comments. “I’m hot as soon as I put this on but cold as soon as I take it off.”

“Sounds like a struggle. Don’t say I didn’t warn you.”
Victor grins at the sarcasm and nudges him with his shoulder. Yuuri nudges him back. “You, on the other hand, look comfortable.”

Yuuri tugs his jacket tighter around his shoulders, just to show off. “Cozy.”

“Maybe we can fit together?” Victor suggests, leaning closer to him, their faces almost inches apart. 

He stretches out one edge of his coat, playing along, and Victor pretends to snuggle up beside him, sighing even though he’s not even close to fitting. “Better?”

“Well, no, but you’re very warm, actually,” Victor comments, wrapping his arms around him and hugging him. “Very warm.”

“And you’re cold,” Yuuri realizes, trying to get away.

Victor hugs him tighter, fingers creeping up the back of his shirt to touch his skin, and they’re both laughing, now, Yuuri swatting at him with both hands. “What? You don’t want to share your warmth?”

Yuuri rolls his eyes. “It wasn’t my idea to wear a shirt like that.”

“I don’t quite understand your obsession with my shirt.”

“Well, you should know, it’s very stereotypical.”

Victor tilts his head to the side. “Stereotypical?”

“Stereotypical frat boy. You know, muscle shirts. Salmon-colored shorts. Khakis. That sort of thing. Though, I haven’t seen you wear either of those last two things yet, but given this…” He pauses to point at Victor’s shirt. “I’d say you’re well on your way.”

Victor’s hands are still on his sides, and he drifts them down slightly lower to his hips, eliciting a quiet gasp from Yuuri. “Are you saying you don’t like it?”

He falters. “I… I never said that.”

Before Victor can follow up, somebody clears their throat behind them. And then they’re on the move again. This time, they go for two more hours, and Victor is starting to sweat just slightly, taking his jacket off once again. He doesn’t miss the way that Yuuri glues his eyes to him, but this time, Victor winks at him. It provokes the response he desires.

Phichit leans over and whispers something to Yuuri, and the flushing just gets worse.

He wonders what Phichit had said.

As the sun sets, they arrive at the campground. The tents, sure enough, had been delivered there, but it’s up to them to set them up. Phichit helps another group while Yuuri stands awkwardly around Victor, unsure of how to assist. Victor doesn’t appear to be an expert at it either, leaving most of the work to Christophe.

“Two to three people per tent, I guess,” he muses out loud, glancing around.

There are about twenty members of the fraternity overall, though a few had brought guests, and there are what looks to be around eight tents. Some are smaller than others. Yuuri glances at Phichit, who smiles and waves at him from across the field. He’s holding down a pole while somebody adjusts something on a tent.
“Want to share a tent?” Victor asks.

(Casual.)

Yuuri attempts to match the tone. “Oh, sure.”

It comes out squeaky, so he clears his throat. Victor seems to notice and chuckles, reaching out and touching his arm. Then, his expression turns concerned. “Wait. You didn’t bring zip ties, did you?”

“What? I mean, no.”

“Hmm. Okay. I guess we can share a tent then.”

It takes Yuuri far longer than it should to get his joke, then he’s grinning. “Don’t let your guard down, though.”

Victor ruffles his hair affectionately. “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

He reaches up and fixes his hair, then darts out a hand to ruffle Victor’s in return. Victor yelps, backing away, and Yuuri chases after him. Within seconds, they’ve both broken out into full sprints across the large field, darting past people and between tents. Then, Victor turns and makes his way down the path that they’d come from, and Yuuri follows him, relentless. The cold wind is exhilarating against his skin, blowing his hair back out of his eyes, and he finally catches up with Victor thirty seconds later, accidentally tackling him onto the ground, panting.

“Are you okay?” he asks quickly.

Victor groans in pain.

Yuuri winces. “Oh my god, Victor, I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean to—”

“Ouch,” he gasps, shutting his eyes tight. “Yuuri, you hurt me.”

“I didn’t mean to, I really didn’t,” he repeats desperately, pulling away to try and examine him, afraid to touch. “Where does it hurt, is there anything I—”

Before he knows what’s happening, he’s flipped over, and Victor is smiling down at him. His back is flat on the path and it knocks the wind out of him. “Got you.”

Yuuri struggles in his grasp, kicking. “That wasn’t funny! I thought I’d hurt you.”

“I’m not quite that delicate.”

“Don’t you think everybody is going to wonder where we ended up sprinting off to?”

Victor hums, kissing Yuuri on the cheek delicately. “Probably.”

Yuuri reaches up and kisses him on the lips instead. Victor responds eagerly, mouth opening on top of his, grazing Yuuri’s bottom lip with his teeth. His grip on Yuuri’s wrists loosens, until he chooses to press his palms into the path instead to support himself. Yuuri purposefully lets out a soft sigh from underneath him, and it has the exact effect that he wants, Victor’s pupils dilating before they disappear under his eyelids again, entire body melting into the kiss.

Yuuri adjusts his hips so that he can lazily wrap both legs around Victor’s waist. Then, in one move, he flips them over so that Victor is laying on his back with an “oomph.” He laughs and takes his wrists, pinning them. “Got you.”
“Are we going to do this in every possible unsanitary area? First, our dorm room floor, now, the literal ground. What’s next?” Victor complains.

“Well, no matter where we are, I’ll always be stronger than you.”

Victor looks as though he has been challenged. “That’s not true.”

“Is too.”

“Arm wrestling match. We’ll go back to the campground, then you’re on. We’ll settle this once and for all.”

Yuuri gets off of him and offers a hand to help him up. Victor accepts it, suspicious, and dusts off his pants. Then, they head back towards the campground, and Victor announces the arm wrestling competition, which quickly turns into a contest among everyone. Then, several fraternity brothers are laying on the grass, hands gripping other hands and elbows digging into the dirt.

Victor and Yuuri lay down across from each other, Yuuri glancing around self-consciously. “What do I win, when I win?” Victor asks, phrasing the question purposefully.

“You mean what do I win when I win? I think I win the recorded admittance that I am, in fact, stronger than you.”

Victor hums. “I’d like the same thing.”

“Deal. But no cheating.”

“No cheating,” Victor promises. In fact, he glances over towards the others. “Christophe, come over here and judge us.”

Phichit watches, too, getting low onto the ground like a proper arm wrestling referee. Victor takes Yuuri’s hand, wrapping his fingers around his palm. Yuuri copies the motion, maintaining confident eye contact. Christophe starts counting. “Three… Two…”

At the last second, he has an idea.

Victor’s attention is utterly and completely set on him, so Yuuri licks his lips.

He sees Victor blink, confused by the action.

“One. Go!”

It succeeds in throwing him off, but not completely. His arm falters, but only to a thirty degree angle. Yuuri pushes harder, but Victor starts pushing back, and within seconds they’re evenly matched once again. Christophe and Phichit are whooping next to them, quickly hopping to their feet, and then others are coming over. JJ is yelling something at Victor as he shifts closer on his stomach.

~

“Victor?” Yuuri says through a breath as they continue to arm wrestle, the others not able to hear him.

Victor doesn’t answer, just watches him, curious. He’s putting all of his strength into the competition, and he can tell that Yuuri is, too.

“You do look pretty sexy in that shirt,” Yuuri mumbles, letting his eyes drift unashamedly down to
Victor’s chest and blinking a few times, dark eyelashes making him unbelievably beautiful, unbelievably tantalizing. He even licks his lips again, but the action is slower this time, more deliberate. Victor feels his throat dry.

In an instant, Yuuri moves his arm.

(Moves his arm?)

“YUURI WINS!” Phichit screams, and the crowd erupts.

Victor is still in shock, though there’s a list of potential reasons for why he can’t move a muscle, can’t breathe, can’t utter a single syllable:

a) Yuuri had just said the word ‘sexy’

b) Yuuri had just called him sexy

c) He’d just lost an arm wrestling battle to Yuuri Katsuki

So he stares. Still breathing heavy, arm aching, back of his hand still flat on the grass. Yuuri is being lifted up onto his feet by Victor’s fraternity brothers, and then off of his feet. He’s carried away, laughing, eyes flickering down to Victor one last time before he’s out of sight. Only Chris remains by Victor’s side. “Well, that was entertaining.”

Victor just nods.

He has a feeling that he and Chris have very different ideas of how that had been entertaining.

Now that Yuuri has championed him, each of the fraternity members takes turns arm wrestling him. He’s quickly beaten, but he’s still smiling anyway as people clap him on the back or start chatting him up. Victor is surprised by how calm he sees, how confident—just a few minutes ago he’d been clinging to Victor, shy and easily flustered.

Victor simply props himself up on his elbows, content to watch. Christophe ends up walking over to talk to the others, too, but Victor stays. Awed.

Leave it to Yuuri Katsuki to charm every single member of a fraternity, all of whom he has little in common with, by winning an arm wrestling competition through seduction.

Victor isn’t sure he has ever been more attracted to him.

After a while, Yuuri notices him again. He gets down and touches his shoulder. “Victor? You’re still laying here?” He laughs nervously. “I didn’t bruise your ego too much, did I?”

“Nope,” Victor promises. “I was just enjoying the view, actually.”

Yuuri looks around.

(Actually looks confused.)

(As in, he’s genuinely puzzled by that statement.)

(If he weren’t so adorable, Victor would face-palm.)

“Yuuri, I want you to think about what I just said.”
Yuuri’s expression changes from one of innocence to one of stunned understanding. “Oh. I’m the view?”

“You’re the view,” he confirms.

“That’s…” He starts, trailing off. Victor sits up, cross-legged, across from him. The others are distracted amongst themselves, a fire beginning to be built up and logs beginning to be dragged around it for sitting. It’s still too light outside for a proper campfire, but he figures they’re just preparing early. “I… I’m not…”

Victor touches Yuuri’s hand, playing with his fingers. “What, you don’t think you’re a view?”

Yuuri nods, expression slightly absent, as though he’s not sure what he’s agreeing to. He glances down at their hands, biting the inside of his cheek. “I disagree,” Victor says gently.

Paradoxical—that’s probably the best way to describe Yuuri. He’s confident, yet shy. He’s easy to read, yet impossible at the same time. Whenever Victor thinks he’s starting to understand him, he realizes he has been looking at him from the wrong angle the entire time, and yet…

Yet he knows him.

On some level, somehow.

“Want to go collect firewood?” Victor asks.

(Perhaps not his best flirtatious line.)

But Yuuri takes his hand tighter in his own, squeezes it, unknowingly constricting Victor’s heart at the same time, and stands up. “Whoever gets more firewood wins.”

“Life is just a competition for you, isn’t it?” Victor jokes, though neither of them are rushing ahead for firewood. They’re walking at a leisurely pace towards the woods, hand in hand, shoulders brushing against each other’s.

“Only when it comes to you, funnily enough.”

Victor hums at that, swinging their arms. “Perhaps it’s because you keep beating me. Next time, we’ll compete at something I’m good at.”

“And that would be…?”

“I’ll think of something.”

Yuuri laughs at that, and it’s Victor’s favorite kind of laugh—the messy, unrestricted one.

Victor bends down and picks up a piece of firewood, keeping it tucked under his arm. Makkachin is behind them, now, sniffing the forest floor. “I want a rematch, by the way. You cheated.”

“Cheated? Cheated how?”

“By… By speaking during the match,” Victor states firmly.

“I didn’t know speaking was against the rules,” Yuuri protests.

He smiles and kisses him on his hair. “Well, it was when you said what you said. It was a purposeful distraction—don’t act like it wasn’t.”
“Are you saying that you think you’re stronger than me?”

Victor shrugs. He doesn’t actually think that, but given the way Yuuri’s tone gets slightly more competitive, slightly more edgy, he keeps his voice nonchalant, teasing. “Your words, not mine.”

“We’ll rematch sometime, then,” Yuuri promises. “Higher stakes and no talking.”

“Deal.”

~

When the sun is low enough, Georgi starts the fire. There are almost unlimited marshmallows, chocolates, and crackers for s’mores, and Yuuri takes one of the rods and impales a marshmallow, holding it over the flame. Victor does the same, leaning his head on Yuuri’s shoulder. Yuuri doesn’t move.

He loves it.

Loves this.

People start telling stories, but he only half pays attention, because the way that Yuuri occasionally turns the marshmallow, brings it closer to his eyes for examination, is far, far more interesting. In fact, his breathing is interesting, the way his cheeks are gorgeously rosy in response to the cold. The way he tugs his jacket farther around his shoulders, snuggling into it, making sure not to move too much so that Victor is still comfortable leaning against him.

Perfect, Victor thinks.

“Your marshmallow is on fire.”

Yuuri’s words don’t quite process in Victor’s mind. But he does hear him speaking, so he just looks up, adoringly. “What?”

Yuuri looks mildly concerned. “Your… It’s on—oh, okay, it sort of just fell.”

Victor glances back at his rod. Sure enough, a large chunk of his marshmallow had fallen into the flames. And what’s left is, in fact, on fire. Whoops. Luckily, nobody else seems to be paying attention to him except for Phichit, who is watching him with an expression different than his usual optimism. It’s…

Something else.

Something less Phichit.

Victor quickly brushes off that thought when Yuuri is laughing at him, bringing his own rod forward and offering his marshmallow to Victor, who accepts it joyfully. “Thank you.”

“No problem,” he answers, grabbing another one and beginning to cook that as well.

Eventually, JJ starts singing.

It’s a medley of some sort, Victor doesn’t know the words, but some others do, and they’re singing,
too. It’s soft, and the sun is almost fully gone now, night beginning to fall. It’s cold, but Victor just tugs his coat tighter around himself, and Yuuri does the same.

He hears Yuuri hum along.

It would appear that he doesn’t know the words, either, but Victor can’t stop smiling at the noise, feeling like the luckiest person in the world for getting to hear it. He shuts his eyes, soaking in it, embracing in the soft sound. “Are you going to fall asleep on me?” Yuuri asks after a while.

“I definitely could, but I’ll spare you the hassle of carrying me into a sleeping bag.”

“Thanks for that.”

~

After a while, Victor leads him to a tent.

“This one is mine,” he explains. It’s about average-sized, dome-shaped, and beige. However, when Victor pulls out a lantern from his bag and sets it up in the middle, it seems to glow golden, matching the stars in the sky. They set up their sleeping bags—there’s plenty of room for both of them—and then Yuuri lays down, stretching out his arms. Makkachin lays on the edge of the tent farthest from the door, already snoring.

“Comfortable?” Victor asks.

He nods, already feeling himself drifting off.

“I’m going to go to the restroom,” Victor adds, getting up. “Well, not the restroom, but you know what I mean.”

Yuuri smiles at his bad sort-of-joke as he leaves. Then, he pulls out his phone, wincing at the lack of cell service. He supposes that’s just part of the camping experience. In fact, Georgi is so immersed in camping that he insists nobody brings their phones. Therefore, it’s an unspoken rule that nobody takes their phones out in front of Georgi. Everyone has them, of course, but nobody takes them out.

After trying different angles for countless minutes, he can’t manage to get any service, so he tosses his phone on the ground beside him and rests his head on the small pillow he’d brought. He’d changed into pajama bottoms but kept his shirt and jacket on. Victor had done the same. It’s cold, but his sleeping bag combined with the jacket are keeping him comfortable.

He thinks of their arm wrestling match earlier—he isn’t sure what had gotten into him, what had prompted him to say that, but the look on Victor’s face had been worth it. And then Victor leaning his head on his shoulder while they’d sat around the campfire…

Yuuri swallows, tries to shake off the straying thoughts.

They’re still not dating, he reminds himself. Victor isn’t his boyfriend, no, that’s ridiculous. They’re… Well, they’re not friends, either, are they?

So what are they?

(Some sort of in-between?)
And that’s when Victor practically leaps into the tent, slapping a hand over Yuuri’s mouth instantly. “Don’t talk,” he whispers, barely above his breath. He looks panicked. There are beads of sweat on his forehead and Yuuri’s heart starts pounding instantly, goosebumps breaking out across his arms.

What’s happening?

Why does Victor look so distraught?

Yuuri takes Victor’s hand and tears it away from his mouth. He opens his lips to speak but Victor shakes his head, fearful, so Yuuri keeps his mouth shut. No, no, he has never seen Victor afraid before, and they’re a group of college students in the middle of the woods and anything could go wrong and—

“There’s a bear out there,” Victor whispers. “We need to stay quiet.”

He covers his own mouth, then, horrified. He crawls slightly away from the entrance to the tent, trying to think on his feet. “We need to get out of here,” he says, too quiet to even be considered a whisper. “Go into the woods, where we got the firewood earlier. Take Makkachin, tell him to go quickly. I’ll follow.”

“You’re sure?” Victor asks, voice and expression serious, now, but fear still lingering in his eyes.

Yuuri takes in a sharp breath, not sure of what to say.

And then, suddenly, Victor is hugging him.

“Joking, joking.”

He exhales—long, slow.

“That…” Yuuri starts, body trying to catch up to his mind.

“Joking, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, Yuuri, it was a joke. There’s no bear.”

“That…” he just starts again, falling onto his side, shutting his eyes. “Victor.”

“I’m sorry,” he repeats, following him onto his sleeping bag and keeping his arms around him. There’s a pause. “But I did get you.”

“You’re the… I hate you. So much.”

“No, no, Yuuri,” he pleads, nuzzling his shoulder. “I’m sorry. Was that too far?”

When Yuuri turns around in his arms and sees Victor’s expression, he starts laughing a little, even though he doesn’t mean to. Victor starts smiling slowly, obviously relieved. “It was definitely too far, and if you do that again I will, definitely, kill you. But… But, I’ll admit, it was sort of a funny idea.”

“Roar.” Yuuri laughs slightly harder, his heart still thumping in his chest.

“My pranks are better than yours,” Yuuri points out.

“I didn’t think you’d be so scared,” he apologizes.

Yuuri shoves him. “You’re a good actor.”
“Future career, maybe? Who needs linguistics?”

He takes in another deep breath, and presses his face into Victor’s chest. “I can’t believe you seriously just did that.”

“If it makes you feel better, I didn’t record it. Now, want to go prank JJ?”

Yuuri can’t help but say yes. He takes Victor’s hand, laughing with him as he’s pulled out of the tent and they approach JJ’s instead. “This is mean,” he complains.

“I bet you’re a better actor than me, though,” Victor tells him. “I’ve seen your pokerface, Yuuri. Frankly, it scares me. You could be lying to me at any given moment and I’d never know.”

“Oh, right. Like if I were to say, ‘You’re good at pranks, Victor.’”

Victor pouts at him, but Yuuri kisses him.

“You’re forgiven. Like I said, it was sort of funny. But like I said, if you ever do something like that again…”

“I won’t,” Victor assures him. “No more scary pranks. I’ll just dye your hair some unflattering color. Not that your hair could look bad, honestly.”

He grins at that, kissing him on the cheek. Victor’s grin only widens, and he turns to kiss Yuuri on the lips instead. “Now, let’s prank JJ,” Yuuri tells him, feeling diabolic, adrenaline pumping through his system. “But we’re not going to take it too far, alright? We’ll tell him right away. Just a quick joke.”

“Just a quick joke.”

~

An hour later, they’re both in their sleeping bags again, the lantern turned off. Victor yawns, rolling over onto his side. “Are you asleep yet?”

There’s a murmur of protest.

“Want to talk?” Victor whispers.

“About what?”

“I don’t know. Anything.”

Yuuri hums and shifts his sleeping bag closer to Victor’s. Though it’s dark, he thinks he can make out the outline of Yuuri’s face, just several inches away from his own. “You were born in St. Petersburg?”

Victor nods. “Yakov, Yurio, and I moved here a year after Yurio was born. I was six.”

“Six,” Yuuri repeats. “That must’ve been crazy.”

“You’d never lived here before you came to college,” Victor realizes out loud. “That would be
worse.”


Victor smiles at that, too. “That is lucky.”

“And now I’ve met you,” Yuuri adds, thoughtful.

“Is that lucky?”

He’s answered with a kiss, one that he reciprocates fully. They’d both brushed their teeth earlier, and Yuuri still takes like peppermint, Victor notices happily. He shifts even closer, ignoring the fact that the edge of the sleeping bag is now slipping down his torso, causing him to lose one of his protective layers against the cold. Yuuri slips a hand across his side, and then his fingers are drifting across his skin.

Somehow, it’s colder than the air.

He shivers.

His mouth, though, is hot. His lips part against Victor’s, their tongues meeting. It’s lazy, a tango of two, though neither is leading nor following. It’s simply mutual self-indulgence, Victor eliciting a moan when Yuuri brings his teeth into the equation, content to let him do as he likes, since what he likes seems to be what Victor likes, too. Yuuri’s hand on his side never ceases movement, fingers drifting upwards and downwards, as though on a contained mission of exploration. Victor can’t help but copy the motion, pushing his t-shirt up and grazing his hand along the skin beside his navel.

It’s Victor who pulls away first, needing to breathe, much to his chagrin. Yuuri smiles at him shyly, but there’s something playful in his eyes as well, something that Victor can’t identify. Perhaps it’s the need for sleep. Either way, Yuuri places one last kiss to his lips, then shuts his eyes. “Goodnight, Victor.”

“Goodnight. Don’t let the bedbugs bite.”

“Or the bears.”

Victor snickers. “Or the bears. There are many, you know, up here in Michigan.”

“I hear they like to eat arrogant, silver-haired linguistics majors.”

“Hmm, no wonder so many species of bear are endangered. That’s a specific diet.”

“Goodnight,” Yuuri tries again.

There’s a pause.

“Yuuri?”

“Mm?”

“I did get you, though.”

“You did,” he admits, and Victor has a feeling that if he were any more awake, he wouldn’t be admitting that quite as easily.

He smiles as he falls asleep, favorite person and favorite dog in close approximation.
~ Yik Yak

saw V Nikiforov looking at his roommate like he hung the stars in the sky today

(2d) (9 replies)

Are they dating??

hang on… isn’t his roommate the guy from that video?

video?

i’ll find a link

Wait I know what you’re talking about.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2ouaLIuumQ

I have never seen that before???

that has to be him

omg
Chapter Summary

Victor has an important talk and Phichit is conflicted as a video spreads like wildfire.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys!!! So this chapter started out as 9k. Now it's 13k. Whoops? What happened? Who knows?
Anyway, a lot happens in this chapter, and most specifically.... Rating change! If you're not about that life, skip the part sectioned off by the double tildes! (~~) You've been warned!
check out this ADORABLE art by the awesome chinxe

Be sure to let me know what you think of this chap and thanks for reading!
Also a few small notes: there is a possible anxiety attack in this chapter and, (this is very minor), the mention of the possibility of being taken advantage of. Super minor, both of them, you'll see what I mean, but if either of those things bother you, take note!
p.s. I find it pretty funny how the comments are divided into two groups (tag yourself i'm group b sorry guys):
a) YES YUURI PHYSICS IS SO INTERESTING
b) Victor is right... Physics is boring lol

When Phichit met Yuuri one year ago, Yuuri was struggling with Command Strips.

Phichit entered his new dorm room, leaned against the doorway as he watched Yuuri fumble with them again and again, trying desperately to hang a figure skating poster above his bed. It was sort of painful to watch. However, admittedly, the sight made this whole college thing less intimidating. He’d moved to America from Thailand to come to the College of L’homme Arme, and though Phichit isn’t one to get nervous about new experiences, there are definitely butterflies in his stomach.

“That looks good,” he commented when the poster was finally hung up.

Yuuri, his new roommate, turned around from where he was standing up on his bed, looking startled. Then, he blushed, glancing between the poster and Phichit. His hair was black, his glasses were falling down on his nose, and he was wearing a white sweater and jeans. He was barefoot, black tennis shoes sitting near the foot of the bed. “Oh, um, thanks. Are you…?”

Phichit took a step forward, out of the doorway and into the room. “I’m Phichit Chulanont, you must be Yuuri Katsuki?”

There was a nod, a shy smile as Yuuri got down from the bed. “Nice to meet you.”

Yuuri was from Japan, apparently—he’d only come to America twice before he’d moved in. Phichit
told him about Thailand, and they clicked almost instantly. Pretty soon, they were friends. They bonded over their mutual love of figure skating and movies. Then, they were best friends. They started watching *Game of Thrones* together, and it’s undeniable that Phichit is a Tyrell. Yuuri, however, is harder to pick a house for, so they end up deciding on Stark, though Phichit insisted that that didn’t fit. Yuuri commented that maybe he’s just not cut out for the *Game of Thrones* universe.

He’s not much of a partier, but Phichit likes a good party, so he managed to drag Yuuri along to a few. Most notably was Psi Omega Iota’s End of the Year party, which is the wildest one on campus. There were drinks, dancing—everything that could possibly sate Phichit’s craziest, most stereotypical college party desires. Yuuri had fun, too, ending up out of Phichit’s sight for most of the evening. When they went back to their dorm together, though, he was missing a majority of the clothes that he’d started with. Phichit was too drunk to interrogate him, and in the morning neither of them remember much.

The only clue was a phone number written on the back of Yuuri’s hand in a messy scrawl.

He washed it off before Phichit could insist that he text it.

~

Yuuri and Victor return from the fraternity camping trip on Sunday afternoon, and the next week is pure, domestic bliss.

(Victor’s new favorite thing, in particular, are his physics tutoring sessions.)

“In exchange for all this help in physics, I’ll teach you something about French. There’s one important thing I haven’t taught you yet,” he explains to Yuuri, who winces in advance, anticipating a bad joke. They’re sitting beside one another at Victor’s desk. “French kissing.”

Yuuri laughs despite himself, but doesn’t exactly give him the French kissing lesson he’d been hoping for. “Focus, Victor. This test is important.”

“I am one-hundred percent focused,” he promises, leaning his head on Yuuri’s shoulder and shutting his eyes. He slips one hand up the bottom of his shirt, fingers splaying across the cool skin of his side. Yuuri shudders beside him. “I just never said what I’m focused on.”

“You’re supposed to be identifying the joules of energy for each of these,” he reminds him, poking the worksheet.

Victor kisses his neck, keeping his hand where it is since Yuuri doesn’t seem to care. “You’re impressively hard to distract, Yuuri. Whereas you seem to distract me without even trying.”

“The difference is that you want to be distracted.”

He doesn’t deny that, just shifts closer to him, practically about to fall off of the desk chair. The taste of his skin is intoxicating, the feeling of it something even worse, and it’s no wonder that he can’t focus, really. Yuuri turns and kisses him on his lips instead, and Victor hums approvingly, lips opening against his, free hand coming up to cup Yuuri’s cheek.

And then, just like that, Yuuri has pulled away. “One kiss per question you get right. How about that?”
“French kiss?” he suggests.

“We’ll see,” Yuuri teases, though it’s obvious that the question flusters him.

Victor likes this game, so he plays along. He glances at the worksheet, keeping his chin resting on Yuuri’s shoulder, a hand still up his shirt. “Okay. That one is forty five.”

He gets a kiss.

It’s warm, captivating, and he lingers. Their foreheads press together, Victor touching his hair, carding his fingers through the strands. It becomes apparent that Yuuri doesn’t want to pull away, either, and Victor smiles, kissing him again. “You’re cheating.” Yuuri scolds, not making any attempts to stop him.

“I respond very well to positive reinforcement.”

“Like Pavlov’s dogs?”

Victor keeps his hand on his hair, brushes it out of his eyes. “Do you have an obsession with scientists’ pets or something?”

“Next question,” Yuuri moves on, pointing at the worksheet.

He gets the next question wrong, but leans in for a kiss anyway. Yuuri shakes his head, sticking to his rules, and tells him the right answer. Then, he gets the next one right. Victor figures he’s improving already. He tells Yuuri that, and Yuuri laughs and kisses him again, and there’s a feeling brewing in his chest that he can’t define, that feels like weightlessness and plain, unadulterated joy.

He wonders if Yuuri feels that way, too.

When they’re done studying for physics, Victor lifts Yuuri out of his desk chair and attempts to carry him to his bed. However, getting him up the ladder doesn’t go well, so Yuuri ends up going of his own accord, insisting that he’d rather do it himself than die having Victor try, despite the cute gesture. Yuuri’s hands loosely grips his sides as they kiss again, Victor pushing him back until he’s laying down, his knees straddling Yuuri’s hips.

“How’s this my payment for tutoring you?” Yuuri asks, a hand playing with the collar of Victor’s white, button up shirt. ‘Psi Omega Iota’ is embroidered above the breast pocket. As though an afterthought, he adds, “This shirt is very stereotypical frat boy, too.”

“Is it?” Victor hums, glancing down at himself. “You’re very judgmental of what I wear, Yuuri.”

“Am I? I haven’t noticed.”

Victor kisses him again, harder this time, bringing his hand back through Yuuri’s hair and then to the front again—it’s soft, just long enough to pull on, and Yuuri gasps quietly underneath him at the feeling. His hand on Victor’s collar slips down his shirt, and Victor pauses, squeezing his eyes shut at the feeling of Yuuri’s fingertips exploring what they can reach, eventually undoing the first few buttons of the shirt for better access.

“Yuuri,” he breathes, kissing his way down his neck and to his collarbone, nipping there and using his tongue to quickly soothe the spot, enjoying the way that Yuuri squirms underneath him, the way that his grip on Victor’s side tightens. He repeats his name, unsure of what else to say, shirt still being unbuttoned. He takes the bottom of Yuuri’s shirt and lifts it up, but it gets caught underneath his arms. “Up,” Victor pleads.
Yuuri lifts his body up and then the shirt is gone, and it occurs to Victor that this might be one of the only times he has seen Yuuri shirtless. A few times after he had showered, perhaps, but those occasions had only ever been brief glances. This is…

Victor traces a finger over his abdomen, speechless. Then he works his way up his torso, eyes soaking him in, trying to get used to the experience, but it’s a useless effort. He’ll never get used to this, he vows. Whether he’s with Yuuri in one year, twenty years, he’ll never get used to this. Never get used to his lips being bruised from kissing—Victor had done that, yes, _he’d done that_—or his hair being ruffled from Victor’s fingers dragging through it.

“You’re staring,” Yuuri realizes.

“I am,” he agrees, circling Yuuri’s nipple with his index finger, licking his lips. Yuuri shivers and his hand on Victor’s side falls, gripping the bedsheets instead. He’s biting his lip, hard, and Victor realizes he’s trying not to say anything. “Sensitive there?” he asks, teasing.

Yuuri doesn’t answer, but his shaky release of a breath is answer enough. Victor leans down, presses his lips to his nipple, a light kiss. “Victor,” he mumbles, a hand coming to touch his hair. His fingers tangle in the strands and Victor considers it encouragement, sucking slightly. Yuuri repeats his name like he can’t help himself, head digging back against the pillow. Then Victor takes a hand and brings it to his ribs, fingers ghosting against them. Yuuri jolts. “I’m ticklish,” he complains.

Victor tickles him again, and Yuuri is laughing now, pulling him back up by his shirt collar to meet his lips. Even though Yuuri is on the bottom, he leads, taking Victor’s bottom lip between his teeth and swinging one leg over his hips. It’s surreal, Victor thinks, to have this, to have him like this. Like a dream that he’s desperate to fall into, desperate to never wake up from.

Yuuri trails a hand down Victor’s chest, tracing the thin lines on his abdomen. Victor chuckles against his lips. “What do you think? Am I fit?”

“You’re fit, but I’m stronger than you, remember?”

As if to prove his point, Yuuri manages to flip them over, almost causing both of them to fall off of the delicate bed. Victor can’t help but smile as Yuuri captures his lips, rough and fast, hot and wet. “We never had that rematch.”

Yuuri laughs, breathless. “This bed isn’t big enough for a wrestling match.”

“Sounds like something someone who’s afraid of losing would say.”

He takes Victor’s wrists and pins them above his head with ease. “You were saying?”

“Oh, Yuuri, I can break out of your grasp whenever I want to,” Victor says, putting all of his effort into his tone, making it sultry. It appears to work, because Yuuri swallows, his confident persona faltering ever so slightly. He likes to see Yuuri lose control, likes to see the different sides of him.

It doesn’t take long for Yuuri to come up with a comeback. “Then why haven’t you?”

“Because I don’t want to. I like watching you take control.”

In lieu of words, Yuuri kisses him again, as rough as before—sloppy. Victor responds eagerly, trying to free his wrists so that he can touch him, but unable to break out. Yuuri seems to be able to tell what he’s trying to do, smiling against his lips, and though he knows he’s being made fun of, Victor smiles as well. The top of Yuuri’s chest brushes against Victor’s, and he shudders, delighting in the feeling.
When Yuuri does finally let go of one of his wrists, Victor brings it back to his chest, exploring greedily. He’s muscular, from skating, probably and his skin is cool to the touch. He brings his hand to his navel, then starts to drift lower, following a thin line of hair. Silently, he meets Yuuri’s eyes, asking for permission.

There’s a brief hesitation, Yuuri’s eyes flickering down to Victor’s hand and then back up, searching for something. Victor moves the hand back up and cups his cheek. “If you’re not ready, then…”

“I’m ready,” Yuuri says suddenly.

Victor isn’t convinced, he squints at him, trying to make sure.

“I’m ready,” he repeats, more certain this time. “If… If you’re sure you are.”

“Have you ever…?”

Yuuri shifts underneath him, nods. “Once. It didn’t… Yeah, just once.”

He kisses him again, and this time it’s Yuuri’s hand that slips downwards, fingers toying with the waistband of Victor’s jeans. Victor’s heart beats faster with anticipation, and he tries to portray a silent yes, their tongues meeting, a moan escaping his lips without his permission. Yuuri fumbles with the button one-handedly, then tugs down the zipper with ease. For a second, Victor leans back, letting the jeans pool around his ankles.

“Wait. Do you have condoms?” Yuuri asks gently.

(Damnit.)

Victor groans, loud, obnoxious, and buries his face in Yuuri’s shoulder. “I don’t. Do you? Please say you do.”

Yuuri looks regretful, shaking his head.

“I bet Chris has supplies,” Victor thinks out loud.

“You are not asking Christophe to bring us condoms and lube,” Yuuri states firmly, kissing his temple. “There’s the convenience store down towards the quad…”

Victor rolls off of him, scrambles down from the bed, almost tripping on the final rung of the ladder. “I’ll be right back. Don’t move.”

“Aren’t you going to put pants on?”

He blinks, glances down at himself. “Right. Pants.”

Yuuri tosses him his jeans, laughs as Victor almost falls while he hops to get them to fit. “I can go, if you want. You sort of look, um…”

“Look what?” Victor asks, and his hair is a mess, his clothes wrinkled. He knows that. But before Yuuri can answer, he has a hand on the door. He glances down to see that his shoes are uncomfortably on the wrong feet, and Yuuri is laughing again, obviously noticing that as well. “Don’t move,” he repeats, pointing at him.

There’s a brief second of déjà vu.

“Don’t move,” Yuuri agrees, and he’s laughing, and he’s beautiful, and he’s shirtless and waiting in
bed for Victor and the moment the door is shut Victor is practically sprinting towards the convenience store, wrong shoes on the wrong feet and all.

~~

“That was fast,” his roommate comments when he returns.

Victor climbs the ladder and kisses him. This time, it’s horizontal, not vertical, Yuuri rolling onto his side to meet him and a hand instantly gripping his back. Victor touches his chest again, having missed the contact, and exhales against him, laughing. There’s a small shopping bag in his hands. “I think I might have disturbed the lady behind the counter.”

“Oh my god.”

“I let her keep the change. I don’t even know how much it was. I just sort of tossed bills at her…”

“Victor.”

“I’m kidding, I’m kidding,” he promises, kissing his neck. Yuuri arches his head back into the pillow, eyelashes fluttering. “Okay, I’m not kidding, but—”

Yuuri groans, but not the sort of groan Victor would hope for while laying in bed with him.

Victor touches his chest again, lowers his hand. “Can we try again?”

He nods, and Victor easily undoes the button of his jeans, then tugs them down, kissing him while doing so. Yuuri wiggles his hips to get out of them, and then they’re around his ankles, so Victor pulls away to get a better look. “So you’re a boxers guy?” he teases.

“You knew that already,” Yuuri points out, blushing.

“Mmm,” he just agrees, still drinking in the sight of his thighs, his calves. When he blushes, it doesn’t just spread to his ears, it spreads down his chest, too, Victor notices happily. He kisses his way down from his collarbone to his navel, pausing at his nipple again, making Yuuri gasp in delight, hips bucking slightly.

Victor drifts a hand across the front of his underwear, shivers when he realizes that he’s already hard. So he presses harder, and Yuuri squeezes his eyes shut, muttering a quick, incoherent syllable. It’s Victor’s name, he realizes, but broken, torn apart. He wants to hear that again, wants to hear it more than anything.

“Already hard, Yuuri?” he mumbles against his skin.

Yuuri reaches down and touches him, too. “So are you. And Victor, now really isn’t the time for—oh my god.”

Victor palms him completely through his boxers, and Yuuri’s reaction is instant, lips pursed tight to stop himself from being audible. He hooks his thumbs in the waistband, then pulls them down, and Yuuri does the same, not wanting to be exposed alone. For a second, Victor takes the sight of him in, breath catching in his throat, and there’s that blush again, just as gorgeous as it had been previously.

“Can I…?” he starts to ask slowly, unable to find words.

Yuuri blinks at him, innocuously confused.

“I want to…” Victor tries again, but he’s as unsuccessful at finding words on the second attempt.
Instead, he reaches down and touches him, wrapping his fingers experimentally around Yuuri’s length.

There’s a quiet groan, and then Yuuri is biting his lip, hard. Victor shifts lower, mouth ghosting near his cock, and glances up. Yuuri is watching him, now, pupils dilated with want, hair still messy. “Victor,” he whispers, moving his hips again as though he can’t help it. He’s hard, throbbing.

“Aren’t you going to beg?”

Yuuri laughs—a breathless, short thing. “You’re the worst.”

“Good enough,” Victor muses, then puts his lips on him, taking in just the head. Yuuri moans, loud, pressing his head back against the pillow and letting his eyes fall shut in ecstasy. He takes him in deeper, slowly, working up and then back down farther, and Yuuri’s hips rock lightly in time with his movements, not forceful but desperate.

He starts a steady rhythm, and Yuuri makes small noises underneath him, breaking apart and being put back together all at once, and Victor loves it, loves the feeling of him losing control, loves that Yuuri’s attention is solely focused on him. He works with his tongue, and Yuuri’s entire body shudders with a desperate gasp. “I’m going to…”

Victor helps him ride out his high, sucking and licking, and then Yuuri collapses on the bed. He’d suspect that he was already asleep if not for his hands still tightly gripping the bedsheets. Victor works his way back up, pausing to kiss his shoulder, then nipping at it, leaving a mark, probably, and meeting his lips once again. “It was good?” Victor asks.

“Oh my god,” Yuuri just says, kissing him back, lifting his head off of the pillow to do so.

“Yuuri, I’m not your god,” Victor promises sweetly.

At that, Yuuri shoves him playfully. “Do you have to make bad jokes even when we just…? When you just…?”

“Do you have to shove me? I know you’re into rough things, Yuuri, ever since that zip tie prank, but —”

Yuuri wraps his hand around his length, effectively shutting Victor up. He kisses him again, hot and deep, and Yuuri’s free hand fumbles around the bed, eventually finding the shopping bag. He produces the packet of condoms, then pulls away from the kiss, glancing down at it. After putting it in between them, he struggles to get it open, fumbling with the packaging.

“Ah yes, Mr. Strong,” Victor jokes.

He tears it open, raises a challenging eyebrow at him. Then, he rolls it over Victor’s length, and Victor shivers, instinctively shifting towards Yuuri. “Do you want me to…?” Yuuri starts, glancing down at himself, moving on the bed to get more comfortable.

Victor kisses him again, can’t help it when he looks so perfect. He doesn’t pull away far, breath still ghosting across Yuuri’s lips. “You still want this?”

A nod.

“You can turn over, if you want,” he mumbles, and the anticipation has him giddy, has his throat dry. “Whatever is… Whatever’s most comfortable for you.”
Yuuri turns over onto his stomach, and Victor kisses the back of his neck.

“You’re comfortable?”

Another nod, encouraging. “Let me know if you don’t like anything,” Victor requests, finding the bottle of lube and sitting up. He coats two of his fingers, then moves one to Yuuri’s entrance. There’s a sharp intake of breath beneath him and Victor can’t help but want to see his face properly, his expression. He kisses the short hairs on the back of his neck, lets his mouth linger there as he slides a finger into him.

Yuuri’s reaction is instant, a low moan, hips moving backwards desperately. “Please,” he whispers.

It doesn’t even occur to him to make another joke about begging. Yuuri’s voice combined with the feeling of him combined with the smell of his shampoo combined with the taste of his skin combined with everything, everything, all of the sensory taking over his mind, is making him lose himself. He adds another finger to the first, and Yuuri takes it with ease, moaning again, but it’s a choked sound, this time.

There’s a muttered word in Japanese, and Victor moves his hand a few times, in and out, before adding a third finger. He feels his cock growing painfully hard, condom still wrapped around it, and he kisses Yuuri’s shoulder, his taut muscles unbelievably tempting. His skin is hot to the touch.

“Victor,” Yuuri begs.

He knows what he wants—what Victor wants, too. Victor keeps working his fingers, Yuuri’s body responding underneath him, squirming with desperation. Then, he removes them, lining his cock up at his entrance instead, making sure to use a fair amount of lube. He presses lightly, and Yuuri arches upwards, another desperate noise leaving his lips.

Victor enters him slowly, making sure he can adjust, and then he’s moaning, low, long. Yuuri arches against him again, this time sinking farther onto him, and Victor tilts his head back in ecstasy, stars behind his eyes. He starts a slow rhythm, but Yuuri breathes out “harder” and he can’t help but obey, pace quickening and becoming sloppier.

“You’re beautiful, Yuuri,” he tells him against his neck.

Yuuri tilts his head to kiss him, and it’s a horrible angle but Victor manages it, teeth gliding along his lower lip, harder than he intends but judging by the way that Yuuri chases after him, he supposes it was okay. Eventually, Yuuri calls out during a deep thrust, quickly burying his face into the sheets to try and muffle the noise. The flushing of his skin has spread to his neck, now, and Victor nips at it, wants to leave more marks, wants to mark Yuuri as irrevocably, irredeemably his.

When he comes, Yuuri helps, thrusting backwards and kissing him again, hard as Victor had, matching the desperation, the passion. Victor collapses beside him, chest heaving, and takes off the condom, squinting before dropping it perfectly into the trash can below them. Yuuri kisses him again, then, and it’s perfect, he thinks, having him like this, being with him like this. He laces their fingers, and Victor squeezes his palm, content and sleepy.

Victor pulls Yuuri on top of him so that the younger boy’s head is pillowed on his chest, then lazily drifts his fingers through his hair. Yuuri hums in delight, cuddling farther against him, one arm around Victor’s waist.

“You’re perfect,” Victor tells him, because it’s true.

“I’m not even close to perfect.”
He had a feeling he’d say that, but it hurts nevertheless. Victor takes his free hand and ghosts his thumb across Yuuri’s bottom lip. “You’re right, I forgot about your tendency to perform horrible pranks on your roommate. I guess you’re not perfect.”

“Romantic.”

Victor laughs and holds him tighter. “In every other respect, though? Perfect.”

Yuuri turns his head to smile up at him, and Victor isn’t sure he has ever seen a more beautiful sight. Yuuri Katsuki laying on top of him, lips thoroughly kissed, hair properly messy. His eyes are alight with sleep and something else, something that Victor figures parallels his own gaze. “You’re perfect,” Yuuri says, but there’s something to his tone, something akin to pure admiration, pure want.

“This isn’t an argument,” Victor explains. “As if I could even…”

As if I could even hold a candle to you, he wants to say. He wants to tell Yuuri about his laugh, about how melodic it is, about how sometimes he giggles like a little kid but it comes off as endearing instead of juvenile, somehow. About how he can charm everyone in the room and charm Victor again and again and about how it always feels new, being with him. About how he has never, in his life, met someone he has wanted to spend every waking second with, someone who he dreams about and somebody who he is irreversibly, undeniably enamored with.

(Love?)

(It’s more than possible.)

Yuuri traces a pattern on his chest. He’s nibbling on his lower lip, and there’s something alight in his eyes, some sort of concern, like he wants to say something. “Victor?”

Victor tilts his head to the side. “Yes?”

“What… What are we?”

He blinks at the question, surprised. “We’re roommates.”

There’s a pause.

And it’s a heavy sort of pause, like something thick hanging in the air between them, so Victor sighs and leans his head back. He makes his tone teasing once again. “I could get used to having you as my blanket, you know.”

Yuuri seems to snap out of whatever thoughts he’d been delving into. “I could get used to having you as my pillow.”

“ Seems like a fair arrangement.”

~~

Yuuri has a competition on Saturday.

Victor attends, but he wasn’t quite prepared for Yuuri’s costume.
“It’s a hand-me-down from one of Celestino’s other skaters,” Yuuri explains shyly. The fabric is black, silver crystals traveling up one side of his chest and also around his hips. Parts of the fabric are see-through, and the back has a red, skirt-like piece. “I know it’s sort of weird…”

He loves it, and tells Yuuri so by kissing him against the nearest wall.

(The message seems to get through.)

Yuuri’s short program is impressive—Victor’s knowledge of competitive figure skating is limited but he knows a thing or two about skating in general, and he knows that Yuuri does a good job. He lands every jump, making it appear effortless. At the beginning of his routine, his hands move down his sides sensually, and his eyes met Victor’s unabashedly.

Victor had to take several deep breaths to recover from that.

His long program goes well, too, and he ends up placing first overall in the competition. He insists quietly to Victor that it’s not a big deal, but Victor is elated anyway, kissing his medal and congratulating him endlessly. Yuuri is humble, kissing him back and taking the compliments in his stride. They order takeout from a place fancier than usual, and Victor lathers him in kisses, one for every rotation he’d done on the ice, or so he claims. But he loses count several times. Not to mention the fact that he has no idea how many rotations Yuuri had done, anyway.

~

Phichit goes on Yik Yak often.

So often, that it doesn’t take long at all for him to find the video.

It spreads sort of like a wildfire—it starts small, a few people sharing it and questioning whether or not the man shown in it is the same one who has been spotted with Victor around campus. Then, though, it’s everywhere, the top Yak at almost all times. There are whispers and rumors and Phichit can’t keep up, his head spinning.

He clicks on it again.

First, Yuuri is stripping.

Phichit had known that he’d stripped at the End of the Year party. That’s not all that surprising. Yuuri hadn’t remembered it, though, and he’d said strictly to Phichit: “If I did anything embarrassing, I don’t want to know about it.” Phichit isn’t sure that he had truly meant those words, but he’d respected his wishes nevertheless. So Yuuri doesn’t know about the stripping. Though Phichit figures he has probably guessed about it by this point, given the people who had come up to him after the party and praised him for his unique talent.

Then, in the video, Yuuri dances.

His shirt is popped open, tie still hanging around his neck, a bottle of champagne in his hands. He dances with Victor, but that’s not particularly surprising, either—there were a lot of people dancing with a lot of people at the party in question. A freshman dancing with a sophomore isn’t particularly insane, doesn’t make Yik Yak go wild.
What happens next—that’s what’s interesting.

It would appear that the cameraperson took the video on accident. In the foreground is a young woman laughing and saying something, but in the background is Victor. His suit is crumpled, his eyes are wide as he stares at the black-haired boy in front of him. The boy could be mistaken for somebody other than Yuuri, given the blurry quality of the video, but Phichit knows it’s him. Knows it’s him without a second thought.

At first, they’re talking about something. Victor laughs, his eyes bright, attention captivated, as though they’re the only two people at the party. Yuuri is smiling, too, and one of his hands is on Victor’s shoulder, his other hand fixing his own hair. Victor parts his lips, and Yuuri does too, and then they’re kissing, Yuuri reaching up on his tippy toes to reach him and Victor’s hands moving to his hips, fingers splaying across them.

Nobody else at the party seems to notice.

It’s Yuuri who pulls away first, and Victor’s smile is…

Phichit doesn’t know Victor well. But he pauses the video, stares at that frame. Yuuri is laughing again, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, but Victor… He’s…

Hopeful, maybe? Infatuated? He’s watching Yuuri like he’s the best thing in the world, like he’s not sure what to do with himself. Like he is a child who has just had the world explained to him for the first time, who now sees everything differently. He’s blatantly drunk, yes, but Phichit thinks that the expression on his face may very well be the purest one he has ever seen. It’s love, there’s no doubt about that. Perhaps the fleeting, passionate, love-at-first-type-but-not-real-love type of love, but it’s love nevertheless. Nobody could deny that.

And then Yuuri grinds on him.

Phichit laughs a little at that part, knows Yuuri would die if he were to see that. Victor pulls a marker out of his shirt pocket and scribbles his phone number on Yuuri’s hand. Then, he’s holding that same hand tight, and saying something firmly, desperately. Phichit puts the video on .5x speed, tries to read his lips. It’s useless, but he figures from the body language that Victor is telling Yuuri to call him later. Yuuri, on the other hand, is ignoring him, kissing him again before sauntering back off to the dance floor, too wasted to think straight, probably.

So as Phichit rewatches the video, he’s not sure what to do with this information.

There’s a good chance Yuuri has already seen it. But the part that shakes him is the fact that Victor probably remembers every detail of that night, probably recognized Yuuri the moment they started rooming together.

That concept…

It bothers him, slightly.

Like they met on uneven terms.

Obviously, Victor loves Yuuri. And Yuuri loves Victor. It’s too soon for either of them to say that to each other, Phichit figures, but everybody can tell. Especially everybody on Yik Yak.

So he’s conflicted.

As he sits by the campfire on Saturday night, he’s torn in two. He sees Victor leaning his head on
Yuuri’s shoulder, looking as though he’d reach up and try to fetch the moon for Yuuri if he were simply to ask. All in all, Phichit is happy for Yuuri. But he does wonder if Victor has told Yuuri about the video, or if he’d just assumed that he’d remembered, or exactly what is happening on that front. Phichit is the type of person who likes to know what’s going on, and the fact that he doesn’t bothers him, even though he simultaneously wants to respect Yuuri and Victor’s relationship and privacy.

He watches Victor curiously, trying to get a grasp on his intentions. They’re probably innocent enough—that’s definitely Phichit’s first impression. But he watches anyway, analytical. Victor meets his eyes at one point, and Phichit tears his gaze away.

He just wants to do what’s best for his best friend.

But he doesn’t know what that is.

(Eventually, he decides that the video is inconsequential.)

(For once, he won’t intervene.)

~

For Thanksgiving Break, Yuuri is going to fly to Japan.

The news almost breaks Victor, feels like a punch to the face.

But he doesn’t admit that to Yuuri because he knows it’s unfair. Yuuri has been talking about how much he misses his family for ages and his birthday is coming up. Victor won’t be selfish and beg for him to stay just because he can’t stand being apart from him for a single week. Therefore, Yuuri flies to Japan. And Victor stays behind. Alone.

(Well, not alone. He has Yurio and Yakov. But that’s beside the point.)

He FaceTimes him, though the time differences are hard to work out. Victor, to Yuuri’s chagrin, meets Yuuri’s parents over FaceTime, waving to them and greeting them happily. When they start telling him everything that Yuuri has told them about him, Yuuri turns pink and begs for them to stop, eventually deciding to hang up the phone. Victor grins at that knowledge for the rest of the day, tries to imagine Yuuri talking about him to his parents. He wonders if he’d used the hand gestures he typically uses when he gets excited. He hopes so.

When Yuuri comes home, though, Victor traps him in a tight hug, lifting him off of his feet and twirling him around. Jet-lagged, Yuuri isn’t in the mood for much more than a hug, and he collapses on his bed, asleep the moment his head hits the pillow. Victor smiles affectionately, because things hadn’t been the same without him around. Hadn’t felt right.

~

A few days later, it’s Yuuri’s birthday.
Victor offers to throw him a proper party, but instead a few friends just come over to their dorm room. The space is limited, so they all sit on the floor between Yuuri and Victor’s beds, grinning and talking. Yuuri is presented with gift after gift—new skates from Mila, katsudon from Sara, a heartfelt card and a few new articles of clothing from Phichit, and so on.

He’s nervous to give Yuuri his gift, but he does anyway. It’s sort of stupid, he tells Yuuri quickly, wanting to preface it in case he hates it. Yuuri just ignores him, unwrapping it and tossing the paper behind him. It’s in a brown box, so he glances at Victor, curious. Victor smiles, nodding for him to open it.

“Newton’s Cradle,” he says out loud, pulling styrofoam out of the box and then holding up the small device. It has a wooden base, and then silver rods extending upwards at an inward angle. There are five metal balls suspended from string, and Yuuri places it on his lap, picking up one on the far end and letting go. Perfectly, the ball hits the other four, then the one on the other end goes flying up, then back down. A miracle of physics, or whatever the Amazon description had said. “This is great!” Victor swallows, afraid that his reaction isn’t genuine. “I wasn’t sure if you’d…”

“No, I love it,” Yuuri promises, placing it on his desk before hugging him, bits of styrofoam falling to the floor. He buries his face in Victor’s shoulder, breathes in. “I love it. Thank you.”

“One more thing, actually,” Victor adds after drawing out the hug for as long as possible. He heads across the room to his own desk and opens a drawer. He produces a white t-shirt, unwrapped. It’s folded, and he heads back over to Yuuri, sitting down on the floor and handing it to him.

Yuuri unfolds the shirt, then slowly tilts his head to look at him. “Victor. I can’t wear this.”

“What does it say?” Phichit asks, interest piqued.

He blushes, shaking his head and folding the shirt back up. “I am not wearing this.”

“Yuuri,” Victor complains, stretching out his name. “Try it on, try it on.”

“What does it say?” Phichit repeats.

Yuuri sighs and unfolds it again, reading the print on the shirt aloud. “Your clothes would look better accelerating towards the floor at 9.8 meters per second squared.” Everybody in the room breaks out into laughter, and Mila stands up, taking the shirt and putting it over Yuuri’s head. “Come on, move your arms.”

Reluctantly, Yuuri obeys.

Victor admires him. “I like it. You should keep it.”

“Where would I ever wear this?” he complains, though he’s suppressing a laugh as he looks down at himself, shaking his head in disbelief.

“Everywhere,” Christophe states, and then whistles.

Victor kisses him on his forehead. “Happy birthday.”

“Thank you,” he says. “For the first gift. Not for this.”

“You’ll end up wearing it,” Victor teases, playing with the sleeve of the shirt. “It looks good on
Yuuri blushes, and then a boy named Guang-Hong is thrusting another gift into his arms.

As the clock ticks and the moon rises, people begin to leave their dorm room.

For a while, it’s just four of them—Victor, Yuuri, Phichit, and Christophe. They start to watch a movie, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, which is one of Yuuri’s favorites, apparently. They watch it on Yuuri’s laptop, which is far too small for all of them, and they sit against the wall behind Yuuri’s bed, legs dangling over the edge. It doesn’t take long for Yuuri to be yawning, struggling to stay awake. Phichit talks to him every once and a while, which appears to do the trick.

Christophe leaves a few minutes later, saying something about having to work on an essay.

Then, there’s a long enough lull in the conversation, and Yuuri quickly falls asleep between Victor and Phichit, his breathing even. The movie plays in front of them, and it’s not the type of movie he could imagine Yuuri admiring so much. It’s sad, emotional, philosophical. There’s also something beautiful captured in the story, though, and he tries to pay attention so that he can talk to Yuuri about it later.

Victor likes Phichit.

He always has, ever since they met.

But he remembers his odd look at the campfire the other day. And it’s sort of an odd dynamic, isn’t it, to have one’s sort-of-boyfriend asleep between one and the sort-of-boyfriend’s best friend? Victor just continues to watch the movie. After a while, though, Yuuri shifts in his sleep, and his glasses are threatening to fall.

Victor takes them off for him, folds them and places them on the first rung of the ladder, where Yuuri normally keeps his phone. Phichit watches, and there’s that look again.

Then, suddenly, Phichit pauses the movie.

“So, Victor.”

Victor is a smart person.

(Or, at least, he’d like to think of himself as smart.)

So he recognizes what’s happening right away and winces preemptively. “Shovel talk?”

“Shovel talk,” Phichit confirms, pushing up his sleeves. He glances at his sleeping friend, as though saying, *yes, Yuuri, I’m doing this for you.*

Victor’s thoughts threaten to go off on a tangent about how beautiful Yuuri is when he’s sleeping, but he forces his attention to stay on Phichit instead. Determined to impress. “I wouldn’t ever hurt him, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

Phichit nods, as though that was what he’d wanted to hear. “He probably wouldn’t want me to tell you this, but he gets nervous. During exam week, especially.”

Victor isn’t sure where he’s going with that statement, so he just nods, lets out a stupid “oh” of surprise.
“Anxious,” Phichit corrects, as though that clarifies it. “He gets anxious.”

“I… Okay.”

Phichit looks at Yuuri again, watching him with undiluted love. “I would make him tea. He likes sencha, but there’s… There’s only one store nearby that sells the specific kind that he likes. He says it reminds him of how his mother makes it.” Then he looks back at Victor, gravity set in his eyes. “And sometimes you’ll need to distract him. Force him to do something else for a while—it’s good for him.”

“Phichit…”

“He thinks that he’s not good enough.”

Victor swallows at that, throat feeling dry all of a sudden.

Phichit wipes his hands on his jeans, looking down. “He thinks that he’s not good enough,” he repeats. “For you, for me, for anything. And sometimes that…” His voice trails off, and he takes in a shaky breath. “Sometimes that can stop him from doing things, from saying things. He expresses love through actions, not words. He thinks differently. You should know that, too, I guess.”

“I think I love him,” Victor whispers, and he’s surprised by how genuinely it comes out, how effortlessly the words roll off of his tongue.

He nods, unsurprised. “I think he loves you. But my point is—take care of him for me.”

Yuuri readjusts in his sleep, leaning to his right, head landing on Phichit’s shoulder. Phichit puts an arm around him, and Yuuri sighs, cuddling against him. It’s platonic, Victor knows that, but he can’t help being slightly jealous anyway. “I will,” he promises.

“You make him happy,” Phichit points out. “And that makes me happy. So thank you.”

“Don’t thank me for that,” Victor says. “Thank you for trusting me. And, for the record, you’d be a good psych major.”

Phichit laughs, and in an instant he’s back to his usual, playful self. “I know, right? Can’t you imagine it?” He rubs Yuuri’s back gently as he sleeps, and Yuuri unconsciously shifts closer to him. “I think I’ve stolen your boyfriend for the night. Sorry about that.”

Victor isn’t upset. He gets down from the bed, but pauses on the ladder, noting the way that the two boys are sat against the wall. “You both will ruin your necks if you sleep like that.”

Phichit nods in agreement. “Come on, Yuuri, let’s lay you down,” he mumbles.

Yuuri doesn’t protest as he’s pulled off of the wall and onto a pillow, not once breaking out of his slumber. He does, however, keep hold of Phichit’s arm, and Phichit grins at him. Victor wonders, briefly, if he likes to be needed. If that’s why he’d told Victor about his anxiety, about distracting him. Quickly, though, he shakes that thought off—he’s not the psych major, after all.

“Guess you’re stuck,” Victor jokes.

“Guess so,” Phichit responds. “You’re cool if I crash here for the night?”

Victor nods, is surprised that he’d asked in the first place.

He makes his way to his own bed and, surprisingly, it’s the best he has slept in years.
When Yuuri wakes up, his face is buried in the crook of someone’s neck.

Victor, he thinks instantly. He keeps his eyes shut, wanting to drown in the moment. Yuuri leans in, exhales his name, and presses his lips to Victor’s neck.

“Woah, woah, not Victor,” Phichit’s voice is saying. “I’m not Victor.”

Yuuri blinks, backing away, his eyes flashing open. Definitely not Victor. He feels himself flushing and shakes his head wildly, grabbing the sheets and pulling them over himself with embarrassment. “Oh my god. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry…”

There’s a mock groan from the other side of the room. “Where are your loyalties, Yuuri?”

Phichit is grinning—Yuuri can hear it in his voice. “I guess you two have been getting comfortable, then? If it’s normal for you to wake up next to him?”

“Phichit,” Yuuri breathes, a warning. He tugs the blanket down, only his eyes exposed, and glances between them. They’re like partners in crime with their smug smiles, Yuuri thinks, and he winces, covering himself again.

“Nice shirt, by the way,” Victor comments.

Yuuri glances down at himself, sees that he’s still wearing that ridiculous gift that Victor had given him. “Oh my god.” He wonders how much he’s blushing, how much they can tell. In an instant, he’s in the bathroom, shutting and locking the door behind him. First, he pulls the shirt over his head, then he turns on the shower.

He hadn’t anticipated just how dangerous a friendship between Phichit and Victor would be.

(Though, at the same time, he can’t deny that it makes him sort of happy, being a bridge between them.)

Either way, when Yuuri exits the bathroom, Phichit is on his way out of their dorm room, giving him one last ‘happy birthday’ before heading to his own room. Then Yuuri is alone with Victor, who is still giving him that stupid, amused expression that makes him want to bury himself alive. There’s a silence.

“That was cute.”

Yuuri saw that coming. “Did you two do that on purpose?”

Victor takes a piece of paper from his lap and begins folding it—Yuuri had taught him how to make his own paper airplanes ages ago and he’d gotten rather good at it over time. He’s sitting up on his bed, but Yuuri can see his tongue dart out as he works. It’s a habit that Yuuri has himself, and it occurs to him that maybe Victor had picked that up from him. That thought stirs something inside him, but he can’t quite put a finger on it. He files it away to think about later.

“No, you just happened to lean to your right instead of to your left when we were watching that movie. I’m offended, by the way.”
He knows he’s kidding, but there does seem to be an underlying tone of envy that makes Yuuri’s
toes curl. “Did you like the movie?”

Victor hums. “Didn’t get to finish it, we’ll have to sometime. But what I did see was good.”

Yuuri wonders, briefly, why he and Phichit hadn’t finished it. But he doesn’t ask, because Victor
scribbles something on the inside of the airplane and then it’s soaring towards him, hitting him in the
chest. Its wings are folded slightly unevenly, but it flies well nevertheless. He unfolds it.

“可愛い,” he reads out loud, puzzled. “You… How did you…”

“That means ‘cute’, right?” Victor asks, slightly concerned. “I started taking a class online. It’s hard,
but it’s slightly similar to Korean, which I’m roughly familiar with.”

The lettering is off, shaky, but it’s legible. And then Victor’s words start to sink in, the weight of
them. Victor had started learning Japanese because… Because of him? He looks up at him, trying to
grasp any confirmation he can muster, and Victor is just smiling, almost shy. Or as shy as a Victor
Nikiforov expression can get. “You’re learning Japanese?”

Victor licks his lips, looks at the paper airplane again. “Your expression is making me wonder if I
accidentally wrote something horrific.”

“No… No, it’s…” He swallows. “It’s right.”

“Toss it back up here, I learned a few more words.”

After scribbling a few more basic words, mostly adjectives, Yuuri is sitting beside him, writing with
him and pointing out different nuances of the written language. Victor learns quickly, which is
unsurprising, Yuuri supposes, and squints, focused, as he tries to formulate a full sentence. “How do
I write your name?” Victor asks, handing him the pencil once again.

Yuuri writes his name, then Victor’s. He labels both in English.

Victor draws a heart in between the words.

“That’s universal, isn’t it?” he asks quietly.

It’s a rhetorical question, but Yuuri finds himself nodding anyway, and suddenly the feeling of
Victor’s side pressed up against his own is burning, noticeable, like something in the background
rapidly shifting into the foreground. He finds himself shifting, still watching the tiny heart, wondering
if it’s truly there or not, wondering what Victor is thinking.

Then Victor slips his hand up Yuuri’s shirt, and his skin is so cool that Yuuri gasps, instinctively
moving closer to the touch. It’s electric, every time they meet like this. Subtle hands brushing against
hands or something more like this—heated, passionate. Either way, it’s electric. Yuuri covers
Victor’s hands, laces their fingers from behind, and Victor kisses him.

It’s slower than usual, makes him dizzy. Victor starts on the corner of his mouth, taking his time, then
works his way to the middle, the short distance being traveled at an agonizingly slow pace. At first,
it’s closed lips, scattered movements, wandering hands, but when Victor opens his lips, Yuuri
doesn’t protest. He doesn’t taste like anything in particular, just Victor, and Yuuri discovers that
perhaps that’s the best taste of all. That, combined with the smell of his cologne, is flooding his
senses, blissfully blurring his thoughts.

“Can we cuddle?” Victor asks quietly.
It takes a moment for those words to set in, but then Yuuri is laughing out loud with shock and adoration. “What?”

He looks defensive. “I asked if we could cuddle. What’s so weird about that?”

“Well, just… You’re…”

Victor waits.

Yuuri struggles to find an answer that won’t offend him. “You’re very, um, forthright.”

Humming at that, Victor lays down. Yuuri lays beside him, facing him. He thinks of how Victor hadn’t been at all what he’d expected. Yes, he still manages to maintain the persona of a stereotypical frat boy, but then he’ll ask Yuuri to cuddle in the same tone he’d use to ask if Yuuri could pass the butter. It reminds him of Phichit, in a way. They’re both confident, though perhaps that trait reveals itself in different ways.

Then he realizes that they’re not, in fact, cuddling. Victor seems to realize that, too, so he puts his head on Yuuri’s shoulder, burying his face in his blue sweatshirt. “Yuuri?”

He touches his hair, can’t really help it. Given the way that Victor melts against him, he figures that he likes it. “Yeah?”

“If you ever want anything, you can be forthright with me. I just hope you know that.”

“Is it forthright if I say that your clothes would look better accelerating towards the floor at nine point eight meters per second squared?”

Victor laughs, and the vibrations tickle Yuuri’s chest. He leans his head to the side, one hand still on Victor’s hair and his other arm lazily thrown over his back. “You’re a true minx, Yuuri Katsuki. Has anybody ever told you that?”

“Nope.”

“You’re cheeky.”

“Cheeky?” Yuuri repeats.

“Cheeky.”

“I don’t think that’s true.”

Victor kisses his neck, gentle. “I beg to differ. I’m building a case against you, actually.”

Yuuri angles his head to give him better access. “A case?”

“I’m going to take you to court. I have evidence for a lot of crimes, Yuuri. Not to mention a strong vendetta. You’re going down.”

He’s not very convinced, and Victor’s words only sound half thought-out, attention obviously focused on something more important as he nips at his collarbone, now, hand tugging the collar of his shirt down. “You should know that Phichit would make a good attorney.”

“Oh, I can imagine that,” Victor mumbles. “Never mind, I won’t sue you.”

“That’s a relief.”
He kisses his lips chastely, then resumes his earlier position, content to snuggle against him. “I have a physics assignment that I should be working on.”

Yuuri brushes his hair back out of his eyes, something that Victor has done to him countless times, and it occurs to him that perhaps they’re picking up many habits from each other. “What’s the topic?”

“Centripetal force versus centrifugal force.”

“Easy,” Yuuri tells him.

Victor glances up at him. “Is it?”

“Well, one’s real, one’s not, first of all.”

He groans—loud, drawn out. “I thought physics was just supposed to be how things move, how things happen. You know, real stuff. Why is it all about disappearing cats and fake forces?”

“Some of it is real,” Yuuri protests. “I mean, not everything has to be tangible. Linguistics isn’t tangible.”

Victor runs his thumb across his bottom lip. “But it’s real.”

Yuuri takes in a shaky breath, watches him.

“Which one of the forces is real?” he asks.

“Well…” he starts, checking Victor’s expression to see if he’s genuinely interested or just trying to be polite. “Centripetal is real. Centrifugal is fake. They’re opposites.”

There’s a slight pause, as though Victor is thinking about something. He touches the top of Yuuri’s chest, just above the neckline of his shirt, and traces something, over and over. It takes him a moment to realize that it’s messy Japanese, letters and words that are nonsensical when strung together. Yuuri is captivated nevertheless, losing his train of thought because he’s focusing on the feeling, now, on the fact that Victor had begun learning an entirely new language just for him.

“How can something real be the opposite of something fake?” Victor whispers.

The question breaks him out of the spell, draws him back to the real world. “It… It’s an apparent force. So centripetal force is when…” Love, he recognizes on his skin. Victor pauses, blinks at him through silver eyelashes. No, it must’ve been another word, Yuuri thinks. He must’ve been mistaken. “Centripetal force is, if you’re swinging something, as it rotates, it moves towards the center.”

Victor’s finger starts tracing a circle.

“As the radius gets smaller, the force gets stronger.”

“Like they’re being pulled together?”

“In layman’s terms, yes. But centrifugal force, that’s the opposite direction. But it’s an apparent force, not a real force.”

“I’m trying to understand,” Victor says, “but I don’t see how that’s possible.”

Yuuri takes Victor’s hand, guides it to trace another circle. This time, he moves inwards. “Centripetal,” he whispers. Then, he makes the same motion, but outwards. “Centrifugal. It’s…” It’s
about your frame of reference. Technically, they’re the same force.”

“The same force, but a different frame of reference,” Victor repeats. “So it is sort of like the cat. Dead and not dead at the same time.”

“I guess so.”

There’s a pause. “Paradoxical.”

“Paradoxical?” Yuuri repeats.

“Like you.”

Another pause.

It occurs to him that he doesn’t know why Victor likes him. Why Victor spends time with him, finds him interesting. It would make more sense if they were roommates and Victor simply spent little time around the room—out with his fraternity friends or drinking and partying every night, only to stumble back drunk to go to bed. It’d make more sense if he were to use Yuuri’s knowledge of physics to his advantage, only using him to succeed in the class and hardly speaking any other words to him.

He doesn’t have to lay with him. Doesn’t have to listen to him go on and on about a topic that Victor doesn’t care about. Doesn’t have to do any of this.

Victor calls him a paradox, but really, he’s the biggest paradox of all.

“I should get going, figure skating practice starts soon. Phichit will be looking for me.”

“Can I come?”

Yuuri shrugs. “If you want, I suppose.”

~

Victor comes, and when Yuuri is on a break, he takes him out onto the ice. Yuuri speaks of angular momentum and friction and Newton’s third law, and Victor asks him how centripetal and centrifugal forces play a role, and Yuuri explains that, too, happily.

Phichit smiles at them.

They smile back.

Victor stumbles, causing Yuuri to fall awkwardly on his back. Then, as he starts laughing and lands beside him, pulling him closer with meaningless apologies, Yuuri isn’t sure he has ever been happier.

~

Yuuri is hungry, one day, so he walks to the dining hall for a late dinner. Victor is working on a project, so Yuuri is alone, yawning with thoughts of Pasta Thursday on his mind. It’s early December, now, and things are getting colder, so he has a jacket tugged tight around his shoulders and his jeans are too thin to protect him against the brisk wind.
It’s snowing, just a bit. He remembers a time so long ago when Victor had wrapped him up in his coat, joked about both of them fitting together in it. Then, the memory shifts to the warmth he’d felt the other day with Victor laying on top of him, lightly grazing a finger across his skin, voices hushed and soft.

Those thoughts are interrupted by giggling.

There are two girls—first years, maybe?—watching him. They’re both pretty, from an objective standpoint, and brunette. One is wearing a maroon sweater, and the other is wearing a puffy, mint green coat. They’re pushing each other towards Yuuri, aggressively whispering to each other, completely in sync. Yuuri pauses, glances around to make sure he’s not being mistaken. They want to talk to him.

“Oh, hi,” the maroon sweater girl says. Her friend glares at her. “Are you dating Mr. Feltsman’s son?”

The friend erupts into giggling behind her hand, and Yuuri blinks, slightly dazed. “Victor? Oh, we’re…”

He’s not sure he knows the answer.

“We saw that video,” the student in the coat adds.

“Marie! Shut up,” the first girl gasps. “He doesn’t want to talk about that.”

“She’s just upset ‘cause she had a crush on Victor,” Marie explains. “But you two are a cuter couple than her and him would be, anyway.”

Yuuri feels awkward. They’re obviously drunk, or tipsy, at least. Upon further examination of their outfits, he figures that there must’ve been a sorority party or something. He contemplates walking away, but then part of the conversation sticks out to him. “That video?”

“The party video.”

Oh, he thinks. It must’ve been from the Halloween Party. Victor had probably done something stupid while drunk—he’d definitely been out of it that night. Yuuri almost walks away for the second time, but he can’t help being curious about his roommate’s actions. “What’d Victor do in the video?”

The girls start giggling synchronously, and one friend pushes the other on her shoulder. “You mean, what did you do.”

“Me?” he asks, surprised.

Then it hits him—the one party he’d been to before. The Psi Omega Iota End of the Year party. He must’ve done something embarrassing. He’d always expected that, judging by the look that Phichit always gets on his face when somebody brings that event up. Therefore, he doesn’t want to see it. Better if he doesn’t know.

So he walks away.

“You’ve got moves, you know,” Marie calls.

He ducks his heads, walking faster.
After a week, he forgets about the video. Then, it’s Friday evening. Winter break starts on Monday, and Victor will be leaving for St. Petersburg. Phichit is going to Thailand, but Mila and Sara are staying behind, so Yuuri won’t be completely alone. Nevertheless, he’s slightly disappointed that he’ll have to live without Victor for a month or so.

He does, however, eventually bring up the topic of the video with Phichit.

It comes up naturally in conversation, and, really, the curiosity has been gnawing at him ever since those two girls had spoken to him about it with their giggles and stares.

Besides, it’s inevitable that Phichit knows about it.

“Do you know anything about a video from the End of the Year party last year?” Yuuri asks, casual.

They’re sitting in Yuuri and Victor’s dorm room—Victor and Christophe are in Christophe and Phichit’s dorm room. As though they’d switched roommates for a day, as though things are the way they were supposed to be originally. It’s sort of ironic, Yuuri thinks briefly. Phichit glances up, his eyes widen. “Somebody told you about that?”

“Somebody mentioned it, yeah,” he asks, slightly concerned now.

“Did you watch it?”

Yuuri frowns, shakes his head. “Should I not? I know I told you not to tell me if I’d done anything embarrassing, but…”

“Victor… Victor never… He never brought it up with you?” His words are slow, as though he’s putting together a puzzle, as though something had just occurred to him for the first time. “Victor never spoke to you about a video?” he asks when Yuuri doesn’t respond instantly.

“Um, no. Why would he?”

Phichit cringes. Physically cringes. “Yuuri, you’re going to need to watch it.”

He does.

And it starts with him stripping, which doesn’t surprise him, really, since he’d woken up the next morning with a distinct lack of clothes. He glances at Phichit nervously, who isn’t watching the video, is watching the wall in front of him, a poster of a Thai actor on it. The color is drained from his face, and it’s an unfamiliar look, one that doesn’t suit him. Regret.

Yuuri keeps watching.

And then…

Victor.

Victor is there.

And they’re kissing.

Hard, passionate. Victor is drawn to him, and he’s drawn to Victor, and Yuuri thinks of centripetal
force all over again, thinks of the smaller the radius, the stronger the pull. He swallows, but there’s emotion riding up in his throat, choking him, constricting him. And then Victor is writing something on his hand.

It’s out-of-body, seeing himself. Seeing himself confident, giving Victor a sultry smile that appears to make the silver-haired boy’s knees weak, make him melt into the floor of the large building that the party had been held in. But the worst part is the hands on hips, the kissing, the bruised lips, the messy hair, the…

Victor’s words ring in his ears.

*If you ever want anything, you can be forthright with me.*

(Had Victor known?)

(Had Victor known about this?)

(Had Victor known that Yuuri was captivated with him from the start?)

“Don’t freak out,” Phichit says quickly, and there’s a look of shame on his face. “This is my fault, I knew about the video, and I should’ve told you. I had just figured that you and Victor knew about it and had talked about it or…” He takes in a breath. “Are you thinking that he knew about this?”

“I’m thinking…” Yuuri starts, then exhales. “I’m thinking that I don’t know.”

“I’m sorry,” Phichit adds, touching his arm. “I’m sure there’s an explanation for this, you’ve just got to talk to him. You know, there’s a good chance that he doesn’t remember, either.”

Victor doesn’t look that drunk in the video.

Victor had been touchy from th—

It hits him.

“We didn’t meet when we became roommates,” Yuuri whispers.

“What?”

“When he hit me on his skateboard…” He realizes slowly, his heart sinking lower and lower, the grief attacking his thoughts, nipping away at the edges of his mind, infecting all of his memories until everything, everything makes sense. Victor’s instant infatuation, that night, then when they’d become roommates, his persona, the way that he was simultaneously ridiculous and sweet and flirtatious…

Phichit takes both of his shoulders, grips them tight. “Yuuri, stop.”

How far back does this go? Had Victor been thinking about the video ever since they’d met on that path? Had he been ecstatic when he’d realized that they’d be rooming together, knowing that the cute Japanese boy harbored a crush on him? Knowing that he could get him to do as he liked, knowing that eventually, eventually he could get him to…

Nausea swirls in his stomach.

Victor wouldn’t, a voice reminds him.

Victor wouldn’t.
Or would he?

The thing is, it makes sense.

All of it: Victor’s easy approval of staying roommates with Yuuri, the way he’d pretended to be so enamored by his love of physics, the way he’d tried to get close to him, with figure skating practices and compliments and gifts. It adds up, mathematically.

“Yuuri,” Phichit hisses.

He’s dazed, blinks at his friend with unshed tears in his eyes.

Then he’s in Phichit’s arms, and Phichit is whispering words unheard, rubbing his back. “Yuuri, listen to me. You’re probably overreacting, everything is probably fine. We don’t know his side of the story. Do you hear me? You trust Victor, and I trust Victor. He’s a nice guy. We don’t know what he was thinking, if he was thinking at all. You’re jumping to conclusions. He probably hasn’t even seen this video before, or maybe he doesn’t remember that night, or maybe he just hadn’t recognized you later on. We don’t know anything.”

Yuuri breathes, in and out. He won’t cry. He won’t cry over something stupid like this. Phichit is right. There’s nothing to cry about in the first place. It’s just embarrassment more than anything else, the idea that Victor could see a stripping, grinding mess of a black-haired boy in boxers whenever he looks at him. It’s the sharp contrast that can now be drawn—Yuuri is a messy drunk, flirtatious, not pretty in the slightest, and Victor is pretty at all times, whether he’s drunk or sober or annoying or kind. He’s endearing, charismatic by nature.

“Go talk to him,” Phichit commands. “Before you work yourself up.”

Too late.

Then he’s hugging Phichit again, tighter this time. “You’re right.”

“Okay, go find him, then,” Phichit urges. “It’s better to do it now before you’ve had time to think about it too much. I’m sure there’s a simple explanation. This is all nothing.”

Yuuri shuts his eyes. “What if it isn’t?”

Phichit pulls away, swipes his thumb underneath Yuuri’s eyes to catch a tear he hadn’t realized had fallen. “What do you mean? What’s your fear?”

“That…” he starts, then chokes on the word, inhaling before starting over again. “What if he doesn’t really like me, Phichit? What if he just likes the fact that I… The way that I…” His voice trails off with darker thoughts looming on the horizon.

“Oh, Yuuri,” Phichit just says, biting his lip. “That’s not true. That can’t be true. Go talk to him, please. Besides, if that is true, then guess what?”

“What?”

“He doesn’t deserve you. Alright? Just remember that. If he doesn’t…” Phichit pauses, thinking. “If he doesn’t feel the same way about you that you feel about him, he doesn’t deserve you. Please tell me you’ll remember that. Don’t think of him as… Don’t think of him as the guy you thought of before you’d gotten to know him. Think of him as the Victor that you’ve been living with, not the campus celebrity.”
The words are so rehearsed, so thought-out, that it vaguely occurs to Yuuri that Phichit must’ve thought about this at some point in the past.

Yuuri shakes that off, stands up on wobbly legs. “Okay, I’ll go ask him about it.”

“Good. That’s the Yuuri Katsuki I know.”

He raises an eyebrow, doubtful.

Phichit rubs the back of his neck, eyes downcast. “Right, maybe not the Yuuri Katsuki I know, but the Yuuri Katsuki I’m proud of! Go talk to him, get answers, report back to me. If he turns out to be an asshole, which I don’t think he will, I’ll be by your side. I’m right behind you.”

The pep talk helps, slightly.

Images from the video haunt him as he makes his way down the stairs to Phichit and Christophe’s floor. He pauses to glance at his reflection in a window in the stairwell, making sure it isn’t too apparent that he’d cried a little. His sensitivity has always been one of his least favorite traits about himself. It makes him feel pathetic, annoying.

And then, as he walks, the guilt sets in.

How could he have doubted Victor like that? Of course Victor hadn’t taken advantage of him, of course Phichit is right—there must be a logical explanation. He overreacted, obviously, had gotten emotional and doubted the person he had fallen head-over-heels for, the person he knows like the back of his hand. Surely there’s some sort of logical explanation or reasoning that will easily prove his innocence, that will allow them to continue building their relationship in the beautiful way it had been building over the last few months.

Yuuri straightens his shoulders and walks down the hallway. He can hear Victor and Christophe’s voices when he’s a few rooms away—the door is open. Christophe is speaking, sounding thoughtful. “How are you planning on getting him to sleep with you?”

Yuuri pauses.

Feels the tension in his shoulders increase, feels his entire body sinking. No, no, he must be mishearing. Or Christophe is talking to someone else. Yes, Christophe must be talking to someone else.

Except…

Except Victor talks next.

“Well, that has happened before, I could get it to happen again. It’d be easy.”

A girl walks past him in the hallway, looks slightly concerned. Yuuri braces himself on the wall. His heart is like a wild animal, beating to try and find its way out of its cage, faster and faster and wilder and wilder until he can’t breathe anymore and he’s choking on the air that’s supposed to help him the oxygen and the nitrogen and—

There’s a laugh from Christophe. A laugh. “Do you think he’s that gullible to let his guard down?” A slight pause. “I hate to break it to you, but you’re not a very good liar, Victor.”

They’re talking about someone else, Yuuri lies to himself, but the sensical part of his mind says that that’s not true, they’re talking about him, there’s no mistake. Victor has been scheming to sleep with
him and Christophe is in on it and who’s to say that Mila and Sara aren’t in on it, too? In on the joke that Yuuri Katsuki, a stupid second year, is head-over-heels in love with Victor Nikiforov, a preppy frat boy? But he’d seemed to be an arrogant frat boy with a soft side and he’d asked Yuuri to cuddle, a week ago, hadn’t he? Had genuinely, really asked for that, with a lovely smile and…

And Victor laughs, too.

Laughs at him.

And it’s the same laugh that Yuuri had admired, had fallen in love with, but now it feels like the manifestation of malice, and that sort of anger isn’t something he’d ever associated with Victor before because normally Victor is paper airplanes and stupid jokes and he’d bought him a nerdy physics t-shirt and Yuuri can’t breathe, now, is collapsing in on himself, and he hates the fact that he’s sensitive but he also hates the fact that he’s here, hearing this—

“I’m a great liar!” Victor retorts. “I think it’ll work. I’ve been sitting on this idea for a while now… Waiting to make my move.”

He doesn’t walk, he runs.

Yuuri runs back to the stairwell and a few people scattered about the dorm building give him odd looks but he runs and he runs and he runs and he trips on the first step and his knee hits the edge of the stair and it aches, god, it aches, but he keeps going and makes his way up and goes to the door, the same door that he’d been inside with Victor so, so many times before and he finds Phichit and Phichit knows, instantly knows.

“I’ll kill him for you,” Phichit offers, and it’s a joke but it doesn’t sound like a joke.

It sounds like tears, sounds like Yuuri burying his face in Phichit’s shoulder and curling up against him, sounds like finals last year when he’d had a mini-meltdown and Phichit had shushed him and told him that grades don’t really matter, that they don’t define him. It doesn’t sound like a joke. None of it sounds like a joke.

Victor doesn’t care about him. Has never cared about him. All of this had just been a game to him... Yuuri’s emotions, everything. A game.

First is the breathing.

(He can’t do it.)

Phichit notices, brushes his hair back out of his eyes and continues to stroke it. “Yuuri, breathe, okay? You’re having an attack. But everything will be okay. You need to breathe. Hang on, watch me. Watch me.”

Yuuri obeys half-heartedly, shaky gasps coming in and out through his mouth. He meets Phichit’s eyes, but can hardly see him through the tears, and he needs to be pressed against something again, needs to hide, but Phichit is grabbing his hands gently. “Okay, in through your nose, out through your mouth. Got it? With me. In… Now out.”

They repeat that a few times, and though Yuuri’s breathing gets better, his thoughts are still wild. Victor has been sitting on an idea for a while to get Yuuri to sleep with him again. For a while, Yuuri thinks. How long is a while? How long has he been planning this? Does he remember every detail of that night, of that party? Does he remember the feeling of Yuuri’s lips on his for the first time? Had their first kiss—or what Yuuri had thought had been their first kiss—meant nothing?
And then a memory comes back to him.

*His head pillowed on Victor, finger tracing a pattern on his chest. A whispered question, a barely audible request. “Victor. What… What are we?”*

*“Roommates.”*

At the time, it had…

But now…

Now that word, that response…

*“Yuuri,” Phichit mumbles, still stroking his hair and holding his hands, seemingly overwhelmed. “Yuuri, please listen to me. You’re better off without him, okay?”*

“I think I loved him,” he gasps through the sobs, and he’s not sure the words are audible, but Phichit nods, resting his chin on top of his head.

“I know you do.”

Present tense.

Yuuri clings to him, doesn’t let go. The sobs wrack his body, each one making him convulse, and the tears keep flowing, staining Phichit’s shirt and staining his hands and staining his thoughts and his mind and his entire being. He wishes he’d wake up to this being a dream, wishes he’d wake back up in Victor’s arms, lips pressed to his hair. The same lips that had laughed at him just a minute ago.

But he won’t have that again.

And he never truly had it in the first place.

~ *Earlier*

Victor is planning on going to St. Petersburg during winter break with Yurio and Yakov. The plans had been in place for a while, and he’s excited to visit his limited extended family and some old friends. More importantly, he’s excited to breathe the air once again, to hear people speak in his first language and to embrace the area he had once called home.

But there’s something itching at the back of his mind.

A thought that he can’t get rid of no matter how hard he tries.

“I want to invite Yuuri.”

Yuuri had gone to Japan for Thanksgiving Break, but he has no plans for winter break. He’s just staying at the college, as some students do. When Victor had asked him why, he’d explained that the plane tickets are expensive. He’d said that, yes, he’d like to see his family again, but the cost really just isn’t worth it.

Victor buys him a plane ticket for St. Petersburg.
He doesn’t buy it under the assumption that Yuuri will say yes, because he knows it’s a ridiculous and impulsive request. No, he buys the plane ticket because it slightly solidifies the dream in his mind—their eating piroshki side by side, Victor watching him experience it for the first time, leaning in for a kiss, hearing Yuuri’s laugh when Victor shows him the best sights, explores with him...

Chris doesn’t look too surprised. “Then invite him?”

“I can’t just invite him,” Victor explains. “I need to… Do something.”

He’s not sure how to explain the desire, but it’s definitely present. The need to show Yuuri something, to explain how he truly feels. The fact that their relationship remains unlabeled hasn’t slipped his mind, though sometimes he does forget that they’re not, in fact, dating. He recalls accidentally calling Yuuri his boyfriend in front of Yurio a while ago, and his little brother’s subsequent groan of disgust.

Somehow, Chris seems to understand him. When it comes to relationships, Chris usually understands. “Ask him in a special way.”

“I was thinking I combine it with a prank,” Victor explains, thoughtful. “Because that’s like… An inside joke, I suppose. A nice prank, this time. What about a scavenger hunt?”

Christophe hums, interested. “A scavenger hunt? What do you mean?”

“Well, I take the plane ticket, and when he’s not around, I’ll hide them somewhere, and hide little notes that lead him from clue to clue. There are plenty of hiding spots in the room. Anyway, then I get him to fall asleep next to me, and I hide something of his. Maybe his phone. The only way for him to get the phone back is to complete the scavenger hunt, and at the end of the scavenger hunt are the phone and the ticket sitting side by side.”

“Hmm. I like it. How are you planning on getting him to sleep with you?”

“Well, that has happened before, I could get it to happen again. It’d be easy.”

Christophe snickers. “Do you think he’s that gullible to let his guard down? I hate to break it to you, but you’re not a very good liar, Victor.”

“I’m a great liar!” he protesting, chuckling. “I think it’ll work. I’ve been sitting on this idea for a while now… Waiting to make my move.”

For a brief second, Victor thinks he hears footsteps walking away from their door, but he ignores the sound. Christophe leans his elbow on his knee, then his chin on his palm. “I’ve never seen you like this before, Victor.”

“Like what?”


Victor just grins at that, thinking of all the possible reactions Yuuri could have to his prank. It’ll be perfect. He can even put the first clue on Yuuri’s lap while he’s asleep, and it’ll be the first thing he’ll see when he wakes up. And then, if Yuuri were to say yes to the trip? They could pack together, and fly together, and Victor could experience St. Petersburg through new eyes, and then, that’s when he’d ask Yuuri to be his boyfriend. Officially.

He can picture the scene.
Moonlight—moonlight is romantic. He’ll take him out under the stars, hold both of his hands. There’s a church choir playing, maybe. Yuuri could wear the scarf he’d been wearing when they’d first met, the one that makes him look even more attractive than he normally does. Victor would say the words, Yuuri would hug him, and everything would be right in the world. The giddiness of the mere possibility has his chest aching.

“I am happy,” he agrees, standing up. Then the realization of that sinks in, the light feeling to his heart that is unfamiliar, new. “I am happy,” Victor repeats, mostly for himself, thinking it through. The way that just thinking about Yuuri makes him feel? The sound of his laugh?

He is happy.

Has never been happier.
Victor can't figure out why Yuuri is being distant with him and he tries desperately to figure out what's going on. Meanwhile, winter break is rapidly approaching.

Hi guys! We passed 2.5k kudos with this fic and I am shOOK thank you all so much!!!! I'm so glad so many people have been enjoying this story and I hope you enjoy this chapter as well ^.^

First though, some links!  
This really snazzy moodboard made by the incredible babytaku  
Yuuri falling asleep on Victor (super adorable) by the talented fyology!  
Yuuri with his punny present by the awesome kazemizuki  
This intense meta that forovnix wrote about the title of the fic!!!

Also, I did write a small thing about why Yuuri acted the way he did in the last chapter, that you can find here, and that might be useful to read before reading this chapter!

P.P.S. You may notice this is out of ten chapters now! The fic was originally going to be only nine chapters, but then this chapter sort of evolved into a monster, so it'll probably be ten overall! Which is better, because if it was nine chapters that probably would've bothered me forever. *shrugs*

Be sure to leave me a comment to let me know what you think and thanks for reading! ^.^

On Friday night, when Victor is still in Phichit and Christophe’s room, he gets a text.

Not from Yuuri, but from Phichit.

**We’re swapping roommates for the night.**

His initial reaction is surprise, then discomfort. He thinks of the past few weeks, sleeping more often than not with Yuuri beside him, on top of him, underneath him, in some other sort of close proximity. He adores Chris as a friend, yes, and Phichit is nice, but there’s nothing quite like sleeping near Yuuri Katsuki, waking up next to Yuuri Katsuki, being with Yuuri Katsuki.

And then it dawns on him that Phichit hadn’t been asking for his opinion.

(No, this is a statement.)

Curious, he shows the text to Christophe, who just shrugs, telling him that he’s fine with that plan.
Victor agrees as well, albeit reluctantly, figuring that Phichit and Yuuri must want time to catch up. Besides, he can last one night without Yuuri. He’s not *that* clingy.

However, he’ll need clothes eventually. And his toothbrush, and his comb. Plenty of items for his nightly routine.

“Go on, go kiss your boyfriend goodnight,” Chris says, breaking him out of his thoughts.

Victor chuckles, heading out of the room and towards the stairwell. He thinks of Yuuri’s plane ticket to Saint Petersburg currently burning a hole in his backpack—he’ll have to get rid of that evidence. Not that Phichit or Yuuri would look through his things, but just in case. He’s determined to keep his surprise a surprise. It is a shame, though, that Phichit had picked tonight to want to hang out with Yuuri. He’d been planning on asking Yuuri tonight, had already worked out that he would hide the clues for the scavenger hunt while Yuuri was in the shower.

Evidently, he’ll have to wait until Saturday. The plane leaves Monday.

The chances that Yuuri are going to say yes to him are dwindling with every hour that passes.

He sighs and knocks on the door to their room, leaning against the wall beside it. There’s a peephole, and he can’t see through it, but he squints at it anyway. The door is fully shut, which isn’t abnormal—Yuuri usually locks it, or at least has it shut, when nobody’s around.

The second that the door swings open, Victor lifts his foot to step inside. However, Phichit steps out, shutting it behind him and effectively trapping them both in the hallway instead. “Victor,” he greets coolly.

This is…

Odd.

“I just need to grab clothes. Is Yuuri in there?”

Phichit looks as though he’s on guard, arms folded across his chest and shoulders straightened, making him appear taller than he is. “He’s asleep, actually.”

Victor winces, slapping a hand over his own mouth. “Sorry,” he whispers. “I’ll pop in and out.”

“I can grab them for you,” Phichit offers instead. “What do you need?”

“No, I can do it, I’ll be quiet.”

He knows that Phichit is protective of Yuuri, but *this* is obviously something else.

Either way, Phichit grudgingly opens the door. Victor glances towards Yuuri’s bed, and sure enough, there’s a jumble of sheets and a figure laying down. He grabs his clothes and backpack, brushes his teeth, performs a few other basic tasks before hesitating at the doorway. He tries to take in the sight of Yuuri, whose face is covered by shadows and sheets, but is instead distracted by Phichit’s steely expression.

“You can go now,” Phichit says, unimpressed.

“Phichit, why are you…?” Victor starts, then swallows, rephrasing. “What’s wrong?”

Phichit just sighs, glances at Yuuri and then back at Victor. “Screw you, Nikiforov.”
“What?”

“I said, screw you.”

Victor wonders how he could’ve offended Phichit by simply needing clothes. Then he remembers his terse, pointed text earlier, and the two scenarios click together. However, that connection doesn’t help him understand. “Are you upset with me?”

For some reason, his words only seem to anger Phichit more. It’s unfamiliar, seeing his entire body stiff like this. It makes the Thai boy who normally seems so outgoing seem aggressive instead, ready to attack. Victor refuses to be intimidated, though he is concerned. He stands his ground, tries to read his eyes. Phichit’s gaze is unwavering, heated with intensity. “If you really don’t know what’s wrong, then we can talk outside, you prick.”

Ouch.

They step out into the hallway and Phichit shuts the door behind them. Mila and Sara’s door is shut, no light peeking out from underneath it. There is, however, a student walking past, who watches them with concern as she clutches a book against her chest. Phichit offers her a kind smile—the one that Victor is used to seeing—and she smiles back, reassured.

The moment he looks at Victor again, the animosity has returned.

“What’s going on?” Victor asks, shoving his right hand into his pocket, his left arm still holding the clothes he’d gotten out of his room.

By his side, Phichit’s hands clench into fists. “Try and think about it for a second. See if you can get it through your thick skull.”

“Phichit, I…”

“I said, think about it.”

None of this is adding up.

He does try to think about it, tries to go through what he’d done in the past few days. He’d bought Yuuri that plane ticket, which is still in the backpack slung over his shoulder, and he’d taken a Thai test, and…

(The texting?)

He thinks back to their text conversation a few minutes ago. Sure, Phichit had sounded out of character, but it wasn’t as though Victor had denied the request to switch roommates for a night. But it must have something to do with that. “Did I misread your text?” he asks thoughtfully, taking out his phone.

“You’re kidding, right?” Phichit asks, and there’s something else to his voice, now, something softer, less forthright. A waver. A disbelief in what he’s saying.

“No,” Victor replies lamely. He looks at the text again. Not misinterpreted.

Phichit’s chest rises as he takes in a deep breath. “You’re seriously telling me that you have no idea what you did?”

(It occurs to Victor, for the first time, that this could involve Yuuri.)
That’s when the panic starts to set in, begins to creep around his thoughts. Because he can deal with Phichit being upset with him, sure. But Yuuri being upset with him?

Without even trying, Phichit can read him like a book. ‘You hurt him, you asshole. You told me you wouldn’t, and you hurt him. What was it you said exactly? ‘I wouldn’t ever hurt him, if that’s what you’re worried about.’ You know, Victor, I wasn’t even worried about that, because I thought you were half-decent person. Guess I was wrong.’

Before Victor can utter a syllable, the door is slammed shut, and he’s alone in the hallway, backpack over his shoulder and clothes in his arms. Like he’d just been thrown out onto the streets. There’s the sharp sound of a lock clicking. Unsure of what to do, he moves to knock on the door, but then he remembers that Yuuri is asleep, and Yuuri hates being woken up when he’s asleep, but Yuuri is also probably mad at him and Victor doesn’t know why.

He moves across the hall to Mila and Sara’s room, knocks quietly on that door instead to see if either of them are around. They’re not. So he pulls out his phone, opens his conversation with Phichit.

Let me back in?

Victor waits for a minute, but there’s no response. There is, however, a read receipt. He tries the doorknob, just to make sure that it truly is locked. It is. So he texts Mila, texts Sara, but apparently neither of them know what’s going on, either. He asks Chris, who is just as confused, offering to come up there to help, but Victor isn’t sure what good that would do.

Eventually, he settles on sitting outside of the door. He brings his knees to his chest and leans against the wall. Is Yuuri truly mad at him for something? What had he done? He tries to think back—nothing is coming to the forefront of his mind, nothing is clicking. Had he said something? When had this started?

He retraces his steps.

He’d been with him earlier that day, and he’d been fine. They’d kissed in the morning, Victor had held him in his arms, heart so full of adoration that it threatened overexertion. Everything had been fine. Then, he’d gone to see Chris, and Phichit had come to see Yuuri. That was when it must have happened. So, either, something had happened to him during that time, or Phichit had told something to Yuuri.

But Phichit had liked Victor—or so he’d thought.

(And that realization is…)

(So something must’ve happened.)

(But what?)

He waits for an hour.

Then, there are muffled voices on the other side of the door. Victor leaps up to his feet, knocking immediately. Yuuri must be awake—Victor just wants to clear this up, wants to know what had happened. The voices pause, and Victor holds his breath, putting his weight on the heels of his feet.

“Yuuri?” he calls.

There are whispers again, the sound of someone sniffing. Then, a heavy sigh from Phichit, who swings open the door again, slamming it behind him, loudly. “I told you to get out.”
“I’m not leaving until I talk to him, or until you tell me what’s going on.”

“We saw the video, okay?” Phichit hisses. “Now leave us alone for the night. Do you even know what you’re doing to him? Just by being here? God, the audacity that you must… Get out. If you think that you like Yuuri or whatever, or you’re trying to prove that to me, then get out. That’s the best thing that you can do for him right now.”

His head spins. “The… The video?”

Victor’s surprise must be mistaken for shocked realization. Phichit rolls his eyes. “Get out. Text me in the morning, but don’t you dare,” he says the last word with emphasis, pokes Victor hard in the chest, “text him. Got it?”

“I still don’t—”

The door is shut again.

Victor presses a palm against the wood, fingers splayed.

~

“Is he gone?” Yuuri asks, and his voice comes out smaller than he’d intended, more pathetic. He hates the sound of it, hates how weak he is, having let Victor Nikiforov tear him apart in the exact same way that Yuuri had always imagined he would, in the same way that his dark thoughts had always said that he would. Hates that he fell for his nice act, his fake loveliness, all of it a show.

“Is who gone?” Phichit responds, and it takes Yuuri a second to understand.

(It doesn’t make him feel better. But he appreciates the attempt.)

Phichit seems to understand that.

He heads back up to Yuuri’s bed, puts an arm around his shoulders until Yuuri leans his head on him again, sighing. There are tears staining his sheets, and they’re certainly not stopping now, fresh ones already brewing in his eyes, already threatening to grow into big enough droplets to fall. Crumpled tissues are scattered about the room, only half of them having made it into the trash can.

Yuuri can’t stop thinking about him.

He tries to, tries desperately, tries every common strategy in the books, but he can’t. Victor had possessed a majority of his thoughts for the past few months, had worked his way into Yuuri’s heart with ease. And yet Victor is probably still just Victor. Unchanged. Unaltered. Yuuri’s heart had broken, yes, but it hadn’t broken evenly.

(Victor is still just Victor.)

Yuuri is in pieces, pieces scattered throughout their time together and their shared space, and Victor is just Victor, the same Victor he has always been, no matter what façade he had put up during those nights in bed, while hugging him, kissing him, he’d always been…

*Do you think he’s that gullible?*
Those six words sting more than the rest.

Because he had been, hadn’t he? There’s no lie to it. He had been gullible, had thought, for an instant, that Victor liked him—maybe even loved him. He’d thought that his affections were requited, but, no, this had all just been a game, a game, and it hurts more than anything else. It’s a dull throbbing behind his eyelids and present in his chest and his stomach and it won’t stop, persisting and persisting and staying and staying and aching and aching until he can’t feel anything anymore, until the resistance has built up.

It’s a coat of worthlessness, wrapping itself around him and squeezing him until his lungs are restricted, burying him in the thoughts and the remembrance of a hopeless dream. More than anything else, it’s heartbreak—Yuuri had had exes in the past, had been broken up with, had broken up with others, but nothing, nothing had ever been like this. Victor, or the fake Victor, had been perfect—kind and funny and nice and loving.

Except he hadn’t been.

(Except he had been.)

Because Victor had been one thing. One surefire thing. But then they’d gotten locked away in kissing and cuddling and domestic bliss, and Yuuri had gotten so distracted that he hadn’t realized that Schrödinger’s cat was locked in the box, that there was no longer one warranted claim or the other, that both possibilities were in coexistence. That is, until he’d watched that video, until he’d overheard that conversation. Then everything had fallen apart.

A quantum superposition.

A dual reality turning into one possibility or the other.

“Yuuri,” Phichit is begging, and Yuuri hates hearing him like that, like he’s trying to be comforting but doesn’t know how to be, and like he’s breaking, too, because Yuuri knows that he’s responsible, knows that his best friend had been roped into this.

He tries to choke out a sorry but it gets lost somewhere, only another sob coming in its place, chest heaving and throat sore. Phichit hugs him tighter, and Yuuri buries his face in his shoulder, tries to hide himself because he hates, hates, hates being comforted, hates showing his ugly, raw emotions like this. “I’m sorry,” Phichit whispers.

“What?” he manages, not moving from his shirt.

“I should’ve told you earlier about the video. If I had, I could’ve saved you from all of this, but I—”

That makes the knife of pain dig farther into his chest, makes everything feel more real, suddenly. He can’t handle Phichit apologizing. Phichit can’t be apologizing. “No, no, please don’t say sorry, please…” He looks up and meets his eyes, desperate. “Please don’t say sorry.”

“Oh, I won’t,” he agrees gently, touching his hair.

(Touching his hair like Victor had used to.)

Within seconds, Yuuri is incoherent again. His thoughts race with midterms and Victor and the trembling and Phichit’s apology and everything, everything, but they’re racing so fast that they’re just glimpses, fragments, and he can’t keep up with them as they drift through and gullible, gullible, gullible, he thinks, that one word sticking in place for a fraction of a second longer than the rest. And Victor, mostly Victor.
(He mostly thinks about Victor.)

(And over time, those thoughts become less and less about the lovely moments they’d shared and more about the bits in between. Their first meeting, Victor telling him firmly that they’re just roommates before moving on, as though it had been another casual joke, as though it was just another bit of banter that they shared.)

It’s like mold spreading through his memories, infecting and jumping on everything he can touch, until all of it hurts, everything since his sophomore year of college had started hurts, everything since he’d gotten hit while riding his bike and since he’d first seen Victor enter their room, blue eyes peering up at him with curiosity.

He shivers, cold, all of a sudden.

Phichit peels the sheets off of the bed and covers both of them, then lays down with him, soothing the tears out of him. He doesn’t say you’ll get through this or everything will be alright or just get over him, no, Phichit just holds him. Phichit holds him and he understands, and Yuuri couldn’t be more grateful.

~

“They locked you out?” Chris asks, surprised.

Victor is a mess.

He’s about ready to pull his hair out. For the last hour, he has been pacing back and forth in Christophe and Phichit’s tiny dorm room. His feet shuffle back and forth, back and forth, the sound of his sneakers rubbing against the carpet echoing about the white walls. Christophe had texted Phichit, but there had been no response.

“He mentioned a video,” Victor explains quietly.

Christophe frowns. “I don’t know anything about a video.”

He takes in a shaky breath, presses a hand to his eyes, covering them. “He said, exactly… ‘We saw the video.’ He and Yuuri saw the video, and now Phichit is mad at me, and I haven’t even spoken to Yuuri but, but he… What if he…”

His chest grows cold, feet pausing. The wall in front of him looks miles away, now, and so does Christophe. Victor hasn’t seen Yuuri cry, and he doesn’t want to, but earlier, when he’d heard a sniffle…? And the way that Phichit had been mad, and—

He thinks that he’s not good enough.

For you, for me, for anything.

That’s what Phichit had said to him.

(But surely Yuuri isn’t…)

(Surely he doesn’t…)
“He said you can text him about it in the morning?” Christophe asks.

Victor nods, heart sinking.

Because Yuuri is good enough—he needs to know that. No, he’s not just good enough, he’s everything, he’s sunshine and beauty that should be ephemeral but isn’t. He’s everything, Victor thinks, because there’s no other way to describe him. He’s nerdy sometimes but seems more like a jock at other times and the thing is, he can’t be labelled, he ascends from the world of labels.

He’s everything, and he’s Yuuri, and Victor is in love with him.

And he needs to know that.

Those are the facts: not some video, not some stupid locked door.

“Wait until morning,” Chris advises.

No, his mind thinks before he can properly consider his friend’s words. He wants to march up there now, wants to find Yuuri, wants to take him into his arms. He wants to tell him that he speaks seven languages but that his feelings for him are indefinable in all of them, and that he’ll keep searching if he has to, if Yuuri truly needs spoken confirmation to make him happy, then he’ll keep searching until he drops.

Until then, he’d tell him that he loves him in French, in Thai and German and Arabic and Portuguese and Chinese and Dutch and Norwegian and Russian and finally, finally, he’ll tell him in Japanese. So he needs to go, he thinks. He heads towards the door, mind set firmly, when somebody grabs his arm.

“Victor, I agree that you need to talk to him, but it’s late.”

He shuts his eyes, tries to let his clouded, one-track mind process the words. “So?” Yuuri is normally up late, is normally on his laptop with heavy bags under his eyes and the bluish glow of the screen reflecting off of his glasses and—

“You need to think. Your issue is obviously communication. So if you’re going to communicate, then make it right instead of making it fast. Talk to him tomorrow morning, when you’ve both had time to contemplate.”

“There’s nothing to contemplate.”

He knows how he feels. That’s that.

Christophe shrugs. “I just think you should wait. Obviously they’re working something out. If I know Phichit, then I know that he wants what’s best for Yuuri, and right now, he doesn’t think that you’re it.”

Victor pauses.

“I also know,” Christophe adds, “that he’ll respect Yuuri’s wishes and try to protect him. So if you’re not talking to Yuuri right now? Then Victor, as much as it hurts, Yuuri doesn’t want to talk to you. Due to whatever happened. Wait until morning. Work it out then.”

Yuuri doesn’t want to talk to you.

Yuuri doesn’t want to talk to you.
He feels dizzy.

Chris’s hand falls away from his arm. “I didn’t mean it like that. Sorry.”

“You’re right,” Victor exhales, moving to sit down in Phichit’s desk chair. “You’re right.”

“It’ll work out. You two will figure it out.”

Unless Yuuri doesn’t want to figure it out, unless Yuuri isn’t upset at all, is just trying to protect Victor’s feelings. There are so many possibilities, and Victor is working off of so little information that it’s tearing him to shreds. Not to mention the fact that his flight leaves Monday, that he’ll be going to Saint Petersburg…

“Victor, it’ll work out,” Christophe repeats. “I know that he loves you.”

(That catches his attention.)

“Anybody could tell,” he continues, “with the way that he looks at you. Like you’re the center of his world. And you look at him the same way.”

~

When Yuuri wakes up, there’s an arm around him.

And he sees that it’s Phichit, and the memories come flooding back, viciously ripping him from the blissful safety of his dreams. He bites his lip, trying to shift out of Phichit’s loose grasp while not waking him. His friend shifts slightly, but doesn’t wake up, face turning into the pillow and an arm stretching out by his side.

The light from the rising sun has started to leak into the dorm room, and Yuuri glances around. It feels less alive without Victor—feels unnatural, now. To his left, laying on the blankets, he catches sight of Phichit’s phone, face down. Curious, Yuuri flips it over and taps the home button.

**Text me back. It’s morning.**

There are a few more messages like that, all from Victor, and Yuuri covers his mouth with a palm, shuts his eyes tight and lets the phone fall out of his grip. His breath is shaky, but he won’t lose himself—he refuses to. So he gets out of the bed, stands up and grabs clothes instead. Then, he heads into the shower, head still throbbing with the seemingly never-ending swirl of emotions.

(But he doesn’t cry.)

(Which is progress, he thinks.)

Instead, the pain is reduced to a dull feeling, ever present and ever noticeable but sliding into normalcy nevertheless. He turns off the shower water, instantly freezing cold in the small bathroom with the white tiled floor, and wraps a towel around himself, picking his phone up off of the counter. No messages, no notifications.

When he gets dressed and exits the bathroom, Phichit is still asleep. It reminds Yuuri of last year in their dorm room, though normally Phichit would be the one to wake up first. He’d go and get coffee or tea or food, and they’d take turns paying for it every morning, though eventually Phichit had...
charmed the handsome barista and started getting everything at half-price.

Eventually, Yuuri knows, he’ll need to speak to Victor. After all, as much as the thought of him hurts, his items are still scattered about this room, his toothbrush still sits next to Yuuri’s in the little cup in the bathroom. His sheets are still up there on the bed. Memories of laying with him on the carpet still fill Yuuri’s mind as he toots the floor.

After standing for a while, thoughts still rushing, his stomach growls. He takes one more glance at Phichit, then decides to go out and get them breakfast. When they eat breakfast, Yuuri thinks, they can figure things out. He hates that Phichit has been roped into this drama—hates the drama in general—but he knows his friend will stick with him. Knows that he’ll remain by his side.

He slips on his shoes, tries to make his hair look decent in the mirror. There are prominent lines under his eyes, it’s fairly obvious that he’d cried himself to sleep, but he can’t bring himself to care much. He just hopes Mila and Sara are still asleep across the hall, because he’s not sure what he’s going to say to them. They’ve been friends with Victor and Christophe for a while. In fact, they’re friends with everyone in the fraternity.

Yuuri doesn’t want to make this any bigger of a deal than it has to be.

If he has to stay roommates with Victor, that’s fine, he tells himself. They can just be roommates. No more, no less. Simple enough. Plenty of people have roommates they don’t particularly like, roommates that they have nothing in common with. Now, though, he just needs time to think about what he’ll say when he sees him, about how he’ll explain himself.

Yuuri swings open the door and steps out towards the left, immediately hitting something.

“You’re awake,” Victor blurts, and he’s sitting on the floor with his knees brought up to his chest, his eyes wide. He’s right beside the door, and he looks…

Not well.

His hair is messy in a way that Yuuri had only ever seen after the Halloween party, when he’d been wasted, and if Yuuri had thought that the bags under his own eyes were bad, then Victor’s are terrible, dragging down his entire face and making him look years, years older than he is. His blue eyes look duller, somehow, as though the light had been sucked out of them.

Yuuri takes an instinctive step back, and then they’re each on one side of the open doorway. In an instant, Victor has scrambled to his feet, and…

He’s wearing the same clothes from yesterday, Yuuri realizes slowly.

Jeans, a faded green t-shirt, black sneakers.

“I didn’t knock because I didn’t know if you’d be awake,” Victor is saying, and the words are rushed, tumbling out of his lips. “So I didn’t want to wake you or Phichit up, but I did text him, and I came here and I thought I’d wait.” There’s a pause. “But if I’d heard you talking, I would’ve left,” he adds quickly. “I wouldn’t have listened in without your consent. I just wanted to know when you were awake because Chris said…” A swallow. “…Chris said that I should wait until the morning to talk to you.”

Looking at him hurts, Yuuri realizes.

He can’t tell if the pain comes from Yuuri’s still-burning anger or from seeing Victor looking dejected like this. For a second, he figures it’s the former, but as he continues to watch Victor,
curious, it’s quickly becoming the latter. He looks broken, like a shell of his former self, and Yuuri can’t figure out why. Sure, he must know that Yuuri is upset with him by now, but why would he care so much?

Because he won’t get to sleep with you again, a little voice in his head tells him. Because Victor Nikiforov probably isn’t used to rejection.

“I’m just getting breakfast,” he answers quietly, glancing back inside the room. Phichit is still sleeping, oblivious to what’s going on. Yuuri pulls the door closed.

When he starts to walk down the hallway, Victor touches his shoulder. Yuuri winces, pulling away violently, stepping back once again. The last thing he wants right now is for Victor to touch him. In fact, the last thing he wants right now is to talk to him. The pain is still too fresh, the revelation still anew, still being turned over in his mind.

Victor’s hand is still hanging in the air and his gaze flickers down to it as though he doesn’t understand, as though Yuuri had just kicked Makkachin right in front of him. He lowers it, eventually, and purses his lips, eyes sparkling again, but not with their usual joy, their usual buoyancy. This is something else. “Yuuri…”

“What?”

He shakes his head. “I don’t know what… I don’t understand…”

And those are his best puppy dog eyes, Yuuri thinks. And they almost, almost work, because Yuuri can feel his heart fluttering, the wounds from last night reopening, aching. So he throws up his mental shields, tries to shut himself off, because he won’t break down in front of Victor. Absolutely not. He starts walking again, shoves his hands into his pockets so Victor can’t see them sweat or tremble.

Victor follows him. “Yuuri, please talk to me.”

“Why do you want to talk to me?”

“Because I don’t know anything about a video, or whatever it is.”

He can’t tell if he’s telling the truth or not, but really, it doesn’t matter. Whether or not Victor had seen the video before, he’d still said those words to Christophe, still thinks Yuuri hadn’t heard him. He’s still lying by omission. Therefore, the video is irrelevant.

“You don’t even have a coat on,” Yuuri notices as they step outside. There’s a fresh sheet of snow strewn across the campus, newly fallen from last night. It’s the kind that crunches under one’s feet, the kind that Yuuri normally likes, but now it’s just making him nauseous.

Victor is walking beside him, struggling to keep up. His hands rub at his biceps, desperately trying to keep himself warm. “Then maybe we should go inside and talk.”

They’re still outside of the dorm building. Yuuri hates his sense of inevitable compassion, hates that even though he’s upset with Victor, he still doesn’t want him to catch hypothermia. “Go back inside, Victor.”

“Come with me.”

“Victor…”
“You haven’t given me a chance to defend myself,” Victor argues. “Against whatever was in that video.”

That’s the thing—it’s not just the video. If it were just the video, Yuuri would hear him out immediately, would believe him. But this wasn’t just the video, and Victor doesn’t know that.

Yuuri averts his eyes, can’t look at him any longer. “It’s not just about the video.”

There’s a pause, and Yuuri sees Victor move his arm. He wonders, briefly, if he’d been about to touch him again out of instinct. Instead, though, he just shuffles his feet, obviously uncomfortable in the biting cold. “Then is it something that I did?” The cogs working in his brain are almost audible, the way that he’s rushing through every possibility.

“It’s something that I found out,” Yuuri admits before walking again. Victor can follow him or not follow him—he refuses to care anymore.

Victor follows him.

His breath is visible in the air, his hands still desperately trying to warm his arms. “Found out? Found out about what? From what?”

“If you need me to tell you, then…”

“I don’t like this guessing game,” Victor says, desperate. “Listen, Yuuri. Just tell me, give me a chance to explain myself, and then make a decision. Please? If you still…” He looks uncomfortable for a second, then swallows, as though preparing himself. “If you still don’t want to talk to me after that, then I promise I’ll leave you alone.”

They’ve reached the cafe, a small thing, more of a stand than anything else, and Yuuri produces his wallet from his coat pocket. The woman behind the counter glances at Victor. “Aren’t you cold?”

He doesn’t answer her, instead keeps his focus on Yuuri, who is squinting up at the menu. “Yuuri, listen to me.”

Yuuri orders two pastries and two drinks. He sits down somewhere, absent-mindedly crinkling the receipt with his left hand. Victor sits across from him, pulling his chair in as far as possible. Yuuri sighs, stares at the tiny indentation in the wooden table between them, refusing to meet the other boy’s eyes. “I overheard you talking to Chris.”


“Talking to Christophe. About me.”

Victor opens his mouth, then closes it. The woman at the counter is holding out a bag containing the two pastries, and Yuuri gets up to grab it. Instead of sitting back down to wait for his drinks, he waits by the counter instead, not wanting to speak to him any longer. It’s too annoying, watching him pretend like this.

When the drinks are finished, Victor follows him out of the door. “You heard Christophe and I talking?” It’s obvious that his mind is reeling, trying to figure it out. Unless, that is, he’s faking it, trying to play innocent. Yuuri had heard what he had heard, and there was no mistaking those words, their meaning. He winces at the remembrance—gullible, gullible, and Victor blinks at him, concerned eyes sheltered underneath silver lashes.

“Stop looking at me like that,” Yuuri mutters.
“Like what?”

“Like you care about me.”

“Like I…? Yuuri,” he says slowly, as though he can’t believe it. “Of course I care about you.” When Yuuri doesn’t answer, Victor steps in front of him suddenly, blocking his path. Then, though, he’s walking backwards, trying to maintain eye contact.

Yuuri bites his lip, tries to keep his tone objective. “You’re going to fall if you do that.”

“Sounds like you care about me, then.”

He doesn’t have a response for that.


He tries to block out the words but they make their way in anyway and the tears are back, they’re pricking at his eyes and he can’t handle this right now, can’t let Victor see, can’t possibly let Victor see. “I’m sorry,” he blurs awkwardly. “I’m sorry, I just need time, I can’t do this, I need to…” He swings around him, clutches the bag and drinks from the cafe close to his chest and increases his pace, hurrying back towards the dorm building.

Because he can’t think these things, can’t let himself believe that Victor cares about him, because he doesn’t, and he hadn’t, and Yuuri had heard what he’d heard, had heard an uncontrived conversation, unaltered and honest. He can’t trust him anymore, he can’t, he can’t, because it doesn’t make any sense that Victor loves him, not if his entire agenda is simply trying to get Yuuri to sleep with him…

He hurries up the stairs and then back into his dorm room. Phichit is no longer asleep, is sitting at his desk, and looks up, shocked. “Where have you been?”

The tears flow freely. His knees tremble. His breaths come out in ugly wheezes. Everything hurts— his heart, his lungs, his throat. In a last ditch attempt, he tries to act as though he’s fine, doesn’t want Phichit to be upset over him anymore, wants to stop being upset in general. He wants to be more like Victor— casual, comfortable with anything that life throws at him. He thrusts out the bag of pastries. His hand shakes so violently that the room is filled with the shuffling of the food within the paper bag. “I got us food.”

“Yuuri,” Phichit breathes, standing up and hugging him in one fluid motion.

“I got us food,” he chokes out again, but he breaks on the last syllable, and then he’s back with his face buried in Phichit’s shoulder, pathetic and crying, tears falling onto the drink carrier that he’s still holding.

~

On many occasions, Victor has wished that he could read Yuuri’s mind.

When he’s making a joke and treading the thin line between sarcasm and reality, when they’re
talking about physics and Victor doesn’t understand whatever he’s saying, when they’re laying in bed and Yuuri looks at him with an indefinable expression. He always wants to know what he’s thinking, is always curious, but now is the worst scenario of all.

He doesn’t follow Yuuri to his dorm room, but he does see him turn the corner at the stairwell, sees the tears in his eyes.

(And Victor sinks like an anchor.)

He sinks lower than he’d ever thought possible, feet feeling heavy beneath him and his shoulders feeling as though there’s something constantly pressing down on them, trying to keep his head under the water. The thought of Yuuri crying over him when he hadn’t even done anything is ruining him, because somehow, somehow he may have been responsible for that.

Grudgingly, he heads back to Christophe and Phichit’s dorm room, aimless. He reports what had happened to Christophe, who squeezes his shoulder, telling him, once again, that they’ll work it out, that they just need to talk things through. He points out that he doesn’t know Yuuri well, but that he probably thinks that his own actions are just, that he probably thinks he’s doing the right thing, even though he still loves Victor.

Victor tries to cling to that thought, but it doesn’t want to stick in his mind. Instead, it wants to be overwritten with alternatives. He tries to shoo those away, tries to focus. But the pain is too real, too fresh in his heart, so he reaches down and picks up his backpack, placing it on his lap as he sinks down onto the floor of Christophe’s room. Then, he unzips the largest pocket and reaches inside, towards the very bottom.

He’s looking for Yuuri’s plane ticket, but it’s not there. He must’ve left it in another pocket of the bag. He’s going to continue looking, but then Christophe is sitting on the floor across from him, concerned. Victor removes his hand from the backpack, takes in a deep breath. He picks up his phone, wanting to text Yuuri but quickly remembering the tears. “I made him cry,” he tells Christophe, and those four words feel disgusting on his tongue, make him want to scream, to protest. None of this is fair—none of it.

“I don’t think you made him cry. I think he did. I just don’t know how.”

Victor doesn’t quite understand that statement, but he nods anyway.

~

“What’d he say to you?” Phichit demands.

Yuuri sniffs, laying against him on the floor of the dorm room, Phichit leaning against the edge of his desk. “He told me that he cares about me.”

Phichit falters at that, brushes his hair out of his eyes. “He did?”

“And it sounded honest, but how am I supposed to… How can I…?”

“Believe him?”

Yuuri nods, sniffs.
“Let me get you a tissue,” Phichit offers, standing up. There’s a box on Victor’s desk, and he plucks a tissue, but hesitates before turning around. There’s a piece of paper on the floor beside the trash can, upside down and creased in the middle. He bends down and picks it up, and Yuuri watches, his bones heavy.

“What’s that?” Yuuri asks quietly, though he doesn’t really care. Probably notes for a class or something.

Phichit squints at the paper, then shakes his head, confused. “It’s… Um… Yuuri, aren’t you staying here during winter break?”

He nods, sniffs again. “Yeah.”

After handing him the tissue, Phichit is still standing, holding the paper. “Hang on—this doesn’t make any sense.”

“What?”

Phichit gives him the paper. “It’s… It’s a plane ticket. A printed plane ticket.”

Yuuri takes one look at it, then sets it down on the ground. “Victor is flying to Saint Petersburg for winter break. With Yakov and Yurio.”


Not understanding the point, Yuuri unfolds the paper again. He scans the information. There’s nothing weird about it—it’s a typical flight, the seats are economy. Except, for the name written on the top right…

“It’s for you,” Phichit whispers, confirming his thoughts.

“But why would Victor buy me a plane ticket?”

There’s a silence hanging between them, neither of them knowing the answer.

“Yuuri, can I be honest with you?”

Yuuri frowns at the serious tone of his voice, but nods anyway.

Phichit puts down the ticket for him, shifts closer to him, their knees touching. “Listen, you’re my best friend, and I love you. I’ll stick by your side no matter what. You know that, right?” He nods. “I think… I think you need to think through what you heard last night. What did Victor and Christophe say exactly?”

Yuuri recites the conversation.

“Do you think there’s any room for misinterpretation there?” Phichit asks.

There really isn’t, but Yuuri falters, eyes drifting back down to the airplane ticket. He remembers how Victor had looked earlier, wearing the same clothes from the day before. He wants to believe him, he does, but there really is no other way of interpreting that conversation. “What are you thinking?”

Phichit leans his head back against the wall. “I’m thinking that none of this is adding up. When I spoke to him last night, he looked confused. And I thought, well, he just doesn’t know that you overheard his conversation. But then, you said that today, he looked sad, even after you’d told him
that you’d overheard something. And now, this. Something isn’t right here, Yuuri, and I think you know that, too.”

He swallows. “What do I do?”

“Talk to him. No more of these games, you two need to sit down and have a good, solid talk. I know you’re nervous, but I think you’ll feel better, knowing. Either way. And, like I said, I’ve always got your back. If he does turn out, for the second time, to be a jerk, I’m with you. But I still… I still have doubts about that conclusion. Something is really, really wrong here.”

~

are you busy?

Victor stares at the text. From Yuuri. The text from Yuuri.

No.

He keeps his response terse, watches as the bubble appears, indicating that Yuuri is typing something else. i think i messed up. can we talk?

Chris had left an hour ago for class. You can come over here, I’m alone.

By some miracle, a few minutes later, Yuuri Katsuki is standing in his doorway. He’s watching him analytically, as though waiting to see what Victor will do. Victor sits on the edge of Phichit’s bed, watching him back, heart already leaping into his throat at the sight of him. “Yuuri?”

“I overheard you talking to Christophe,” Yuuri divulges, and he’s still standing there awkwardly. “He asked, um… He asked how you were planning on getting me to sleep with you.” Just saying the words appears to be painful for him, because his gaze flickers down to the floor and remains locked there, the phrases sounding forced, blocky, practiced. “You said that, you said that it’d be easy, that you’ve done it before. And Chris asked if-if you thought I was… If you thought I was gullible enough… If you thought…”

Victor pauses, confused.

And then.

And then.

No, no, no, no, no.

No, that couldn’t have, Yuuri couldn’t have…

The next few things happen in a blur.

Victor gets down from the bed, hardly uses the ladder, and then wraps Yuuri in his arms, both hands splayed across his shoulder blades, his chin propped on Yuuri’s shoulder. Yuuri’s head is turned downwards, face buried in Victor’s shirt, and Victor can already feel the tears leaking through, can feel his silent trembles as he clings to him.
“Yuuri, that wasn’t… Oh, Yuuri. You thought that I… You thought that I would’ve…?”

No wonder he’d been upset. No wonder he’d been horrified.

Yuuri mumbles something against his chest, but Victor can’t understand him, so he pulls away, just enough. “What’d you say?” he prompts.

“There’s more,” Yuuri breathes out. “There was a video. Of me and you, at the Psi Omega Iota End of the Year party last year. And we danced together, and we kissed. So I saw that, and I thought that…I got scared. So I went to talk to you about it, and when I did, I heard you and Chris and I, I don’t.” He looks up. “You… You bought me a plane ticket?”

Victor frowns. “How do you know about that?”

“It was in our room.”

He stares at Yuuri. “No, but I… I took my backpack…” Then, he turns around, glances over his shoulder. “It must’ve fallen out,” he realizes out loud. “But, Yuuri, what you heard—that’s all wrong. Chris and I were talking about you, but not like you think. I bought you that plane ticket because I…”

Victor hadn’t exactly expected to confess this to Yuuri with Yuuri’s eyes watery and his body trembling. But he supposes it’ll have to do. “I wanted you to come to Saint Petersburg with me,” he explains. “And I was telling that to Chris, and I was going to prank you by making a scavenger hunt. I was going to hide little clues around the dorm room, then get you to fall asleep next to me and put the first clue on your lap and steal your phone, putting it at the end of the hunt with the ticket. But you heard part of that conversation out of context.”

Yuuri blinks.

Twice.

Three times.

“Victor,” he gasps, and the tears are back immediately, welling in his eyes and dripping down his cheeks. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry. I thought that, I didn’t… I’m so sorry. I never should’ve… I’m sorry.” He turns incoherent, mumbling more apologies.

Victor takes his shoulders. Yuuri doesn’t meet his eyes, so he takes one hand to lift his chin, forcing him to look at him. “I never, never said anything to you that I didn’t mean, Yuuri. I would never take —” He shakes his head, those words won’t even come out of his mouth. They disgust him too much. “I’d never hurt you on purpose. And I’m sorry that that happened. You’re wonderful, and I’m lucky to have met you.”

“I’m sorry that I didn’t trust you,” Yuuri says quietly. “I should’ve known that I was missing something. I think I was just scared that you had never truly liked me, that everything we had had been fictitious. It was my own fears and then what I heard, but I should’ve…” He takes Victor’s hand and squeezes it. “I should’ve trusted you above both of those things.”

He kisses him on his forehead, lingers there, shutting his eyes. “I forgive you. I can’t imagine what you must’ve thought, hearing that.”

“So this all happened because of a prank?”

“I guess so.” Victor hums, nuzzling his hair. “Got you?”
Yuuri laughs, and it’s breathy and lovely, and Victor hugs him tighter, never wanting to let go now that he has him again, now that they’re on the same page. “You got me.”

“All a part of my malicious plan…”

“Victor.”

“…to get Yuuri Katsuki to be my boyfriend. Aha! Mission complete.”

“When you say it like that,” Yuuri complains, “it sounds dumb.”

“Sorry, sorry,” Victor mumbles, kissing his forehead again. “I’m not trying to make fun of you, I completely understand how you could’ve thought what you’d thought. But will you be?”

“Will I be what?”

“My boyfriend?”

Yuuri grins at him, wide and perfect, eyes lit up with delight. There are still drying tears staining his cheeks, and Victor swipes at them. “Your boyfriend?”

Victor nods, brushes hair out of his eyes. “I like the way that, Yuuri Katsuki, my boyfriend, sounds. I’d like to start saying it at every possible opportunity. That is, if you would call me Victor Nikiforov, your boyfriend.”

“That sounds like a deal. Victor Nikiforov, my boyfriend and annoying roommate.”

“Ha, very funny. So we’re still roommates?”

“Of course we’re still roommates,” Yuuri confirms. “I’m the one who should be asking you that—I’m the one who messed all of this up.”

Victor can’t stop smiling when Yuuri reaches up on his tippy toes and kisses him gently on the lips. “It was a misunderstanding. It’s all over now, right? We’re okay, you and I?”

Victor kisses him back, tilting his head for a better angle. Yuuri’s glasses bump against his nose but they both just start laughing, Victor’s hands moving to his hips and holding him steady, Yuuri’s fingers laced with his. “It’s all over now,” he agrees. “And we’re okay. If… If you think we’re okay.”

A nod.

Then, Yuuri is looking back down at his hands. “I’ll go with you, by the way. To Saint Petersburg.”

A hesitation. “If… If you still want me to? If you can forgive me?”

“Yuuri Katsuki, my boyfriend, you’re absolutely, undoubtedly forgiven, and of course I still want you to come.” Then, he adds, as an afterthought, “We’ll just have to be careful when we’re there.”


“Don’t want to run into my other boyfriend,” Victor sighs, rubbing the back of his neck. “He’s a handful.”

For half of a second, only half of a second, Yuuri falls for it. Then, he whacks him on the arm. “That was the worst joke yet.”
“I learned from the very best,” he teases.

“We should probably be more careful about the jokes from now on,” Yuuri scolds, but he’s smiling anyways, pushing on him until he’s up against the wall. Then, there are lips ghosting across lips, gentle kisses and occasionally breathy sighs. Victor increases the pressure, letting his eyes fall shut as he melts into it, having missed the hot feeling of Yuuri’s mouth, the sensational little noises he makes, the feeling of his touch.

“You scared me, you know,” Victor tells him honestly, their foreheads pressed together.

“I’m sorry,” Yuuri responds. “But maybe we can try and make it up? Just not in Christophe and Phichit’s room.”

Victor hums in pleasure as Yuuri kisses the corner of his mouth. “Is Phichit still in our room?”

Yuuri pulls out his phone, checks it.

Judging by the fact that you’re not back yet, I’m guessing things worked out. Your room is empty. Be safe!

p.s. Tell Victor I’ll apologize to him ASAP in person

Victor reads the text over his shoulder and chuckles, kissing him on his temple. “It’s nice that you have such a supportive friend. Even if I did think he was going to kill me and hide my body earlier today.”

“My fault,” Yuuri says, eyebrows drawn together. “Don’t blame him for that, please.”

“I won’t blame either of you, I’ll blame an unfortunate incident. You should let him know that we’ll be safe.” He takes Yuuri’s hand and laces their fingers, leading him out of the door. Yuuri rolls his eyes affectionately, typing out a response that Victor supposes is anything but what he’d suggested.

When they reach their room, Victor presses him against the door, not kissing him, just staring down at him. “I’m going to shower, even though I’d really, really rather just keep kissing you.”

Yuuri doesn’t protest as Victor starts gathering clothes, then heads into the bathroom. The Japanese boy leans one foot against the wall, keeps his arms folded across his chest. “I’ll undress in here, while you’re showering.” His tone is casual.

Victor swallows, throat suddenly dry. “You’ll… You… What?”

He takes the hem of his shirt, tugs it over his head and then tries to fix his hair. “I said I’ll undress in here. While you’re in there.”

“You’re trying to ruin my life,” Victor complains, realizing that he’s doing this on purpose. “You’re genuinely, actually trying to ruin my life.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Yuuri teases as he lets his shirt fall to the floor, leaning back against the wall and looking Victor up and down appreciatively, gaze pausing at a particular part of his anatomy.

Victor swallows again—that action doesn’t seem to help much.

“Twenty seconds. I’ll take a twenty second shower,” he claims.
“Doesn’t sound sanitary,” Yuuri points out. “Isn’t this the part where you tell me not to move?”

“Don’t steal my lines, Yuuri. That’s my line. Now don’t move.”

~~

When Victor is out of the shower, Yuuri is sitting on the bed, wearing only his boxers. He had wanted to undress fully, but his confident aura from earlier had faded slowly, so he’d compromised. Either way, Victor is staring at him in shock, only wearing briefs. Yuuri lets his gaze rake Victor’s legs, which isn’t hard to do, because they’re easy on the eyes—admires his calves, his thighs. Then, he notices his underwear, pleasantly realizing that Victor is already hard.

His chest, however, has to be Yuuri’s favorite part. It’s muscular, his shoulders broad. Victor moves up onto the bed, and seems to be in just as much shock as Yuuri as in, matching his gaze wholeheartedly. “You’re perfect,” he says quietly, and the words sound unfiltered, as though they’re a subconscious thought brought to life.

“We had this conversation before.”

“I believe you disagreed with me,” Victor recalls. He reaches out and ghosts his fingers across Yuuri’s left thigh. “So I think we should revisit this talk. Because you are, without a doubt, perfect.”

He shivers at the touch. It tickles, sort of, but he doesn’t pull away, doesn’t want to. “I’m ordinary,” Yuuri protests. “And you’re Victor Nikiforov. So you’re perfect.”

“Ordinary?” he scoffs. “Yuuri Katsuki, ordinary. See how those words don’t fit? Yuuri Katsuki, my extraordinary boyfriend. Now that has a ring to it.”

Yuuri laughs and kisses him, pushing on his chest until his back is flat against the sheets. Victor lets him take control, reciprocating every touch but never starting more unless Yuuri starts more. Yuuri figures that he’s probably still trying to appease Yuuri’s earlier doubts, but really, they’re already appeased. They’d never been solidified in the first place, only swirling like cement, constantly ready to harden but never stilling.

When Yuuri opens his mouth, Victor does, too, and he moans against him, having missed this, having thought he’d never have this again. Victor lifts his head off of the pillow, hands gripping his back, and Yuuri keeps one hand on his chest and moves the other to his hair, tangling his fingers in it. When he tugs on it experimentally, Victor hums in pleasure, lifting his hips slightly.

Yuuri gets the message.

He moves his hand on Victor’s chest lower, tracing a path as he goes, stopping at his abdomen, his navel, then finally reaching the waistband of his underwear. “You’re already hard,” he points out. “You did tell me that you would be undressing a mere few meters away from me while I took a shower,” Victor retorts, kissing him again. Yuuri loses himself in it, more heat and more passion, this time, less gentle. He moves his hand underneath the waistband, grips Victor fully in his hand. Victor presses his head back into the pillow, eyes falling shut and his lips parting. “Yuuri,” he whispers, like a prayer.

“What do you want?” Yuuri asks, unsure. He hasn’t led like this before, but it’s simultaneously exciting, sending a thrill through his system.

“You,” Victor answers, like it’s the simplest answer in the world, like it’s written on the walls, like Yuuri should already know. “I want you, all of you, always.”
He smiles in delight at that, kissing his shoulder. Yuuri uses his free hand to push down the briefs so that they’re no longer in the way, then he starts working his hand in a steady rhythm, up and down, stroking. He keeps it experimental, still not sure if what he’s doing is right or will feel good, but judging by the way that Victor melts against him, he figures it’s okay.

“Yuuri,” he moans, and brings down a hand to touch Yuuri, starting a similar stroking movement. Yuuri tries not to collapse against him in response to the touch. He’s propped up on his knees, which are straddling Victor’s waist, and it’s an awkward angle but the feeling of Victor’s hand on him is indescribable—warm, mind blowing.

Yuuri moans his name when Victor runs his thumb across his tip, feels his own hips bucking as his hand stills automatically. A second later, though, he resumes, and Victor is biting his lip, hard, pillow underneath him being tousled by his rolling head and constant fidgets of pleasure. He’s beautiful like this, Yuuri thinks, unravelled.

“I’m not going to last,” Victor mumbles, almost inaudible. “Yuuri, if you keep… Oh my god, Yuuri. If you wanted to… I can’t…”

Victor comes in his hand, and buries his face in Yuuri’s shoulder. His hand is still moving, faster now, the pace sloppier, and a second later Yuuri comes, too, gasping for breath. Victor kisses his forehead, then moves his mouth lower, shifting his body downwards to reach his neck. He sucks hard on a random spot, and Yuuri takes in a breath, letting himself succumb to the feeling.

“Beautiful,” Victor mumbles against his skin. “Beautiful and all mine.”

“All yours,” Yuuri agrees. “And you’re all mine.”

“All yours,” Victor repeats.

After they clean up, they lay back down on Yuuri’s bed together. Victor pulls Yuuri on top of him, wraps both arms around him and tangles their legs, content. Yuuri wonders how it’s possible to love someone so much, to want to be with him at every given second of every given day. More importantly, he wonders how it’s possible to have that love requited. Wonders how Victor had found it in his heart to forgive him, to be so impossibly understanding of what he’d been thinking.

“I’m sorry,” Yuuri says again, and neither of them need to state what he’s talking about.

“Forgiven,” Victor reminds him. “I’m not angry with you.”

“I know, but I am sorry,” he promises. “Thank you for forgiving me.”

“Oh, hang on, I almost forgot,” Victor says quickly, eyes lighting up. “I learned something. I was going to save it for the prank, but…” His voice trails off, the rest implied.

Yuuri nods, waiting.

“Okay, pay attention, because it might be messy,” Victor urges.

He puts a finger on Yuuri’s shoulder. Yuuri lifts himself up with one hand to give him better access. Then, Victor is tracing something. Yuuri starts laughing. “I can’t understand what you’re tracing, it’s all getting jumbled together.”

“No, no,” Victor pleads, and he’s laughing, too. He tries again.

It’s still incoherent, and Yuuri tells him so, kissing him on the cheek. “Do you want paper?”
“It’d be more romantic if I wrote it on you,” Victor complains. “I’ll get a marker and write it on you, hang on.”

“Is it Japanese?” Yuuri asks as Victor gets down from the bed. “Don’t write anything bad.”

“Not permanent marker,” he says, grabbing the item in question off of his desk. Then, he lays down next to Yuuri and takes his hand, drawing on the bottom of his palm. He squints at it, and when Yuuri tries to peek he hides it, giving him a solid glare.

“It tickles,” Yuuri teases.

Victor finishes up, then smiles, putting the cap of the purple marker back on.

Yuuri turns his hand around, blinks at it. It’s Japanese, messy.

“It’s dark,” Victor says apologetically. “Can you read it?”

It takes Yuuri a second, but then he can.

(And he does.)

(And the feeling in his chest is nothing but bliss.)

“I love you too,” he tells him, hugging him again. “I love you too, Victor.”

“You’re going to get marker on me,” Victor mumbles happily against him.

Yuuri picks up the marker, pops off the cap. Then, he makes a mark on Victor’s arm, laughing at Victor’s outraged expression. Victor fights him for the marker, successfully ruining both of their hands in the process, but he comes out victorious, then makes a mark on Yuuri’s shoulder. When Yuuri shifts to get away, though, the marker accidentally swipes across his face.

It’s right under his eyebrow, a long line towards the bridge of his nose.

Victor just starts laughing.

Yuuri stares, wide-eyed. “Did it get on me? Oh my god, do I have marker on my face?”

“Definitely not.”

Using Victor’s distractedness to his advantage, he takes the marker back and makes a polka dot on his cheek. Victor gasps in shock, trying to fight for it. Yuuri starts writing a physics formula on his forehead and Victor tears it out of his grasp, drawing something on Yuuri’s cheek instead. “Are we going to get poisoned or something?”

Victor squints at the edge of the marker. “It’s Crayola. Non-toxic.”

“What are you writing on my face?”

“Ah, there. Done.”

Yuuri takes the marker back, draws a heart on Victor’s chest.

“We’re going to ruin the bedsheets,” Victor complains half-heartedly.

When he looks down at Victor, covered in purple Crayola marker, he breaks out into laughter again,
landing back on top of him. “You look like a little kid who wanted to put on makeup for the first
time.”

“You should look at your face,” Victor advises.

Yuuri takes his phone, turns on the flashlight and then looks in the front-facing camera. In messy
writing, ‘Victor Nikiforov’s boyfriend’ is written across his cheek. Though, it looks more like ‘Victor
Nikiforov’s boy’ since Victor ran out of room near his nose. “Are you serious?” he asks, turning the
phone back off.


“I like this one,” Yuuri adds, tracing the heart on his chest.

“I like you.”

“I like you and I love you.”

Victor kisses him, then yawns. “Goodnight, Yuuri.”

“It’s not even noon.”

He doesn’t seem to care, nuzzling Yuuri’s shoulder and pressing his lips against it.

~~

That night, they sleep in Victor’s bed.

Yuuri falls asleep quickly, exhausted from the swirling emotions of the past few days and the
impromptu planning of their upcoming trip to Saint Petersburg. Victor’s chest is pressed against his
back, forehead against Yuuri’s hair, and one of Yuuri’s hands is loosely held by one of his as they
sleep. It’s tranquil, the moonlight beaming in through the window, coating both of them, softening
their features.

“Yuuri.”

He shuffles at the sound of Victor’s voice, comfortable and warm underneath the sheets. When he
tries to open his eyes, they protest, his circadian rhythm usefully informing him that, no, this is not
the right time to be waking up.

“Yuuri.”

“What?” he groans, trying to turn his neck to look at him.

The moment he catches the slightest glimpse of Victor in his peripheral vision, he’s more awake. His
face is pale, eyes huge, as though he’d just seen a ghost. He’s holding Yuuri tighter than he had been
earlier, lips parted slightly. “Yuuri. Repeat what you said earlier.”

“What I said earlier?” Yuuri repeats sleepily, shutting his eyes again. Although Victor looks shaken
up about something, it doesn’t sound like anything pertinent, and all he wants is to sleep…

“About the video, what you said about the video.”
Yuuri hums, turning fully in his arms to hide his face in the crook of Victor’s neck. “Don’t wanna talk about that right now.”

Victor kisses his forehead, quick. “No, just say what you said earlier about it. You told me it was of a party? Of both of us at a party?”

“Not a big deal,” he mumbles. “I was drunk, you were drunk.”

“What party?”

It’s obvious that he’s not letting this go. “End of the Year party.”

“Psi Omega Iota’s End of the Year party?” Victor clarifies.

Yuuri offers a nod, irritable with tiredness. “Go back to sleep.”

“Last year? This was last year? The video was filmed last year?”

“What’s the big deal?”

Victor takes in a sharp breath. “I need to see the video. Right now.”

“Victor, I love you, but please talk to me again at nine in the morning, at the earliest.”

“This is important,” he promises. “I need to know if… I need to know something. Do you have the video? Where’s the video?”

“Phichit showed it to me.”

“Phichit, Phichit,” Victor chants out loud, thinking. “Phichit uses… Twitter? I’ll check Twitter.” He grabs for his phone and the light is bright and Yuuri yawns again, already drifting back to sleep.

“This cannot be possible. Can it? Could it?”

Yuuri doesn’t answer, hoping that he’ll find the video and then stop talking at whatever godforsaken time it is. Victor starts tapping violently, then mutters something in Russian, hitting the home screen before trying a different app. “Phichit uses Yik Yak,” Yuuri provides.

Victor kisses him on his hair. “Yik Yak! Okay, let me…”

There’s another minute of searching, then a whistle of victory as Victor tilts his phone to the side, letting the video play. He makes comments about Yuuri’s pole dancing, of course, but it’s less teasing and more enthralled. Victor makes a verbal note that he should do that again, one day, perhaps when they’re both sober.

And then the second part of the video starts.

Victor drops the phone.

(On Yuuri’s face.)

“Ow, Victor,” he complains, shifting so that it falls onto the bed. “That hurt.”

“Yuuri,” Victor breathes, amazed.

“What? I know you hadn’t seen that before, either, but it’s not—”
“Yuuri,” he cuts him off, and he pushes Yuuri off of him, holding both of his hands and grinning. “It’s you.”

“Me?”

Victor nods, urging him to understand. He squeezes his hands and his grin only grows wider, blossoms into something that threatens to get stuck there permanently. “It’s you. Oh my god, it’s you, it’s you it’s you it’s you…”

A second later, he’s laughing manically, and Yuuri is in his arms again, and how can Victor possibly have this much energy at this time of night? He’s lifting Yuuri off of the bed and into his lap, kissing him and letting his hands roam. Yuuri kisses him back, but doesn’t put much energy into it, collapsing back onto the pillow the moment he’s let go. “You’re right, Vitya. It’s me. Very good observation.”

“You don’t understand.”

“You’re right, I don’t.”

“Boxers Boy.”

“What?”

“You’re him,” Victor states happily, like he has just cured an obscure disease, like he has just solved world hunger. “You’re Boxers Boy. And you’re Bike Boy.”

“I’m…? Okay…?”

Victor hugs him again, kisses him. “I love you. I’ve loved you three times, now.”

“I love you too, but who is Boxers Boy? And who’s Bike Boy?”

“After that party, I woke up remembering somebody,” Victor explains. “But I didn’t know who it was, I just knew that they were…” He trails off, touches Yuuri’s hair, stroking it gently. “I wasn’t very happy, back then. I was bored. With life, I think. I lacked, I don’t know, what’s the word? I lacked something. But when I was with him, there was something else, something new, unfamiliar. And so I looked and I looked and I looked but I never found him. But…”

“But he was me?”

“He was you,” Victor confirms. “And then, when I hit somebody on my skateboard…”

Yuuri raises an eyebrow.

“I fell in love again,” he finishes.

“With somebody you hit on your skateboard? You hit somebody on your skateboard, sent them flying to the ground, and thought, ‘I’m in love?’ Victor, you’re the most ridiculous—”

Victor kisses him, hard, hands cupping his cheeks and a smile still playing on his lips. He worships his skin, working his way up his jawline and then back down, then to his neck, his chest, his shoulder, his arm, his knuckles. “They’re all you. I should’ve known, I guess. Should’ve guessed from the very beginning.”

Yuuri smiles softly, and Victor kisses him again. Then, Victor picks his phone back up, rewinding the video. “What are you doing?” Yuuri asks, rubbing his arm.
“Rewatching the first part.”

“The fir—Victor, please don’t.”

Victor whistles at the screen. “Those are some moves, Yuuri Katsuki.”
Saint Petersburg

Chapter Summary

Victor, Yuuri, Yakov, and Yurio go on a trip to Saint Petersburg during winter break.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys!!! Only one more chapter left after this ahh!! It feels like I only started this the other day! This was originally supposed to be a 50k fic but it sort of evolved into a monster and I couldn't be happier haha <333 Thank you so much to everybody who has stuck with it so far!

CHECK OUT THESE CUTE LINKS:
Victor drew on Yuuri and Yuuri is super in love by the fabulous bitchitkun
crazy adorable art by the talented faerie--kei

Hope you enjoy this fluffy chapter and be sure to leave a comment!!

p.s. there are different languages spoken briefly in here so sorry if anything is incorrect!!
^.^ google translate is unreliable and plz feel free to correct me!

“So you’re saying that *Yuuri* is Boxers Boy?” Sara questions slowly, as though the words don’t fit on her tongue quite right.

Victor nods while running his fingers through his hair. “Yes.”

“This entire time?” Mila gapes.

“And you fell in love with him at that party, but you didn’t know who he was?” Phichit adds from underneath his palm, his shoulders slack and eyes as wide as saucers.

Another nod.

Phichit’s phone is out of his pocket faster than Victor can blink. “I’m tweeting about this. This is *insane*. You’re telling me that Yuuri seduced you at the party, made you fall in love with him, then you hit him on your skateboard, didn’t know who he was again, and then happened to become roommates with him? You’re telling me that this is real life? That this is really happening? And now you’re officially dating?”


“I didn’t speak to you for one day,” Mila mumbles under her breath, leaning back in her chair, “and all of this happens.”

“Somebody should write a book,” Phichit bursts. Then he pauses, raises his hand in the air to stop anyone else from speaking. “I mean, *nobody* should write a book, because I have dibs.”
Victor skateboards to the science building to wait for Yuuri. He sits down on a wooden bench outside and digs his heels into the soft sheet of snow, tugging his coat tighter around himself. He could wait inside, but the breeze is gentle, and the scenery is beautiful—white-topped trees and buildings all around him. He pulls his phone out of his pocket and sees Phichit’s fifty tweets about the Boxers Boy scenario. It’s entirely possible that Yuuri will kill Phichit for them later, but Victor retweets a few anyway.

Then, suddenly, there’s snow dumped on his head.

“Yuuri!” he yelps, trying to brush it off, but there’s already another snowball coming at him, successfully hitting him between the shoulder blades. Victor bends down and fumbles to make his own. Swiftly, he whirls around and throws it, missing by a few inches. Yuuri is laughing, wearing a dark coat and his favorite green scarf, cheeks flushed pink and eyes sparkling with mirth.

Victor tries again and manages to hit him in the leg. Yuuri creates another snowball, shaping it with his black gloves, and throws it, but Victor dodges it at the last second. He stands up from the bench, ready to defend himself. “You’ve still got snow in your hair,” Yuuri points out.

Instead of trying to fix it, Victor just pouts. It has its intended effect because Yuuri steps closer to him, running gloved fingers through his snowy hair, trying to sort it out. Victor leans forward and kisses him as he does so, and Yuuri seemingly gives up, kissing him back and smiling against his lips. “Excited for tomorrow?” Victor asks.

Their flight leaves tomorrow morning and they’ll stay in Saint Petersburg for two weeks. Victor can hardly contain his excitement, and Yurio has claimed countless times that he’s going to stay at the college instead of dealing with both of them being ‘grossly in love.’

“Nah,” Yuuri teases, and Victor just rolls his eyes, pressing their foreheads together.

“How was your very last final exam for the fall semester?”

“How does a final in Philosophy and Modern Physics sound to you?”

He scrunches up his nose. “Unexciting.”

Yuuri just laughs, as though that was the answer he’d been expecting. Then, he moves his arms around Victor, lacing his fingers at the small of his back. “I have a surprise for you.”

Victor tilts his head to the side, licks his lips. “You do?”

“Mhmm. Close your eyes.”

“Is it what I think it is?” Victor asks as he obeys, keeping his tone flirtatious. Yuuri’s hands slip away from him. He’s slightly confused as to what this surprise will be, as he’d assumed it would be a kiss, but—

“YUURI!”

There’s a chunk of cold snow down the front of his shirt, and he winces, pulling the edge of the
fabric forward to let the snow fall back out onto the ground. Yuuri is doubled over with laughter, clutching at his stomach, and Victor takes the opportunity to pick up more snow and put it down the back of Yuuri’s shirt. Then, he holds Yuuri’s shirt down against his body, trapping the cold snow in place. Yuuri squirms, trying to get out of his grip, and eventually manages, shivering as it clumps on the ground.

“I cannot believe you,” Victor complains. “Every time I start to think that you’re a nice person, you stick snow down my shirt.”

Yuuri is stifling laughter now, and if Victor weren’t freezing he’d think it was adorable. “Yet you fall for things like this _every time._”

“You lower my guards first,” he points out. “Like this time, you smiled at me. That time with the hair dye, you’d bought me breakfast. Evil. Genuinely evil.”

He picks up more snow and throws it at Yuuri, hitting him square in the chest. Yuuri just smiles and brushes off the remaining flakes. “This prank war is becoming sort of one-sided, you know.”

“My last prank idea didn’t go well,” Victor reminds him. “But don’t worry. I’m only taking my time because it’s going to be good.”

“Will it be?” Yuuri hums, squinting at him.

“It will,” he states.

Yuuri still doesn’t look like he believes him, but Victor keeps a pokerface. He grabs his skateboard and sets it down on the shoveled path. When he puts one foot on it, Yuuri starts walking beside him, stretching his arms out behind his back.

“Do you think we could both ride this?” Victor thinks out loud, glancing down.

“Not without one of us dying.”

Victor pauses, gets off of the skateboard and then gestures for Yuuri to get on. Distrustful, Yuuri puts one foot on it, pushes lightly. He goes a few feet and then skids to a stop. “Not bad,” Victor says. “Okay, now I get on.”

“This is definitely not going to work,” Yuuri says, ears tinted red as Victor gets behind him on the skateboard, trying to propel them both forwards.

Victor stops them with a foot on the ground and puts an arm snug around Yuuri’s waist, lips drifting across the back of his neck. “We could just stay like this, then.”

“In the freezing cold?”

“Okay, fair point,” he says, then gets off of the skateboard. “You skate, I’ll walk.”

Yuuri awkwardly pushes off again, then skids to another stop after a few feet. Victor picks up some snow and tosses it at him. Yuuri gives him a look. “I don’t know how you do this.”

“Come on, just don’t stop, put both feet on the board,” he advises.

He raises a skeptical eyebrow but tries anyway, making it slightly farther than before. He looks at Victor, smiling, and Victor hurries to catch up with him. “This is sort of fun,” Yuuri admits. With one foot, he pushes off again, rolling away. His other foot still awkwardly causes him to skid to a
stop, but the motions are becoming more fluid.

“Don’t leave me behind,” Victor jokes, jogging towards him. “Here, watch this.” Yuuri gets off of the skateboard and Victor takes his place. Then, in one motion, he jumps, flips the skateboard, and lands back on top of it with precision.

“Are you trying to impress me?” Yuuri asks, though his sarcastic tone is at odds with his raised eyebrows and his awed expression.

Victor fixes Yuuri’s glasses. “Depends. Is it working?”

“Maybe.”

“Mmm, good,” he says, then pushes his foot down on the board and skates away. Yuuri calls out and chases after him. When he’s far enough away, Victor gets off of the board and picks up some snow, throwing it at Yuuri and deftly hitting him in the chest.

“Victor!” Yuuri yelps, grabbing more snow and tossing it back, but the throw falls short, hitting the ground instead.

A few students nearby are giving them odd looks, but they ignore them. Victor skates away again, but the path up ahead isn’t shoveled well, and the wheels slip on a small patch of ice, sending him flying to the grass. Yuuri is there in an instant, kneeling in front of him, concerned. “Are you okay, Victor?”

Victor groans loudly, clutches his stomach. “Ouch.”

“Oh, do you want me to call—”

In an instant, there’s snow down the front of Yuuri’s shirt. “Got you!”

Yuuri tugs at his shirt, trying to get the mound of snow out, cheeks turning red. “Victor! We need hot chocolate now, and you’re paying.”

“I’m paying?” Victor asks.

“You just stuck snow down my shirt.”

“You started it.”

Yuuri looks like he’s going to protest, but then he just shrugs, giving a mischievous smile. “I guess I did start it.”

“So you’re paying.” Victor claims, standing up and dusting off his back, which now has a prominent wet stain from the snow. He grabs his skateboard and tucks it under an arm, then walks in front of Yuuri towards the nearest cafe, mind already set on marshmallows and chocolate.

“Your jeans are sort of…”

He turns around, glances at Yuuri. Then tries to turn his head to look at the back of his own jeans, wincing at the sight of the darkened fabric. “All your fault,” he claims. Then meets his eyes again. “Hang on. Are you staring, Yuuri Katsuki?”

“Nope,” Yuuri says, eyes widening and head shaking. “Definitely not.”

“Why don’t I believe you?”
Yuuri just shrugs and takes his hand, easily dismissing the topic.

~

Their flight leaves a day later.

Saint Petersburg is beautiful, in Yuuri’s opinion.

The day they arrive, it’s cloudy, but there’s no wind, people and cars milling about the city. He feels Victor squeeze his hand, excited, and Yuuri squeezes it back, trying to take in the overwhelming sight of the city. There are people passing them, speaking Russian, and Yakov and Yurio are already over at a shopping stand, Yurio pointing excitedly at a leopard print t-shirt. They all still have their suitcases in hand, but the flight had landed early, a half hour before check-in.

“Do you like it?” Victor asks him quietly.

Yuuri bumps his shoulder. “It’s pretty.”

“Like you.”

“Smooth line,” he teases, but he can’t stop grinning. He catches sight of an interesting shop across the street and tugs on Victor’s hand, pulling him towards it. “Come on, be my tour guide.”

They shop for a while, Yuuri purchasing souvenir after souvenir and probably spending much more money than a broke college student should be spending. Victor gladly shows him around, getting excited about pretty much everything. He translates things for Yuuri, whispering the English in his ear and keeping an arm around him, and Yuuri thinks perhaps he’s enjoying the language barrier.

Makkachin had accompanied them—Yakov paying extra to get him a special airline service that would bring him to Saint Petersburg without him having to be trapped in the kennel. Yuuri keeps a careful grip on his leash, and the poodle sniffs everything in sight, including people, all of whom are delighted to meet him.

The hotel is a small, run-down brick building on the outskirts of the city. It’s the cheapest one that Yakov could find for them. More of a bed and breakfast than a hotel, really. Yuuri had insisted on paying for his fair share of the trip, as even though it’s a cheap hotel, it’s still expensive for two weeks worth of living. When they arrive for check-in, they’re stopped at the door. A man says something in Russian, and when Yuuri frowns, confused, he repeats it in English. “No pets allowed. Sorry.”

Victor glances back at Yakov, confused. Yakov sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. “I forgot to check if they allow pets.”

In an instant, though, Victor’s expression turns from confused to charismatic. “Oh, not a problem, we’ll take my dog elsewhere. I do have a question for you, though.” The employee listens as Victor steps closer to him, lowering his voice slightly. “See, my boyfriend here—his name is Yuuri, say hi Yuuri—”

“Victor, what are you—”

“is afraid of fire,” Victor finishes. “Pyrophobia. Did you know the word ‘pyro’ is of Greek origin?
Anyway, he’s very afraid of fire, poor thing. It’s not irrational, I suppose, but either way, I think that our rooms are on the third floor of your building. That might stress him out. Do you happen to have a fire escape?”

Yuuri stares at him blankly.

The employee looks confused, but nods anyway. “Um, we do, actually. It’s in the back.”

“Wonderful, thank you,” he says, and then adds something in Russian. Then, back to English. “We’ll be right back. Yakov, Yurio, do you want to go drop off our things in our hotel room while Yuuri and I take Makkachin somewhere for safekeeping?”

Yakov’s eyes are shut, his head bowed slightly. “Victor…”

Yurio doesn’t say anything, just keeps his arms folded across his chest and his gaze set on the employee. The employee shifts, obviously more discomforted by the teenager than the rest of them combined.

“See you in a bit,” Victor hurries to say, leaving his suitcase behind and taking Makkachin’s leash in one hand and Yuuri’s arm in the other, guiding them away.

“Victor, what’s going on?” Yuuri interrogates. “I’m not afraid of fire.”

“Are you saying if there were a fire right here, right now, you wouldn’t be scared?”

Yuuri watches as Victor glances around before heading into an alleyway at the edge of the building. He hands Makkachin’s leash to Yuuri, then pulls out his phone, typing something. Yuuri is still confused, biting his lip. “I mean, yeah, but that’s not…” It clicks. “Are you seriously going to sneak Makkachin up a fire escape?”

“What?” Victor gasps, sounding shocked. “Of course n—oh here it is. Good, stairs the whole way up. Come on, Makka. Your grandfather is going to open an emergency door for us. Or window. We’ll see.”

“You’re insane,” Yuuri breathes.

“Do you really want Makkachin sitting alone in a cold kennel?” He pauses, waits for Yuuri’s void answer. “No? Then up the fire escape we go.”

Yuuri sees his point, so they start up the stairs. There are locked doors and windows lining the edge of the hotel, and the fire escape is cramped, pressed up against the back of another building. Makkachin pants up at them happily, thinking that it’s all a fun game. “Careful, Makka,” Yuuri advises, petting him on the head. Luckily, there are railings.

“Oh, they’re on the third floor,” Victor says, reading his phone. “Yakov thinks that this is a bad idea. So does Yurio, apparently.”

“Because it is a bad idea,” Yuuri mutters as they continue climbing.

There isn’t a door on the third floor, but there is a door on the second. So, reluctantly, Yakov opens the door for them from the inside. “Thanks, Yakov,” Victor says, herding Makkachin inside. Yuuri follows behind him, giving Yakov a shy smile. It’s slightly awkward, visiting a foreign country with his school’s dean and also his boyfriend’s father, but luckily, Yakov seems friendly enough. In fact, he seems friendlier towards Yuuri than Victor, especially in situations such as these.
“Okay, to the stairs,” Victor says. He hides Makkachin around a corner until Yuuri checks to make sure that the stairway is clear, and then they ascend. “Only one floor up, Makka.”

The dog is still oblivious, just happily staring at his owner.

Luckily, there is nobody in the hallway when they reach the third floor. “Are we going to do this every time he needs to go to the bathroom or when you go somewhere?” Yakov sighs.

“Yes,” Victor answers firmly, scratching the poodle between the ears.

They find their hotel rooms—Yakov and Yurio are sharing one and Victor and Yuuri are sharing another. Makkachin jumps on Victor’s bed, already curling up into a ball, content. Victor lays down beside him, giving him an adoring expression. “Have I told you that you’re the most spontaneous person I’ve ever met?” Yuuri asks seriously.

“Not today,” Victor replies, winking.

Yuuri sits down beside him on the bed, and Victor places his head on Yuuri’s lap, staring at up him. “I like it, though.”

“You do?”

“I don’t really want to like it, but I do.”

Victor grins at that, and Yuuri bends down to kiss him briefly. Victor chases his lips, and hums, one arm wrapping around his shoulders, the angle awkward. “We really didn’t need two beds.”

“We can press them together, make a mega bed,” Yuuri jokes.

A flash of something crosses Victor’s features, and then he’s sitting up. “You’re a genius.”

“Are we… There are nightstands in the way…”

“Let’s rearrange some furniture.”

“This hotel is going to hate us.”

“They’ll take one look at Makkachin’s face and forgive us immediately,” Victor replies, grabbing hold of a nightstand and pushing it towards the other wall.

~

They spend the rest of their first evening in Saint Petersburg shopping, glancing around the general sights of the city, too jet-lagged to do much else. Victor orders them takeout over the phone in Russian while stroking Yuuri’s hair, and Yuuri shuts his eyes, sleepiness clouding his thoughts. “Are you tired, lyubov moya?”

“What does that mean?” Yuuri asks.

“My love,” Victor translates, kissing him on his forehead.

Yuuri smiles softly, cuddling against him. “That’s nice.”
“I can wake you when the food comes,” Victor offers.

A minute later, Yuuri is asleep.

(So Victor enacts his plan.)

It’s hard to get out of Yuuri’s grasp—he’s clingy in his sleep. One arm is around Victor’s waist and the other is resting on his shoulder, so Victor escapes the latter first, slipping his shoulder to the side. Then, he gives Makkachin a desperate plea, and his incredible dog seems to understand, moving to stand beside him. Victor slips out from underneath Yuuri and Makkachin takes his place, laying beside him. Yuuri cuddles Makkachin instead, burying his nose in his fur.

For a second, Victor gets distracted by the sight, his heart hurting with joy. Then, though, he’s focused again, grabs his suitcase and opens it up on the floor, taking out the hidden contents. Two large bottles of clear nail polish. He takes another glance at Yuuri, making sure that he’s still sleeping. Then, he heads into the bathroom, grabs the body soap. Yuuri showers at night, Victor showers in the morning, so this should work out well.

Carefully, he places the soap on a tissue. Then, he takes the first bottle of nail polish and begins to coat the soap with it. He turns it over, does the other side, hears Yuuri mumble something in his sleep through the thin wall. There’s a knock on the door, and he accepts the delivered food, placing it on the desk in the corner of the bedroom before continuing. When there’s a good layer of nail polish on the soap, and it has dried well enough, he places it back in the box, folding the tab and hoping that Yuuri won’t notice that it has already been opened.

Then, he heads back to the bed, decides to do another prank, impromptu.

He grabs a can of shaving cream from the bathroom.

(A classic, really.)

But Yuuri is laying on his side facing Makkachin, and that won’t do, so he touches Yuuri’s shoulder gently, a ghost of a touch, trying to readjust him. He doesn’t budge. Victor strokes his hair instead, carding his fingers through it, and that works better. Yuuri rolling onto his back with a gentle sigh.

(The issue with pranking Yuuri, really, is the guilt. Victor can hardly look at him without the guilt threatening to swallow him whole. He looks so peaceful when he’s asleep, so beautiful, and he feels like it’s a sin to abuse that in any way.)

(But then he remembers the feeling of cold snow down the front of his shirt.)

So, tactfully, he puts shaving cream in Yuuri’s open palm, which is resting beside his thigh. Yuuri still doesn’t wake up, by some miracle.

Victor doesn’t have any feathers, so he glances around the room. He ends up taking a glass from beside the sink and filling it with a small amount of water, letting a few droplets fall onto Yuuri’s cheek. Yuuri shifts in his sleep, face scrunching up with discomfort. Instead of wiping at it, though, he just opens his eyes, sees Victor and squints at him, confused.

And then there’s shaving cream spread across Victor’s face.

(Well.)

(That wasn’t what he’d been hoping for.)
“Nice try.”

“How did you…?” Victor starts, then just sighs, turning around and heading towards the bathroom.

Yuuri is laughing from his bed, trying to snap a picture with his phone. “Hang on, come back. Victor!”

Victor washes off his face and then dries it with a towel. Yuuri washes the excess shaving cream off of his hand. “I can’t believe that didn’t work,” Victor complains quietly, getting his food and sitting down at the desk, digging in.

“I believe it,” Yuuri answers, getting his own food. Then, his expression turns thoughtful. “Hang on, that’s the best prank you could think of? That was your big plan?”

“It backfired,” he mutters.

Yuuri picks a french fry off of Victor’s plate and pops it into his mouth. “Maybe you should just leave it to the king.”

“All hail the king of pranks,” Victor praises sarcastically, keeping his lips in a firm pout and his eyes downcast.

Yuuri moves closer to him, expression turning apologetic. “Oh, I was just kidding. Sorry, I didn’t think that you’d—”

Victor attacks Yuuri’s pasta with his fork, eats a bite of it. “See,” he explains through a mouthful, “your weakness is your empathy, Yuuri.”

~

He keeps silent when Yuuri has finished dinner and announces that he’s going to go shower. Yuuri strips off his shirt in front of him, which makes Victor giddy with delight, but heads into the bathroom a second later. The water turns on, and Victor waits, thoughts too crowded with anticipation to do much else.

Then he hears the soap fall, Yuuri’s singing stop.

Victor thinks quickly, decides to hide in the closet. Makkachin watches, confused, from the bed. He shuts the doors, stifling his laughter behind his hand as he hears the water shut off. “Victor?” a call comes.

He keeps quiet.

“Did you… Oh my god, you did something to the soap.”

The bathroom door swings open.

“Victor, this isn’t—did he…” Yuuri sighs, heavy. “Where’d he go, Makkachin?”

He walks towards the door to the hotel room. Victor peeks in between the doors of the closet and then, at the perfect time, jumps out, grabbing Yuuri’s shoulders. Yuuri fumbles on his feet, eyes going wide, and one of his hands comes to cover his heart. “Got you,” Victor tells him happily.
“This is not… What did you do?”

“Hmm?”

Yuuri is only wearing a towel, draped low across his hips, and the sight is impossibly distracting. “To the soap?”

“Nothing, what’s wrong with it?” Victor can’t hide his knowing expression and Yuuri whacks him on the arm, laughing.

“You know what’s wrong with it. Did you buy gag soap or something?”

“Gag soap? Yes, I made a quick run to Saint Petersburg’s local gag soap store. It’s clear nail polish,” he explains, both hands moving to the top of Yuuri’s towel on his hips. “See? You’re not the only prank king. I could win this war yet. Always root for the underdog.”

“You covered our soap with clear nail polish?”

Victor hadn’t anticipated how attractive Yuuri would be after just getting out of the shower. His hair is wet, slicked back, droplets of water scattered across his arms and torso. “Yes.”

“Victor… Is there another soap? Did you hide it?”

“What?”

“I don’t think they gave us more than one body soap.”

He frowns. “Why wouldn’t they?”

“Because most hotel room guests don’t cover their soap with clear nail polish.”

Victor kisses him, ignoring his words because he looks incredible, and presses him back against the wall, hands slipping under the top of his towel, Yuuri’s hands the only thing keeping it from falling away completely. Victor keeps his fingers teasingly high, but just low enough to be promising, his chest almost flush against Yuuri’s own.

“You’re going to call the front desk and ask them for more soap,” Yuuri states, but he shuts his eyes as Victor kisses his neck, then works his way to his collarbone, nipping there.

“As you wish, but only if you let me shower with you when we get more,” Victor mumbles against his skin.

Yuuri laughs. “Okay.”

“Okay?”

“If you go call them,” he says, heading back into the bathroom, letting the towel fall as the door shuts. Victor holds his breath, then sprints to the phone.

~

“What do you think about going to a museum?” Victor asks, tracing patterns around Yuuri’s navel,
his voice sleepy.

Yuuri, half-asleep, drifts his fingers down Victor’s back, then back up, making him shiver. “A museum? Because you’re so cultured?”

“Exactly,” he answers, smiling against his chest and kissing it, eyes falling shut again against his will. “Or, actually, we could just stay here all day.”

“That’d mean we came to Russia just to lay in bed,” Yuuri tells him, still ghosting his hand across his back, light caresses. It sounds less like a complaint and more like a fact, and Victor turns to smile up at him.

“I love you,” he tells him, because he can.

“I love you, too.”

~

“The State Hermitage Museum,” he explains to Yuuri, squeezing his hand as they cross the plaza in front of the building. “Founded in 1754 by Catherine the Great.”

Yuuri’s gaze drifts across the wide, magnificent structure. “Did you Google that?”

“Definitely. But I didn’t Google that the word Hermitage comes from French, and that the French word comes from Latin, and the Latin word comes from Greek. It comes from the word for hermit, then the word for desert, et cetera et cetera. The Romans stole a lot of things from the Greeks.”

“Let’s take a picture in front of it,” Yuuri suggests. “Phichit would want us to.”

They take a selfie and Victor posts it on Instagram before they enter the building.

“So do you know anything about art?” he asks Yuuri.

Yuuri shakes his head, and Victor admits that he doesn’t, either. Nevertheless, they walk around the building, glancing at different exhibits and pieces. Victor has an objective appreciation of art, especially art relating to the cultures that he knows the languages of, but, really, he only has eyes for Yuuri. He keeps a tight grip on his hand, enjoys watching Yuuri focus on things, squinty-eyed and leaning forward on the balls of his feet.

“Look at this one,” Yuuri whispers, clutching to his sleeve.

Victor watches as his lips part, as his free hand subconsciously comes up to push up his glasses. He kisses his temple, shuts his eyes, wanting to live in this moment forever. After a moment, he turns and views the painting, an image of a pond with soft shades of green. It’s nice, but if he’s being honest, the only thing on his mind right now is returning to his and Yuuri’s hotel room.

Yuuri leans his head on Victor’s shoulder. “Monet.”

“Monet? So you do know art.”

“It says it right there.” He points towards a plaque.
Victor chuckles. “You could’ve just taken the credit.”

An hour later, they’re out of the museum, grabbing lunch at a nearby restaurant.

With ease, Victor translates Yuuri’s food requests, giving the waitress a bright smile before she leaves to get their drinks. “Is it helpful? Speaking seven languages?” Yuuri asks conversationally, looking out the large window to their right.

Victor drums his fingers against the table, shrugs. “Sometimes. If I travelled more, it would be of more use.”

“And how’d you get interested in linguistics, anyway?”

He leans forward, folds his arms and rests his chin on them. “I like languages—I’ve always thought they were interesting. When I moved to America from here, it shocked me how differently people spoke, yet at the same time, it’s not different at all. Remember how I told you about linguistic relativity?”

Yuuri nods.

“They’ve always just clicked for me,” Victor thinks out loud. “Sentence structure, word structure. Etymology. Like how physics clicks for you, I suppose.”

The waitress brings them their drinks, and Victor thanks her. He adds something else in Russian, though, and the waitress blushes, nodding and glancing at Yuuri briefly before leaving. “What’d you tell her?” Yuuri asks.

“That we’re dating.”

He blinks. “Why?”

“I like saying it,” Victor informs him, grinning.

Yuuri flushes, ducking his face into his hands, quickly moving on out of embarrassment. “Tell me something else about linguistics.”

“He shakes his head.

Victor thinks for a second. “Like, uh, ‘the old man the boat.’”

“That’s… That’s not a sentence.”

“No, no, it is. You just have to think about it.” He takes Yuuri’s hand across the table, plays with his fingers and watches the confusion take over his features. “You’re cute when you’re thinking, by the way.”

“Oh,” he realizes. “The old people are manning the boat.”

“The horse raced past the barn fell,” Victor says next, a challenge in his eyes.

Yuuri bites his lip. “Um… I have no idea.”

“Participle,” he explains, rubbing his thumb against Yuuri’s. “Raced past the barn is a participle. So the horse that was raced past the barn fell down.”
He hums with understanding, taking a sip of his drink.

A few minutes later, their food comes out, and Victor smiles upon seeing the piroshki set in front of them. Yuuri takes a small bite with his fork, eats it experimentally, and then a grin blossoms. “You like it?” Victor asks, and he gets an eager nod in response.

Eating piroshki with Yuuri Katsuki.

A dream come true.

~

A week later, Victor wakes up alone in the morning.

He stretches out his arms, feels for the empty space beside him, pouting when he realizes Yuuri isn’t there. Makkachin is at the foot of the bed, though, so he chooses to lavish him in attention instead. Then, he plops his head back down on the pillow, blindly grabbing for his phone on the nightstand. Eventually, he finds it and puts it in front of him.

There’s one text from Yuuri. hi

He feels weightless, reads the two letters over and over again with glee. Hi.

i’m getting food & i have a surprise for you when i get back

A surprise? What sort of surprise?

lol what do you think? <3

Victor swallows thickly, glances around the hotel room before looking back down at the phone. He licks his lips and pushes down the covers of the bed, already preparing to hop in the shower. Is it what I think it is?

want a preview?

(A preview?)

He adjusts himself on the bed, heart thumping embarrassingly fast in his chest. Unless this is some sort of grave misunderstanding, which is entirely possible, then Yuuri is flirting with him. They do plenty of flirting lately, yes, but it never seems to lose its effect on Victor. Sure.

well i saw this & i thought of you https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tly3n2b7V9k

Excited, Victor smiles at his phone, tapping on the link. It takes a while, and he impatiently glares at the screen, mentally urging it to hurry up. Eventually it loads, and he tilts his phone onto its side so that the video will play full screen.

After five seconds, he realizes what had happened.

Victor lets out a heavy breath.
Of course.

Yuuri :(

lol see you soon

Yuuriiiiiii :( 

He tosses his phone on the pillow beside him, shuts his eyes and tries to fall back asleep. Of course, he’d never admit this out loud, but he’s afraid that Yuuri is winning the prank war. He’ll need to step up his game. After an instant, his phone is back in his hand, and he’s researching ideas.

And then the lock clicks.

“You’re the worst,” Victor calls from the bed.

Yuuri places a bag of food on the desk and then climbs into bed beside him, kissing him firmly on the lips. He’s fully dressed, jeans and a sweater, but he’s warm, so Victor pulls him close and clings to him, hands bunching up in the fabric. “Hi,” Yuuri greets.

“Sk8er Boi by Avril Lavigne. I cannot believe you would stoop so low.”

“I bet you laughed,” Yuuri claims.

Victor moves his hand on Yuuri’s shirt downwards, fingers touching the hem of his jeans. “Did not.”

“Did too.”

“Maybe a little,” he admits, then slips his hand underneath, enjoying the way that Yuuri freezes, a hand squeezing Victor’s shoulder. “Victor, I—oh.” He’s cut off when Victor palms him through his boxers, applying gentle pressure.

He laughs and kisses him. “Were you kidding about having a surprise for me?”

“S-sort of,” Yuuri mumbles, shutting his eyes. “Victor, please, ah… Please…”

“Please what?”

“Not with Makkachin on the bed,” he tells him, eyeing the dog.

“Good point. Makka, do you want to go see your uncle Yurio for a while? He’s just down the hall.”

~

Victor doesn’t want to go back to Detroit.

His two weeks with Yuuri are magical, a dream that he never wants to wake up from. It’s mornings waking up next to him, it’s afternoons spent cuddling with him and Makkachin, it’s watching Netflix with him late into the night. It’s no schoolwork, no classes—just them, together. Yurio and Yakov are down the hall, sure, but they spend most of their time alone.

Their flight leaves on Monday morning, and then they’ll be back at college for a week or so before
classes start. Victor wakes up first on Saturday, both arms wrapped around Yuuri—the one that is underneath him is numb. He slides it out from under him and Yuuri shifts, yawning and brushing hair out of his eyes. He’s shirtless, and Victor slides a hand down his bare side, slips it onto his stomach, then back up, shutting his eyes at the feeling.

“Morning,” Yuuri grumbles, covering Victor’s hand with his own.

“Good morning,” he responds, kissing his neck. “How’d you sleep?”

“I had a weird dream about you,” Yuuri answers, rolling over underneath his grasp to face him. “But I don’t remember what it was about. Just that you were in it.”

“That sort of dream?” Victor presses, smiling and kissing his cheekbone.

Yuuri laughs, face flushing pink. “No, um… No.”

“Mmm, I like when you blush,” he tells him, voice quiet as he cups Yuuri’s cheek, rubbing his thumb along his temple. Yuuri shivers slightly, and Victor realizes that his hand must be cold compared to the warm covers of the bed.

“Would you call me that thing again? That phrase you used the other day?”

“Lyubov moya?”

Yuuri smiles and nods, kissing him gently, lips searing like blazing coal. Victor’s are cold, so he deepens the kiss, shifting so that he’s slightly on top of Yuuri for a better vantage point. “I like that.”

“How about mon chéri?”

“French?” he guesses.

Victor nods, kisses him again. “My lovely kjæreste.”

Yuuri begins stroking his hair, and Victor shuts his eyes in response to the touch. His fingers card through the strands, pushing them back, and then move to his neck, playing with the short hairs there. “What language was that?”

“Norwegian,” he tells him.

“Say it again?”

“Kjæreste,” he repeats, slower this time. “Beloved.”

Yuuri says it back to him, mouth awkwardly shaping the syllables. Victor smiles and kisses him again, content. “I like hearing you talk in other languages,” Yuuri mumbles, avoiding his eyes. “It’s sort of… I don’t know.”

“Sort of what?”

“Attractive, I guess.”

Victor laughs, surprised by the admission, and snakes a leg in between both of Yuuri’s, still reveling in the feeling of Yuuri touching his hair. “Yuuri Katsuki has a language kink. Who would’ve guessed?”

The gasp of surprise from in front of him is worth it despite the subsequent whack he gets on his arm.
“I never said I had a language kink. That’s… I don’t…”

“Are you sure? Do you want me to start talking in French when we have sex?” Victor suggests, kissing his bottom lip. “*Tu es beau.* It’s the language of love, after all.”

“I just said it’s attractive,” Yuuri reminds him, poking him in the chest. “That’s different than having a kink for it.”

Victor laughs again. “I like hearing you use the word ‘kink.’”

“Why?”

He shrugs. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard you say it. It’s not a Yuuri word.”

Yuuri kicks him affectionately. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It’s like hearing you curse. You don’t curse very often.”

“Neither do you.”

Victor hums in agreement, distracted by his eyelashes. He moves closer and Yuuri shuts his eye, letting Victor kiss him there. “Can I admit something?” Yuuri nods. “I think I have a Yuuri Katsuki kink.”

“You’re so weird,” Yuuri says. Then he pauses, thinking. “But… I think I might have a Victor Nikiforov kink.” He puts extra emphasis on the last word, and it still sounds wrong to Victor’s ears, but he likes it nevertheless, and he can’t help but kiss him again, on his lips, this time.

“Say a curse word,” Victor urges, feeling younger than his age.

“What? Like fuck?”

He takes in a mock, astonished breath. “Yuuri!”

Yuuri sighs and shuts his eyes, pressing his head into the pillow. “Does the attention ever bother you?”

Victor doesn’t like the change in his tone, from something playful to something serious in such a short amount of time. “What attention?”

“At school. Everybody always watching us.”

“Watching us?”

Yuuri shrugs, dismissive. “Watching you, specifically, I guess.”

Not understand what he’s getting at, Victor doesn’t say anything, just purses his lips and tries to think of where Yuuri could be going with this. “Why would people be watching me?”

He lets out a dry laugh. Over time, their relationship has developed—Yuuri doesn’t have as many mental walls between them, is more expressive about his emotions. At this point, Victor can read him as fluently as he can read a language. He sees the subtle adjustment of his shoulders, sees his jaw tense slightly, knows that this isn’t an easy topic for Yuuri to address, that this is something that has been bothering him. “Because you’re your father’s son. But mostly because, well, you know, you’re popular. And attractive. All of that stuff.”
Normally, he’d preen at the fact that Yuuri had just called him attractive, but it sounds less like a compliment and more like a part of a greater whole, now. Victor takes his chin gently, forces Yuuri to look at him. “I don’t get it. You think that people watch us?”

“We’re all over Yik Yak,” Yuuri explains. “I thought maybe it’d stop when people got used to the fact that we were dating, and maybe it’ll get better when we come back from break, but… It’s like…” For a second, he trails off, swallows to try and regain his confidence. “It’s like everyone thinks I took you from the world. Does that make sense?”

“I’m afraid not,” Victor mumbles, leaning forward and pressing his lips to his hairline. “You didn’t take me from the world. I fell in love with you of my own volition.”

He doesn’t seem convinced—posture unchanging, silence.

“Tell me what you’re really thinking,” he pleads.

Yuuri lets out a shaky breath. “It’s… It’s just that, um… It makes sense. That everybody thinks that.”

“What?”

“I just mean that, like, we’re not really similar, Victor. We lead different lives, we led different lives, at least. And I’m okay with that, obviously, but everybody else just sees you falling for me and I guess it’s not—”

“You, Yuuri, slow down,” Victor tells him soothingly. He rests his chin on top of his head, takes in a breath, trying to figure out how to explain this to him, trying to figure out how he’d come to this conclusion. “You love me, right?”

“Right,” he answers automatically.

(There’s something about Yuuri walking into a room.)

(It transcends language, transcends emotion, no, it’s a feeling, it’s something deep in Victor’s chest that is unburdening, beautiful, a blossoming of something metaphysical. Something about him is undefinable in every possible way that Victor knows how to define the average—objects, thoughts—no, Yuuri is different, he’s… He’s the type of person who doesn’t throw away a carton even after it’s emptied, he’s the type of person who leaves the blinds closed, he’s the type of person who smiles and makes the entire world forget about anything else, who captures attention and enralls effortlessly and perfectly, who makes Victor want to give himself to him in every possible way that one person can give themselves to another.)

But those words don’t do him justice.

(Not even close.)

“Dammi la tua mano e corriamo uniti per tutta la vita.” Yuuri doesn’t say anything, waiting for him to translate. “Italian. Give me your hand, and we’ll run together our whole lives.”

“That’s beautiful,” Yuuri tells him softly.

Victor isn’t done.

“Ich liebe dich in allen Sprachen dieser Welt. German. I love you in every language in the world. Does that help?”
“Victor…”

He thinks carefully. “Hang on, I’ve got it. Donna mirai ni mo ai wa aru. I’m guessing you know what that one means? If I said it right?”

There’s another sniff, and Yuuri is clinging tighter to him. Victor wraps him tight in his arms, and it’s beautiful, laying there with him in a cheap hotel room bed, Makkachin still sleeping soundly by their feet. He realizes what this is, realizes that it’s not contentment, because it’s still new, because no matter how many times he holds Yuuri it will still be new, because no matter how many times he looks into his eyes it’s somehow still the first time.

“Translate it,” Victor requests.

Yuuri’s voice is barely audible. “Whatever future there is, there’s love.”

“Don’t doubt yourself,” he begs. “And don’t doubt me. I don’t care what anyone else thinks about us, and you shouldn’t, either. Because you know what they’re all thinking, deep down? They’re thinking, I wish I had a boyfriend as wildly attractive as Yuuri Katsuki. But you’re all mine, and I’m very selfish.”

Yuuri starts laughing at the last part, and Victor is proud of himself for that. “Thank you.”

“No, thank you,” he says instead, serious. “You’re the best person I’ve ever met. Until you sent me that Avril Lavigne link. And until you dyed my hair blue. On second thought, actually… I take back everything I just said. All of that. Scratch the last ten minutes out of our lives, okay?”

“Way to ruin the moment,” Yuuri complains lovingly. “I know you still meant all of it, you sap.”

“I’m only a sap for you.”

“I want to tell you something.”

Victor watches him carefully, but Yuuri avoids his eyes, pasting his gaze to the bed instead, to their joint hands. “Yes?”

“I don’t speak seven languages,” he says quietly. “And I don’t… I’m not even good at expressing things in English. Or Japanese—just in general, I mean. I’m not… I just want to say that I love you a lot too. More than I’ve loved anyone. And you make me happy.” There’s a thoughtful pause, then he adds, “Really happy.”

That feels more special than any words in any language.

Yuuri kisses him, and it’s warm, gentle, an engulfing sort of kiss that makes him forget about anything else, forget about their flight in a few days. It makes his heart flutter, his toes curl. When he pulls away, their lips are still together, his breath hot on Victor’s skin. “Do you remember when I told you that if I were to write a book about you, it’d be the shortest book ever written?”

“I said that yours would be the longest,” Victor recalls.

“I was wrong.”

He smiles. “You were?”

There’s no joke, this time. No sarcasm. Yuuri sinks into the next kiss, passion that his words can’t express melting into it, hands squeezing his shoulders, holding him close.
Victor holds him closer.

(And he doesn’t let go.)
Yuuri helps Yurio with a project and has a talk with Yakov. Victor reflects on their relationship.

Chapter Notes

AND THIS IS THE END! Aww you guys this fic has been so much fun to write!!! Thank you to everyone who has left a comment or kudos! I really didn't think this fic would receive as much hype as it did, and that makes me sooo happy!!!! An extra-special thank you to anyone who made art / posts / tagged me in things regarding this fic..... Seriously you have no idea, it makes my day!!! :D :D :D Anyway, I hope you're satisfied with this ending, and as always, I hope you enjoy this chapter!

Some links!
Blue-haired Victor by the wonderful exile-wrath
An incredible playlist for the fic by the fantastic u-dubstep-my-heart
My CF Tumblr tag!

ALSO! PSA! Those of you who follow me on Tumblr may know that I'm planning on starting a new Victuuri multi-chap AU soon! I can now announce (*drumroll please*) that this will be a Vigilante!AU! More details coming soon! :D I hope those of you who have enjoyed this fic will stick around for that! <3

“What sort of life lesson is this dumb project supposed to teach us anyways?” Yurio grumbles, hands shoved deep into his pockets as he stalks into the house. Victor and Yuuri follow behind him, their hands joined, and Yuuri winces at the blond’s tone of voice. “When, in life, am I ever going to be given a bunch of straws and told to protect a stupid egg?”

“Anyway,” Victor corrects.

Yurio stops, swivels around on his heels. “What?”

Victor smiles, soft. “You said anyways. Anyway is an adverb, it can’t be plural. So it’s anyway, not anyways.”

There’s a pause.

Yuuri clears his throat, squeezes Victor’s hand in a gentle warning. Yurio shuts his eyes for a brief second, as though trying to calm himself down, and then continues to walk without a single word. They enter the foyer, Makkachin coming over to greet them, and Yurio immediately heads into the kitchen and sits down.

By now, Yuuri has been in Yakov’s home a few times. It’s homely, a grey stone wall on the left with
a fireplace built into it and plush, carpeted floors. The house sits at the edge of campus, a tall hedge wall surrounding it. There’s a garden in the back that Makkachin plays in from time to time.

“Okay, so we get this piece of paper, these straws,” Yurio starts, fumbling through the materials strewn across the table. He turns his head and sees that Yuuri is still standing in the hallway, awkwardly hovering near Victor. “Get over here and help me, Katsudon.”

“Katsudon? How did that nickname start?” Victor whispers.

Yuuri smiles and shakes his head, dismissing the subject, before sitting down at the table. “This is all that you get?”

Before Yurio can answer, the doorbell rings.

Yurio groans loudly. “That must be my partner.”

“Partner?” Victor asks, answering the door.

A blond boy with a red stripe in his hair answers, excitedly greeting Victor before hurrying into the kitchen. He sets an electric yellow backpack down on the floor and then smiles at Yurio. “Hi, Yurio. I have some ideas for our project, I was thinking that—oh, hi.” His words are effectively cut off when he catches sight of Yuuri, who offers a polite nod.

“This is my brother’s boyfriend,” Yurio explains. “He’s a physics major.”

Slowly but surely, the boy loses his mind.

“You’re… You’re a physics major?”

Yuuri casts a quick glance to Victor, who looks just as confused as he is, and then back at Yurio’s partner. “Um, yes, I’m a physics major.”

“My name is Minami and I want to be a physics major,” Minami explains, pointing at himself, as though his words weren’t obvious enough. Then, his hands are darting into his backpack, and he produces a binder with papers spilling out of the side. He thrusts it towards Yuuri. “Look!”

Slightly dazed by the boy’s enthusiasm, Yuuri sets the binder down on the table and begins flipping through the notes. There are pictures scribbled along the sides, of different concepts and figures, and he watches Yuuri expectantly, as though waiting for a specific reaction. Yuuri isn’t sure what that reaction is, so he just acts impressed, which isn’t hard since Minami’s notes are very well organized.

“I have designs here,” Minami tells him, flipping to another page. “What do you think?”

They’re…

Detailed.

Very detailed.

“These look good,” he says out loud, squinting to read the fine print. “This one will have good air resistance. A parachute made out of the piece of paper is a good idea.”

Minami squeals, stares at Yurio as though this is the best thing that has ever happened to him. Victor, seemingly feeling slightly out of place, sits down beside Yuuri and pulls his chair far closer than necessary. His thigh presses against Yuuri’s and Yuuri indulges in the casual intimacy of it all, in having the person he loves next to him like this.
“Okay, so maybe we could start by making the cone?” Yuuri suggests.

For a while, Minami sketches and begins putting their designs together, Yuuri helping him. Yurio and Victor simply watch. Yurio eventually decides to pull out his phone and browse social media while chewing a wad of gum instead of helping. But Minami doesn’t seem to mind. When they’ve finally got a design that they’re ready to test, Victor hands them the carton of eggs he’d bought and Minami places one in a paper bag before putting it in the device.

As Minami crouches down on the floor with his phone to get a slow motion shot of the results, Yuuri ascends the stairs and catches Victor looking at him. There’s a warm smile on his face as he leans against the wall, hands in his pockets. He’s wearing his fraternity letter jacket, and Yurio is standing near him, watching his brother’s expression.

Yuuri wonders, briefly, what he’s thinking about.

Then, tactfully, he drops the project, making sure that the balance is even when he lets go.

Minami yells as it hits the floor, but Yuuri can’t tell if it’s a positive reaction or a negative one. He tentatively pulls the egg out, then grins and nods. “It’s okay!”

“The cone is crushed,” Yurio points out bitterly.

“We’ll make another one the exact same way,” Minami says. “Right Yuuri?”

“Sure.”

“Thanks for helping us,” Minami adds as he takes the egg and walks back towards the kitchen table. The other three follow him, sitting down in their earlier spots. “I’m planning on being a physicist when I grow up.”

Yurio snorts. “Why would you want to do that?”

The death glare that Victor gives him is unmistakable. And, for just a second, Yuuri thinks that Yurio might look genuinely apologetic.

Yuuri smiles. “I could see that happening—you’d be good at it.”

Minami passes out.

(Well, he doesn’t actually pass out.)

(But he gets as close as humanly possible.)

“You… You think so?”

Yuuri, slightly awkwardly, nods again.

Minami gets out of his chair and sprints around the table to hug Yuuri, tight. “Can you help us with every physics project from now on? Yurio, can you be my partner from now on?”

“We were randomly assigned together,” Yurio reminds him. Then, his steely persona falters. “But sure, I guess.”

“Um, I can help you,” Yuuri agrees. “Maybe not with every project but—”

“Thank you,” Minami tells him.

There’s that look on Victor’s face again.
“Why were you looking at me like that?” Yuuri asks a few hours later when they’re in their room. He’s sitting at his desk and Victor is flinging paper balls at him from his bed. Yuuri has grown jaded to all of Victor’s annoyances at this point—paper balls don’t affect him in the slightest. Occasionally, he’ll fling one back up, but other than that, he ignores him. “Earlier, when we were with Minami.”

Victor seems to know what he’s talking about. “I just liked seeing you with him. Working with him. Yurio might not admit it, but he’s taken a liking to you, too. And Yakov likes you. He spoke to me about you the other day.”

Yuuri licks his lips, glances up. “He did?”

Silently, Victor gets down from his bed, landing on his feet. He approaches Yuuri’s chair and touches his glasses, adjusting them. Then, he touches Yuuri’s hair, brushing some of it back out of his eyes and pushing a few other strands behind his ears. “It’s getting longer,” he mumbles, not answering the question.

“How about I cut it?”

Victor straddles his lap, lowering himself onto the chair, and presses his lips lightly against Yuuri’s, his eyes falling shut. Yuuri keeps his eyes open, admires Victor’s soft, pink lips, his slightly flushed cheeks, and wonders how he could’ve possibly gotten so lucky. His hand slips underneath Victor’s letter jacket, only the thin fabric of his t-shirt in between Yuuri and himself. Then, Victor properly kisses him, taking Yuuri’s bottom lip between his own and sucking. Yuuri parts his lips, and Victor does the same, and it’s breathy, messy, hot.

“Don’t cut it,” Victor tells him.

Yuuri laughs, forehead pressed against Victor’s. “Was that kiss your elaborate way of telling me that?”

“You know me well,” he jokes. “But no, really I just wanted to kiss you.”

“And why’s that?”

Victor slips a hand up Yuuri’s shirt, pushing the fabric out of the way and tracing a pattern across his abdomen. “Because I love you.”

No matter how many times he hears those three words, they feel surreal.

They feel like serendipity, a pleasant surprise that had ironically taken its form in the most unpleasant of ways. It had taken its form in Victor meeting Yuuri at a frat party, in Victor hitting Yuuri perchance while he’d been skateboarding home, in Yuuri having a roommate mix-up and ending up with the popular frat boy on campus who probably wouldn’t even bother to learn his name.

(But Yuuri’s favorite part of serendipity, as he has discovered, isn’t the luck—it’s the unexpectedness.)

(And that’s what Victor is.)
Because he’s not a stereotypical frat boy, no, he’s Victor, and he’s kind and loving and gentle and annoying and real, and that’s the best part about him, the reality. He’s different from the guy Yuuri had crushed on throughout his first year of college, but he’s different in the best, most serendipitous way.

“We’re going to go play shirtless soccer at two,” Victor mumbles against his lips. “Want to come?”

Yuuri frowns, breaking out of his thoughts. “W-What?”

Victor offers a casual shrug. “Shirtless soccer. We all play soccer, but with our shirts off.”

(Okay, so perhaps he is stereotypical.)

(Yuuri loves him anyway.)

“Are you sure it’s not just soccer combined with your relentless want to see me without a shirt on?” Yuuri teases. He slips his hand down to the bottom of Victor’s shirt and tugs it upwards. Victor helps him by taking his letter jacket off, and then his shirt follows, and Yuuri hums appreciatively.

Victor kisses the corner of his mouth. “That’s… I feel like you’re accusing me. No, it really is shirtless soccer. Everyone will be shirtless. Although, there is only one person I want to see shirtless. So you’re not completely wrong.”

Yuuri rolls his eyes lovingly. Victor’s hands move to the hem of his shirt, gripping it, and his eyes meet Yuuri’s, asking for approval. “Okay, but only because I’ll win.”

“Oh, definitely not,” Victor warns. “I’m very good at soccer. So, if you win, it’ll only be because you cheated and distracted me.”

“What counts as distracting, then?”

He thinks hard for a second. “Smiling, talking, laughing, standing, breathing, existing.”

Yuuri groans and Victor kisses him again, chuckling. “I guess it’ll be easy to win.”

“I guess so. But don’t get me wrong—I’m still going to try.”

“I know.”

~

It’s a little unfair, that Yuuri is seemingly good at everything.

He’s good at science and math, but he also has a good taste and knowledge of the finer arts. He can arm wrestle, figure skate, and, evidently, play soccer.

“What’s wrong, Nikiforov?” he asks, the soccer ball caught between the grass and his heel. He’s shirtless, chest glistening, and there’s sweat on his forehead. His hair is pushed back, the same way that it is when he skates. He’s wearing long, Adidas pants that have been pushed up, revealing a strip of his ankles.
Victor swallows, tries to find words.

Yuuri kicks the ball. It goes in between Victor’s legs and into the goal.

“NUTMEG!” Christophe shouts at the top of his lungs, and the other fraternity members start cheering. Mila and Sara are there, too, laughing at something unbeknownst to the rest of them. He sees Sara kiss Mila on the lips, and Mila’s cheeks turn the same color as her fiery hair. They’d announced that they were officially dating a week or so ago, and ever since then, they’d been even more inseparable than before.

Yuuri retrieves the ball from the goal, keeps it tucked under one arm, then comes up behind Victor, voice in his ear. “Did I distract you?”

“You know what you’re doing,” Victor accuses, turning around and meeting his eyes. “You know exactly what you’re doing, don’t you? You used to not know, but now you know.”

“No idea what you’re talking about.”

But he’s smiling.

A small smile, but a smile all the same.

(Malicious, Victor thinks.)

He puts the ball back in the middle of the field, and in an instant Phichit is dribbling it down towards Victor’s team’s goal. He passes it to Yuuri and Yuuri continues, a seamless and smooth transition. Victor shouldn’t have volunteered to be goalie, he thinks. Not with Yuuri leading offense on the other team.

Yuuri scores on him again, laughing breathlessly, and Victor can’t bring himself to be annoyed, not even in the slightest, because Yuuri looks beautiful like this, vivid and confident, like he owns the world, because he does. Victor clears his throat. “I think we need to split Phichit and Yuuri up.”

There’s mumbled agreement.

Then, Phichit and Yuuri are going head to head, and at some point they both slip while fighting for the ball, and they’re laughing as Phichit rolls off of him, landing on his back and looking up at the clouds with delight in his eyes. Yuuri is clutching his stomach, eyes shut. The moment either one of them stops laughing, they start again, like they’re feeding off of each other’s unequivocal joy.

When Yuuri stands up, though, he winces to see that he’s covered in mud. He starts trying to wipe it off of himself, but it only makes it worse. It’s spread all across his back and onto his left pectoral, covering one of his nipples.

Victor, obviously, whistles.

Confused, Yuuri looks up at him. “Did you just whistle at me?”

Phichit starts snickering. Yuuri removes some mud from himself and flings it at Victor, successfully hitting him in the leg. He covers his mouth with a hand, shocked, as though he hadn’t expected to actually hit him. Then, Phichit throws mud at Yuuri, and all hell breaks loose.

A few minutes later, everyone on the field is covered.

“I’m just saying, I think it’d be more logical for us to take one shower,” Victor flirts unashamedly as
they walk back to their dorm.

Yuuri bumps his shoulder. “You’re so…”

“So what, Yuuri Katsuki?” he challenges. “Finish your sentence.”

“So… I don’t know. I’ve never met anyone else like you.”

“In a good way or a bad way?”

Yuuri licks his lips, then groans and wipes at his mouth with the back of his hand when he accidentally touches mud. “Um, neither, actually. It’s just a fact. You’re unique.”

“Try saying ‘unique New York’ five times fast.”


They make their way into the room and Victor turns on the shower. “We can’t exactly take our clothes off,” Victor says regretfully, staring down at his mud-stained pants.

“Let’s put them in something,” Yuuri suggests. He fetches a trash bag and then peels off his pants and socks, placing them inside. Victor does the same.

Luckily, they’d wiped off their shoes before entering the building, thus not tracking mud anywhere. Their other clothes, however, will need further treatment. They’re both standing in their underwear, then, and Victor watches Yuuri expectantly. Yuuri puts his hands on his hips. “How about you go first?”

Victor shrugs and takes his boxer briefs off. He heads into the shower, watching the chunks of mud fall to the bottom of the tub. Yuuri takes off the remainder of his clothes, too, and follows him. Victor runs his fingers through Yuuri’s hair and the mud falls off of that, too, along with several tufts of grass.

“We’re disgusting,” Yuuri comments, scrunching up his nose at the sight of the wet mud escaping down the drain.

“Is it bad that I’m still turned on?”

Yuuri turns pink but then seems to realize that they are, in fact, naked in the shower together. He licks his lips and meets Victor’s eyes, then gives a quick shake of his head.

Victor grins.

Yuuri grins back.

An instant later, Yuuri is pressed against the shower wall.

Victor slips.

But he doesn’t fall—he almost falls. He manages to catch himself on a shelf hanging off of the wall. Yuuri’s eyes go wide and his hands dart out to catch him, supporting Victor’s weight and trying to help him regain his balance. “Are you okay?”

“This shower is too small,” Victor complains, but he’s kissing Yuuri again an instant later, his near-death experience quickly forgotten in favor of Yuuri’s lips. He reaches up one hand and fumbles to find the shelf. Then, he takes Yuuri’s shampoo bottle. “This one?”
Yuuri tries to take it from him, but Victor shakes his head.

“Let me?”

“Okay, but don’t get any in my eyes, or I’ll kill you.”

Victor sighs. “I feel like whenever I try and set a mood you always add something like that and mess me up.” He opens the bottle and pours some of the shampoo into his hand.

“You shampooing my hair is ‘setting the mood?’”

“Sure,” he defends. “You don’t find that romantic? Me running my fingers through it, you, er, relaxing.” He lathers up the shampoo and then begins, starting with the front and working his way back. Yuuri leans against the wall in a position that can’t possibly be comfortable, shuts his eyes.

He doesn’t say anything for a minute. “I guess this is sort of romantic.”

“Yuuri Katsuki, finally charmed by me. What a miracle.”

“I’ve always been charmed by you.”

“Is that true? Since the beginning?”

Yuuri leans his head forward to give him a better angle. “Well, you must know by now. The effect that you have on people.”

Victor doesn’t quite understand, but he has to admit that he’s only half-heartedly listening because the feeling of Yuuri’s hair and Yuuri’s body in front of his own, the water hitting both of them, is immensely distracting. He wonders how rational it would be to suggest showering like this, and only like this, for the rest of their lives. Or to just never leave the shower in general. “What do you mean? What effect?”

“You’re charismatic,” Yuuri points out. “Everybody likes you.”


Yuuri doesn’t say anything.

Victor stops washing his hair, turns him so that the water can hit it. He runs his fingers through it, getting the suds out. “Do you condition?”

“It’s a two-in-one shampoo and conditioner,” he says, then picks up another bottle. “And this is yours? Can I return the favor?”

He lets Yuuri shampoo his hair, next, then remembers what they’d been talking about a moment ago. “You don’t think that everybody likes you?”

“I know that not everyone likes me. I don’t have the same charm as you. Which is okay.”

“I like you,” Victor says, and he sees Yuuri’s lips twitch into a smile. “Everyone at the fraternity loves you. Mila and Sara like you. Phichit likes you. Our RA likes you. That guy at the grocery store that one time, he liked you. The lady at the cinema? She liked you a little bit too much, in my opinion —”

“I just mean… I don’t know.”
Victor lets Yuuri turn him so that the water is beating down on his hair, then run his fingers through it until he’s satisfied. Afterwards, he gets to work on conditioning. “Well, I know. And I know that everyone likes you, because you’re unbelievably charming. Sometimes a little too charming…”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You attract unwanted attention everywhere we go,” Victor mumbles, kissing his neck. “I’m not blaming you, because you couldn’t help being born with those ridiculous eyelashes, but it’s true all the same.”

Yuuri blinks, and…

Victor had just been using the eyelashes as an example, but…

(Wow.)

“My eyelashes?” he asks.

“Name quite literally anything you possess. Combined with your personality, you’re unstoppable. But judging by the way you were acting on the soccer field today… I thought you’d figured that out.”

Yuuri ducks his head, shy. “I… I don’t know what got into me.”

“I like it, when you act confident,” Victor promises, lifting his chin up. “I like anything you do. I like you.”

“Sometimes I just have a hard time believing that,” Yuuri admits quietly. “Because I don’t see… I don’t get… You’re so wonderful…”

His voice cracks.

“Oh, Yuuri, no no no,” Victor whispers, taking him into his arms. The steam is filling the air, coating the mirror on the other side of the bathroom. “If you could only know… If you could only understand… Today, on the soccer field, what I felt, looking at you. And seeing you with Minami? And… Everything you do. You’re so encapsulating, do you know that?”

Yuuri sniffs, pulls away just enough to look him in the eyes. “Thank you. Sorry for… I’m sorry that I do this sometimes. I don’t mean to ruin the mood…”

“No no, I was joking earlier,” Victor promises. “Don’t ever worry about that. I want you to be honest with me. I love you.”

“I love you more,” Yuuri mumbles.

“I want to try and argue with you, but you’d win.”

He laughs. “Now that’s character development: you finally admitting that I’ll win at any and every competition.”

“That soccer match didn’t even count as a competition,” Victor complains half-heartedly. “I got pummeled. You and Phichit are a super-duo.”

“We’re very in sync.”

“I’ve noticed. Now kiss me again?”
Yuuri is walking across the quad one day when he sees Mr. Feltsman.

Mr. Feltsman—no, wait, he’d said to call him Yakov—is waving at him, beckoning him over. After looking around a few times to make sure it’s truly him that he’s talking to, Yuuri approaches him, slightly nervous. Whenever he has interacted with Yakov, Victor has been there, acting as a buffer. But this is just Yuuri and Yakov.

Which is fine, he tells himself. Yakov is intimidating, sure, but Yuuri would like to think that somehow he’d managed to get on his good side.

“Hello, Yuuri,” he greets, and smiles.

(The smile doesn’t fit his face. It looks like a robot pretending to be human.)

Yuuri smiles back anyway, scolding himself for that rude thought. “Hi, um, Yakov.” That name doesn’t fit right in Yuuri’s mouth.

“Are you going to class?”

He swallows, rubs the back of his neck. “No, I was just heading back to my dorm.”

“Victor is there?”

Yuuri doesn’t know where he’s going with this. He nods.

Yakov adjusts his hat. “Walk with me?”

Yuuri walks with him, and a companionable silence settles between them. The campus is beautiful. Sometimes he forgets that, since he has become so accustomed to it. Lovely maple trees line either side of the path, and occasionally a leaf will blow off, floating through the air before gently hitting the ground. Yuuri bites his lip, glancing around. The cold is biting today, so he keeps his hands buried in his pockets.

“Yuuri, I wanted to thank you.”

Oh.

Okay.

He takes his time before replying, trying very hard not to blurt out something stupid. “Um, okay, but thank me for what exactly?”

“Vitya seems happier, since he met you.”

“Oh,” he says quietly, then repeats the syllable, a little louder. “That’s, um… Good.”

Yakov sighs. “You don’t know this, because you didn’t know him, but he was different before. The same person, obviously, but different. He was compartmentalized—that’s the best word for it, I
think. He would compartmentalize his emotions.”

“Compartmentalized,” Yuuri repeats slowly. “So, like…” He lets his voice trails off, waits for Yakov to elaborate.

“Not as expressive,” he adds. “It was harder to know what he was thinking. He’d act happy, sure—would laugh and smile, but when he thought no-one was looking, there’d be this blank stare. Like he was always waiting for something.” Then, Yakov turns and looks at him. “You know, Yuuri… I think he was always waiting for you, he just didn’t know it yet.”

That comment floors him.

He keeps walking, but his mind has abandoned his body, which is left to run on autopilot. “I… I don’t know what to say.”

“You don’t have to say anything. I don’t think he’ll ever tell you or I about what he was going through back then. But, either way, that’s his story to tell or not to tell. You should just know that you’ve impacted him. And that I’m thankful for that.”

Yuuri inhales deeply. “He impacted me, too.”

“I’m glad to hear that. Now, I suppose you’d better be getting back to your dorm, and I’d better get back to work.”

“Okay, well, it was nice talking to you. Thanks for telling me about… That.” Yuuri smiles, and Yakov gives him that peculiar smile in return.

He starts walking towards the dorm building again.

“Hang on, Yuuri. One more thing.”

“Oh?”

Yakov hugs him.

It feels like a hug from someone who isn’t sure what hugging is.

But Yuuri hugs him back anyway, albeit a little shaken by the sudden action.

“Thank you. Seriously, thank you,” Yakov says, and it’s about as close to an emotion as his voice has ever gotten. Other than anger, of course.

He doesn’t say anything. A second later, Yakov has let him go, and then they part again, Yuuri making his way back to the dorm room in a haze. When he sees Victor asleep on his bed, a book on his chest, he tries to imagine him differently, the way that Yakov had described him. Looking different when he’d thought other people couldn’t see him.

Yuuri climbs up the bed, takes the book off of his boyfriend’s chest and lays there instead, wrapping an arm around his torso. Victor unconsciously slinks an arm around him, holding him closer, and Yuuri yawns, looking up at him. His features are softer when he’s asleep, Yuuri thinks. He’s peaceful, blissful. Watching the breaths enter and exit his lips reminds Yuuri of Newton’s Cradle—one knows what’s going to happen, but one watches anyway, because it’s a miracle.

Then, though, Yuuri’s phone buzzes in his pocket and Victor subsequently begins to wake up, eyes blinking open. “Yuuri,” he says, and a smile blooms.
“Sorry,” Yuuri bites out, grabbing for his phone and turning off vibrate. “I didn’t want to wake you.”

“I’m glad you did,” Victor promises, kissing him. A second later, though, his eyes are shut and his head is back against the pillow. “But I’m too tired to…” He swallows, eyebrows contracting as though he’s focusing all of his energy on trying to remember what he’d been about to say. “Too tired.”

“That’s okay,” he tells him. “I’ll let you sleep.”

He moves to get up, but Victor catches his arm. “Stay?”

He can’t deny that request—doesn’t want to, anyway.

Victor cuddles him more properly this time, spooning him so that his chest is flush against Yuuri’s back. He buries his face in Yuuri’s hair, breathing him in, and Yuuri shuts his own eyes, the warmth of Victor and the covers lulling him off to sleep, too. “You’re lovely,” Victor tells him.

Yuuri smiles. “So are you.”

“Mmm.”

He can’t tell if that’s an agreement or not, but either way, Yuuri starts to notice Victor’s breaths evening out as he falls asleep.

Except then there’s a whisper.

“Yuuri?”

Yuuri turns his head slightly. “Yes?”

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

“I love you.”

Yuuri has to remind himself to breathe, his medulla oblongata giving up on him and leaving the task to his conscious mind. “I love you, too.”

~

“We aced our egg drop project,” Yurio states at Stammi Vicino a few weeks later.

Yuuri is in class, so he’s not there to hear the news. But Victor grins brightly, congratulates him. Mila ruffles his hair and Yurio growls at her, trying to fix it with both hands. Otabek starts chuckling and Yurio blushes furiously.

Otabek Altin is a student who’s friends with Mila and Sara. Yurio has a silent admiration for him, as Victor has noticed over time. He’s a computer science major, which Victor knows is a subject that Yurio has been subtly interested in for years now. He brushes it off by saying that “hacking is cool and stuff,” but Victor knows that his interest in the topic runs far deeper than that. He’s proud of his brother.
(Of course, his brother would kill him if he said that, but he’s proud all the same.)

“What language is that?” Yurio asks.

Otabek glances at him, then back at his computer. “Python.”

“Python? That’s similar to Java, right?”

“In some ways. In Java, you know how you declare variables? In Python, you don’t need to do that.”

Yurio frowns. “What do you mean? How’s that possible?”

Victor smiles as he sees Yurio watch Otabek’s computer screen, pointing out different tidbits, obviously fascinated in whatever is going on on the screen. At some point, he looks up, sees Victor watches him, and scowls, offended. Victor decides to mind his own business, looking down at his phone and checking the time. Yuuri gets out of class in a half hour. A half hour that feels like an eternity, because they’re going to go take Makkachin for a walk, and he can hardly wait.

Victor gives everyone a wave as he heads out of the library. He lets his skateboard fall to the sidewalk, then hops on it. For his birthday, Yuuri had bought him a new pair of earphones—ironically enough—so he pops one into his ear and lets the music blast. With ease, he whizzes past walking and biking students.

A few people wave at him and he waves back, even if he doesn’t know them.

When he finds Yuuri, he hugs him, as he does almost every day now. They walk hand in hand to Yakov’s house to fetch Makkachin and put his leash on him. Then, Makkachin tugs on the leash the whole way to the quad, overexcited.

“Okay, Makka, don’t go too far now,” Yuuri mumbles, unclipping the leash.

Makkachin sprints to go greet some students, who smile brightly at him. Victor squeezes Yuuri’s hand, watching. “All of the tables are full,” Yuuri points out, glancing around them.

“It’s a nice day out,” Victor mumbles, kissing his temple. “That’s why.”

They end up sitting on the edge of the fountain, Yuuri as close to sitting on Victor’s lap as he can be without it being too intimate. Victor has both arms around his waist and keeps his chin on Yuuri’s shoulder, watching as a student throws a stick for Makkachin and the poodle chases it across a patch of grass. Yuuri’s breathing is gentle underneath his hands, and the sunbeams accentuate his features, making him, in Victor’s opinion, even more gorgeous than usual.

“Hey Victor? Are you happy?”

Victor nods. “Are you?” he asks.

“I am.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah.”

For a while, they stay like that.

Until noon hits and the bells on top of the Stammi Vicino Library toll, loud and prominent across the
campus. Students turn and look at them, and it takes them both a second to realize what had happened. There’s a rumor on campus—any couple that is sitting on the fountain when the bells toll are destined to be married.

Victor is okay with that.

He nuzzles Yuuri’s neck. “Will you, then?”

Yuuri is flustered, glancing around nervously. “Will I…?”

“Marry me? Maybe? One day?”

His eyes focus on Victor’s.

Victor focuses on him.

For once, the world around them doesn’t matter.

Yuuri doesn’t answer him—not verbally.

(He doesn’t need to.)

Because their love is not up for grabs, not a quantum superposition, not a fake force, not an unknown language. No, it’s a silent, solidified promise, an exchange between them that nobody else could possibly hope to understand. It’s a bond that neither linguistics nor physics nor any other subject matter could possibly being to explain.

And Victor knows that Yuuri likes hard science—the cold, irrefutable facts.

(But he seems okay with this.)

And that makes Victor happier than any declaration of love ever could.

~ Ten Years Later

Yuuri Katsuki

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Yuuri Katsuki (Katsuki Yuuri) (born November 29, 1996 in Hasetsu, Saga Prefecture, Kyushu, Japan) is a renowned physicist and the winner of a Nobel Prize in Physics. In 2024, he made countless breakthroughs regarding quantum encryption and quantum computing. More recent work has involved research into groundbreaking interactions between ultracold atom and nanoscopic scale systems. In addition to leading lectures on the topics of physics and applied physics, he has written two books, Revisiting String Theory and Revisiting Copenhagen’s Interpretation. As well as his own experiments and research, he is often asked to provide advice for other institutes' scientific structures and projects. His husband, Victor Nikiforov, is a well-versed translator and linguistics professor. Nikiforov is responsible for the translation of both of his husband’s books into a variety of languages that spans the globe. Nikiforov himself has won a Leonard Bloomfield Award for his own accomplishments in the field of linguistics. Together, they have two children. And a dog! Don’t
forget the dog! Also, Yuuri Katsuki is stunningly gorgeous, and so is his husband—which one of them is more gorgeous is a constant, heated debate between them.

Yuuri rereads the last three sentences of his Wikipedia page, blinks a few times to make sure he hadn’t misread them. Then, he shakes the shoulder of the man lying in bed beside him. “Victor, did you edit my Wikipedia page?”

“I’m surprised they didn’t catch it earlier,” Victor admits casually, stretching out his arms.

“How long has my page said that?”

Victor sits up, pulls Yuuri onto his lap and clamps a hand over his husband’s mouth. “Don’t worry about it, love.”

Yuuri licks his hand. Victor doesn’t pull it away, just laughs. Yuuri peels it off of himself so that he can speak. “Victor, don’t avoid my question. When did you make those edits?”

“How long has my page said that?”

Yuuri licks his hand. Victor doesn’t pull it away, just laughs. Yuuri peels it off of himself so that he can speak. “Victor, don’t avoid my question. When did you make those edits?”

“Do you want pancakes? I know the kids said they wanted pancakes today. I’ll make them chocolate chip pancakes, how about that?” He rocks Yuuri back and forth on his lap, as though that’ll convince him. “Yuuri?”

“It has said that for a while, hasn’t it?”

Victor takes Yuuri’s glasses off of their nightstand and puts them on him, cringing in anticipation of his reaction. “Um…Got you?”

“Oh my god, Victor, do you realize that I’ve had colleagues who have—”

“You, Yuuri, you don’t need to prove to anybody that you’re a genius. I know it, the world knows it. Now, there’s a more pressing matter. Chocolate chip pancakes? Yes or no?”

Yuuri caves. He leans back against Victor, kissing his cheek. “Chocolate chip pancakes.”

Victor lifts him up and out of the bed, and Yuuri laughs as he wraps his arms around Victor’s neck, trying not to fall to the floor. “Chocolate chip pancakes it is, for my award-winning physicist husband.”

“Will you ever stop surprising me?” Yuuri teases, playing with the collar of Victor’s shirt.

“I sure hope not. We’d have to get divorced. Therefore, I need to keep up my spontaneity. Which is why…” He sets Yuuri down at the kitchen table, then opens a drawer. “I bought a new spatula!”

Yuuri laughs as he pats Makkachin on the head. “Wow, very spontaneous.”

Victor frowns, approaches him and taps Yuuri on the head with the brand new spatula. “Are you making fun of me?”

“Always.”

“Oh, Yuuri. You never change.”

“I sure hope not.”
There’s a pause.

The teasing dissipates.

There’s an expression on Victor’s face that exceeds defined emotions, that exceeds the range of phonetics and of the written word. Yuuri sees it, sometimes. Randomly. Like when he’s singing their daughter to sleep or when he comes home with arms full of groceries. Every once and a while, he’ll see this look. And it’s the same look that Victor has been giving him since the moment they’d met.

(It’s the same look from the video.)

(The same look from the fountain.)

“I sure hope not,” Victor whispers, like he means it, like he wants so badly for Yuuri to understand. Yuuri doesn’t, but he thinks, he thinks just maybe, just maybe, that he’s starting to. “I sure hope not.”

---

Works inspired by this one

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!